OMNI OCCUPY WALL STREET MOVEMENT

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ANSWER
End Student Debt!

The Editors
May 2, 2012  |  This article appeared in the May 21, 2012 edition of The Nation.

The student loan crisis finally reached center stage in Washington after the House GOP budget called for letting interest rates double on government-subsidized loans (and for deep cuts in Pell grants and other student support). If it passes, students who borrow the maximum will end up paying as much as $1,000 a year in added interest. President Obama sensibly called for extending the lower rate, stumping at colleges and on talk-shows to enlist students and others in the cause.

Republican leaders quickly realized the perils of angering young voters. In another flip-flop, Mitt Romney decided to support extending the lower rate, while the House GOP passed an extension but taunted the president by stipulating that it be paid for with money taken from the preventive health fund created by the Affordable Care Act. Senate Democrats propose paying
for it by closing a loophole that doctors, lawyers and small businesses use to avoid payroll
taxes.

Ignored in the standoff is that even at the lower rates, more and more students can’t afford the
college education or advanced training everyone but Rick Santorum believes they need.

Since 1982 the cost of living has doubled and healthcare costs have tripled; college tuition
and fees have exploded more than four times. All this comes amid revelations about the
hundreds of billions in loans—at below-market rates—ladled out to the banks by the Federal
Reserve and Treasury during the financial crisis.

The student loan crisis has had two effects. The United States, once the leader in the
percentage of college graduates age 25 to 34, has dropped to sixteenth among thirty-six
developed nations, with more and more students dropping out because they can’t afford the
rising costs. The second effect is ruinous debt: the average indebted college graduate is
$25,000 in hock. Total student debt exceeds $1 trillion—now greater than credit card debt.
And student debt is inescapable. Bankruptcy rarely extinguishes it; even Social Security
payments can be garnished in case of delinquency.

These debts weigh down the entire economy. Many students are forced to move back in with
their parents after graduation, which depresses the housing market. Public interest work is
less affordable; as Pam Brown of the Occupy Student Debt Campaign puts it, “The debt
makes us very individual; we can’t afford to help someone else.” Now more than half of
college graduates under 25 can’t find full-time work, and wages for recent graduates are
lower than they were in 2000. Not surprisingly, delinquencies—and the fines and penalties
that follow—are rising.
It is long past time for reform. Representative Hansen Clarke introduced a bill that would forgive up to $45,520 in student debt after a borrower makes ten years of payments at 10 percent of income. The Occupy Student Debt Campaign is calling for a write-off of existing debt as well as free public higher education. Students in California are pushing an initiative that would make four years of state university free for all full-time, in-state students who maintain at least a 2.7 GPA or do seventy hours of community service a year. Lost tuition would be paid for with a modest surtax on those earning more than $250,000.

Making public college (or advanced training) free for those who merit it isn’t a radical idea. For many years the United States led the world in free K–12 education. The GI Bill paid for college or advanced training for a generation of vets after World War II, which gave us the best-educated citizenry in the world and broadened the middle class. As recently as 1980, Pell grants covered 69 percent of public college costs; now they cover less than 35 percent.

We