OMNI OCCUPY WALL STREET MOVEMENT

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Contents of #6
January 20 Demonstration, Occupy the Courts
Abel Tomlinson:  Fayetteville and Arkansas
Danny Schechter, Corporate Crime
Jeff Clements, Corporations Are Not People
Bill Moyers
Glenn Greenwald, With Liberty and Justice for Some
New Group:  The Other 98.%
Who Rules America?  Read G. William Domhoff

Contents of #7
Chris Hedges, Occupy AIPAC
Occupy and Women
Lisa Fithian:  Advisor to the Movement:
Move Your Funds
Kucinich’s H. J. Res. 100
Chris Hedges, Breaking the Corporate State
Gitlin’s New Book, Occupy Nation
Ross, Participatory Democracy

February 28, 2012
Dear Dick,
Join me at  Occupy AIPAC.
President Obama:  No War on Iran!
Sign the petition

Occupy AIPAC Summit
Saturday, March 3  Register now!

No War on Iran Protest
Protest outside the AIPAC Conference
Sunday, March 4, 11am

Read 10 Reasons Why the Israel Lobby is So Dangerous
By Medea Benjamin  
http://www.occupyaipac.org/2012/02/10-reasons-why-the-israel-lobby-aipac-is-so-dangerous/  
Washington, DC  
www.occupyaipac.org

I invite you to join me at the Occupy AIPAC Summit in Washington this weekend.  
http://www.occupyaipac.org/summit/schedule2012/  

I spent seven years in the Middle East.  I lived for two of those seven years in Jerusalem.  I was the Middle East Bureau Chief for the New York Times.  AIPAC does not speak for Jews or for Israel.  It speaks for right-wing ideologues who believe that because they have capacity to wage war, they have a right to wage war.

And just as these elites were too blind and too enamored of their own rhetoric to see what invading Iraq would trigger, so too are they unable to comprehend the regional conflagration that would be unleashed by attacking Iran.

The uprisings from Tunisia to Egypt to Greece to Occupy Wall Street to our gathering outside AIPAC's doors in Washington are all the same primal struggle for justice.

The battle for justice in Middle East is our battle.  It is part of the vast, global battle against the 1 percent.  It is a battle against the fossil fuel industry, the weapons manufacturers, the security and surveillance state, the misuse of public funds that wastes $ 4 trillion on wars that never had to be fought, the trillions more in looted taxpayer money to prop up insolvent banks and swell bloated military budgets, the battle to protect working men and women who are left struggling in the name of "austerity" to save their homes and find work.

Join us at Occupy AIPAC this weekend.  Help us make the voices of the 99 percent—the voices of mothers, fathers and children in the squalid refugee camps in Gaza, in the suburbs of Tehran and in the bleak industrial wastelands in Ohio—heard.

Yours,  Chris Hedges

OCCUPY AND WOMEN  
Sarah Seltzer.  “We Are the Many, Not the Few.”  Ms. Magazine (Winter 2012).  Occupy’s issues are longtime feminist concerns, so it’s no wonder women are holding up half the movement.

Harkinson, Josh.  “Professor Occupy.”  Mother Jones (March/April 2012).  Lisa Fithian teaches the right ways to commit civil disobedience.

MOVE YOUR FUNDS TO A CO-OP OR OTHER LOCAL BANK  
“A Separation of Church and Bank.”  NationofChange, Feb. 14, 2012
Video Feature: There were more than 3,500 foreclosures in Father Eduardo Samaniego’s San Jose parish in 2008. The banks were unwilling to work with the community to keep people in their homes, and the number of houses that were standing empty were becoming a blight on the community and devaluing the remaining homes. Most of the mortgages were held by Bank of America—which also controlled the accounts of the church and its affiliated school. So what did the congregation do? They divested the Most Holy Trinity Catholic Church's money from Bank of America and moved funds to a local credit union. The hope is that transferring the church's sizable accounts—totaling $3 million—will make Bank of America take note. READ | DISCUSS | SHARE http://www.nationofchange.org/separation-church-and-bank-1329238627

Citizens Unite for Constitutional Amendment
1-21-13 KUCINICH’S CAMPAIGN FINANCE AMENDMENT, H. J. RES. 100
Overturn Citizens United: Sign the petition today to support H.J. Res 100. Let us change our campaign financing system so that we can truly claim to be a government of the people, by the people, and for the people.

Two years ago today, in the Citizens United decision, the Supreme Court opened the doors of our electoral process and democracy to shadowy, undisclosed, unlimited corporate spending in our elections. In his dissent Justice Stevens remarked "The Court's ruling threatens to undermine the integrity of elected institutions across the Nation."

It has undermined our democracy. Citizens United allowed more money to be spent in 2010 than any prior midterm election, and will allow even more money to be spent in 2012 than any prior presidential election.

The funding of our electoral contests has a direct effect on who controls our political process. Corporations are overwhelming our political system with massive contributions leading directly to corporate control of the government. A government truly responsive to the public interest requires public financing of the political process.

To save our democracy, we shall turn to the document that established it. This week, I introduced a Constitutional Amendment which would require that all federal campaigns be financed exclusively by public funds and prohibit expenditures from every other source.

My amendment, H.J. Res. 100, would change the way we finance the elections of our Presidents, Senators and Representatives. It is our chance to return the government to the control of the people.

Sign and share the petition today to support H.J. Res 100. Let us change our campaign financing system so that we can truly claim to be a government of the people, by the people, and for the people.

Our Constitutional Amendment, H.J. Res 100 would also prohibit independent expenditures on behalf of or against any candidate to further protect our democratic process from private influence, while safeguarding our First Amendment rights.

Public financing of federal elections is critical to the restoration of our American democracy. How we fund our elections is not an academic argument. Progress on every important issue in American society
today - economic, social and political - will not be achieved until we use the vehicle of a Constitutional Amendment to gain public control of the financing of campaigns. We cannot wait. We must declare and enshrine the public interest: Please sign the petition today.

The problems we face right now are too serious to allow our government to keep drifting towards a plutocracy. We must begin NOW the long, difficult process of amending the Constitution. The Constitution is a living, breathing document and it is up to us to claim its power to deal with the threat which Citizens United brings to our government, our nation and our way of life.

Courage, Dennis J. Kucinich

“The Corporate State Will Be Broken”
Monday 23 January 2012 by: Chris Hedges, Truthdig | Op-Ed
http://www.truthdig.com/report/item/thank_you_for_standing_up_20120123/

A protester with the Occupy Wall Street movement waves to Auubi, a 17-month-old boy whose father was also demonstrating, on the grounds of the Capitol in Washington, on January 17, 2012. Protesters plan events in Washington throughout the week. (Photo: Doug Mills / The New York Times)

I spent Friday morning sitting on a wooden bench in a fourth-floor courtroom in the New York Criminal Court in Manhattan. I was waiting to be sentenced for “disturbing the peace” and “refusing to obey a lawful order” during an Occupy demonstration in front of Goldman Sachs in November. Those sentenced before me constituted the usual fare of the court. They were poor people of color accused of mostly petty crimes—drug possession, thefts, shoplifting, trespassing because they were homeless and needed a place to sleep, inappropriate touching, grand larceny and violation of probation. They were escorted out of a backroom by a police officer, stood meekly before the judge with their hands cuffed behind them, were hastily defended by a lawyer clutching a few folders, and were sentenced. Ten days in jail. Six months in jail. A steady stream of convictions. My sentence, by comparison, was slight. I was given an ACD, or “adjournment in contemplation of dismissal,” which means that if I am not arrested in the next six months my case is dismissed. If I am arrested during this period of informal probation the old charge will be added to the new one before I am sentenced.

The country’s most egregious criminals, the ones who had stripped some of those being sentenced of their homes, their right to a decent education and health care, their jobs, their dignity and their hope, those wallowing in tens and hundreds of millions of dollars, those who had gamed the system to enrich themselves at our expense, were doing the dirty business of speculation in the tall office towers a few blocks away. They were making money. A few of these wealthy plutocrats were with the president, who was in New York that day to attend four fundraisers that took in an estimated $3 million. For $15,000 you could have joined Barack Obama at Daniel, an exclusive Upper East Side restaurant. For $35,000 you could have been at a gathering hosted by movie director Spike Lee. Most of those sentenced in that courtroom do not make that much in a year. It was a good day in New York for Barack Obama. It was a bad day for us. Our electoral system, already hostage to corporate money and corporate lobbyists, gasped its last two years ago. It died on Jan. 21, 2010, when the Supreme Court in Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission granted to corporations the right to spend unlimited amounts on independent political campaigns. The ruling turned politicians into corporate employees. If any politician steps out of line, dares to defy corporate demands, this ruling hands to our corporate overlords the ability to pump massive amounts of anonymous money into campaigns to make sure the wayward are defeated and silenced. Politicians like Obama are hostages. They jump when corporations say jump. They beg when corporations say beg. They hand corporations exemptions, subsidies, trillions in taxpayer money, no-bid contracts and massive loans with virtually no interest, and they abolish any regulations that impede profits and protect the citizen. Corporations like Goldman Sachs, because they
The corporations control the system, are bailed out by federal dollars and given essentially free government loans to gamble. I am not sure what to call our economic system, but it is not capitalism. And if any elected official so much as murmurs anything that sounds like dissent, the Supreme Court ruling permits corporations to destroy him or her. And they do. Turn off your televisions. Ignore the Newt-Mitt-Rick-Barack reality show. It is as relevant to your life as the gossip on “Jersey Shore.” The real debate, the debate raised by the Occupy movement about inequality, corporate malfeasance, the destruction of the ecosystem, and the security and surveillance state, is the only debate that matters. You won’t hear it on the corporate-owned airwaves and cable networks, including MSNBC, which has become to the Democratic Party what Fox News is to the lunatic fringe of the Republican Party. You won’t hear it on NPR or PBS. You won’t read about it in our major newspapers. The issues that matter are being debated, however, on “Democracy Now!,” Link TV, The Real News, Occupy websites and Revolution Truth. They are being raised by journalists such as Glenn Greenwald and Matt Taibbi. You can find genuine ideas in corners of the Internet or in books by political philosophers such as Sheldon Wolin. But you have to go looking for them. Voting will not alter the corporate systems of power. Voting is an act of political theater. Voting in the United States is as futile and sterile as in the elections I covered as a reporter in dictatorships like Syria, Iran and Iraq. There were always opposition candidates offered up by these dictatorships. Give the people the illusion of choice. Throw up the pretense of debate. Let the power elite hold public celebrations to exalt the triumph of popular will. We can vote for Romney or Obama, but Goldman Sachs and ExxonMobil and Bank of America and the defense contractors always win. There is little difference between our electoral charade and the ones endured by the Syrians and Iranians. Do we really believe that Obama has, or ever had, any intention to change the culture in Washington? In this year’s presidential election I will vote for a third-party candidate, either the Green Party candidate or Rocky Anderson, assuming one of them makes it onto the ballot in New Jersey, but voting is nothing more than a brief chance to register our disgust with the corporate state. It will not alter the configurations of power. The campaign is not worth our emotional, physical or intellectual energy. Our efforts must be directed toward acts of civil disobedience, to chipping away, through nonviolent protest, at the pillars of established, corporate power. The corporate state is so unfair, so corrupt and so rotten that the institutions tasked with holding it up—the police, the press, the banking system, the civil service and the judiciary—have become vulnerable. It is becoming harder and harder for the corporations to convince its foot soldiers to hold the system in place.

I sat a few days ago in a small Middle Eastern restaurant in Washington, D.C., with Kevin Zeese, one of the activists who first called for the Occupy movements. Zeese and others, including public health care advocate Dr. Margaret Flowers, set up the Occupy encampment on Freedom Plaza in Washington, D.C. They got a four-day permit last fall and used the time to create an infrastructure—a medic tent, a kitchen, a legal station and a press center—that would be there if the permit was not extended. The National Park Service did grant them an extended permit, and Freedom Plaza is one of the encampments that has not been shut down. “We do have a grand strategy,” he said. “Nonviolent movements shift power by attacking the columns that hold the power structure in place. Those columns are the military, police, media, business, workers, youth, faith groups, NGOs and civil servants. Every time we deal with the police, we have that in mind. The goal is not to hit them, hit them, hit them and weaken them. The goal is to pull people from those columns to our side. We want the police to know that we understand they’re not the 1 percent. The goal is not to get every police officer, but to get enough police so that you have a division.” “We do this with civil servants,” he went on. “We do whistle-blower events. We go to different federal agencies with protesters blowing whistles and usually with an actual whistle-blower. We hand out literature to the civil servants about how to blow the whistle safely, where they can get help if they do, why they should do it. We also try to get civil servants by pulling them to our side.”

“One of the beautiful things about this security state is that they always know we’re coming,” he said. “It’s never a secret. We don’t do anything as a secret. The EPA, for example, sent out a security
notice to all of its employees—advertising for us [by warning employees about a coming protest]. So
you get the word out.”“Individuals become the media,” he said. “An iPhone becomes a live-stream TV.
The social network becomes a media outlet. If a hundred of us work together and use our social
networks for the same message we can reach as many people as the second-largest newspapers in town,
The Washington Examiner or The Washington Times. If a thousand of us do, we can meet the
circulation of The Washington Post. We can certainly reach the circulation of most cable news TV
shows. The key is to recognize this power and weaken the media structure.”“We started an Occupy
house in Mount Rainier in Maryland,” Zeese said. “Its focus is Occupy the Economy.

This is the U.N.'s year of the co-op. We want to build on that. We want to start worker-owned co-
ops and occupy our own co-ops. These co-ops will allow Occupiers to have resources so that they can
continue occupying. It will allow them to get resources for the community. It will be an example to the
public, a public where a high percentage of people are underemployed and unemployed although they
have a lot of skills. People can band together in their community and solve a problem in the
community. They can create a worker-owned collaborative of some kind. They can develop models of
collective living.”“We looked at polling on seven key issues and found supermajorities of Americans—
60-plus percent—were with us on issues including health care, retirement, energy, money in politics,”
he said. “We are more mainstream than Congress. We aren’t crazy radicals. We are trying to do what
the people want. This is participatory democracy versus oligarchy. It’s the elites versus the people. We
stand with the majority.”The Washington encampment, like many Occupy encampments, has had to
deal with those the wider society has discarded—the homeless, the mentally ill, the destitute and those
whose lives have been devastated by substance abuse. This created a huge burden for the organizers,
who decided that they were not equipped or able to deal with these wider, societal problems. The
encampment in Washington’s Freedom Plaza enforces strict rules of behavior, including an insistence
on sobriety, in order to endure through the winter and ensure its own survival. Other Occupy
movements will have to do the same.“We don’t want to become a soup kitchen or a homeless shelter,”
Zeese said. “We’re a political movement. These are problems beyond our ability. How do we deal with
this? Let’s feed the Occupiers first, and those who are just squatting here for free get food last, so if we
have enough food, we feed them. If we don’t, we can’t. We always fed people, of course. We usually
have enough peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for everyone. But as we debated this issue, we stated
talking about things like ‘how about a Freedom Plaza badge, or a Freedom Plaza wristband, or a
Freedom Plaza card.’ None of those ideas were passed. What we ended up developing was a set of
principles. Those principles included in them participation. You can’t be there because you want a
[tent] or free food. You have to be there to build the community and the movement. You have to
participate in the general assemblies.”“The first principles, of course, were nonviolence and non-
property destruction,” he said. “We don’t accept violent language. When you’re violent you undermine
everything. If the protesters in [Manhattan’s] Union Square, who were pepper-sprayed, had been
throwing something at the police, you would not have had the movement. It was because they were
nonviolent and didn’t react when they were being pepper-sprayed that the movement grew. At UC
Davis, when those cops just walked down the line and sprayed, the nonviolent reaction by those kids
was fantastic.”“We constantly kept hearing in the beginning what are our demands, what are our
demands, is our demand to meet with Obama?” Zeese said. “We said: ‘Oh no, that would just be a
waste. If we meet with Obama he’ll just get a picture opportunity out of that. We won’t get anything.’
You don’t make demands until you have power. If you make demands too soon, you don’t demand
enough and you can’t enforce the demand that you get. So if you get promised an election, you can’t
enforce that the ballots are counted right, for example. We realized late into our discussions—we had
six months of planning, so four months into it—‘we don’t have the power to make a demand.’ That was
very hard for a lot of our people to accept.”“Instead of making demands, we put up what we stood for,
what principles we wanted to see,” he said. “The overarching demand was end corporate rule, shift
power to the people. Once you make that as your demand, as your pinnacle, you can pick any issue—
energy, health care, elections—and the solution becomes evident. For health care it’s get the insurance companies out from between doctors and patients; on finance it’s break up the big banks so that six banks don’t control 60 percent of the economy and break them up into community banks so that the money stays at home rather than going to Wall Street; energy is to diversify energy sources so people can build and have their own energy on their roof and become energy producers. The overarching goal was: End corporate rule, shift power to the people. We developed a slogan: ‘Human needs before corporate greed.’ After that, everything fell into place for us.”

When the congressional super committee was meeting, the Occupy Washington movement formed its own super committee. The Occupy Super Committee, which managed get its hearing aired on CSPAN, included experts on the wealth divide, fair taxation, the military budget, job creation, health care and democratizing the economy as well as giving voice to the 99 percent. “The 99%’s Deficit Proposal: How to create jobs, reduce the wealth divide and control spending” resulted from the Occupy hearing. The report made evidence-based recommendations Zeese knew would not be considered by the Congress, but he saw it as foundational for the movement. “History shows the demands made by those in revolt are never initially considered by government,” he said. “Our job is to make the politically impossible the politically inevitable.” I do not know how long it will take to dethrone the corporate state, but I do know it is a dead and terminal system of power. As the global economy deteriorates and climate change causes greater disruptions, these corporations will be increasingly discredited. I know the iron grip of corporations over our lives will, eventually, be broken. The corporate state will, like all wounded animals, lash out with a blind fury, which is why I suspect we have been given the National Defense Authorization Act, which permits the military to arrest and hold U.S. citizens without due process. It will increase pressure to become crueler and more callous at the base of the columns it depends on for survival. And eventually it will break. No one knows how long this will take. It could be months, years, maybe even a decade, although the massive assault by the fossil fuel industry on the ecosystem will probably force a popular response sooner than we expect. The only question is how much damage these corporations will be permitted to inflict.

I attended a rally Friday night in Foley Square, a few blocks from the criminal court where I had spent the morning. It was part of the Occupy the Courts event held across the nation to protest America’s corporate coup and the Supreme Court ruling in the Citizens United case. It was cold and blustery. Snow was on the way. Many in the crowd of a couple of hundred were visibly chilled. I spoke about the movement. I spoke about the lawsuit I have brought against Barack Obama and the secretary of defense to challenge the National Defense Authorization Act. I spoke about the inevitability of the Occupy movement. I realized, afterward, I had forgotten to say what was most important. I forgot to say thank you. Thank you for standing up to corporate power on a cold winter’s night. Thank you for making hope visible. You must never underestimate your power. I was sentenced in the day. I was exonerated in the night.
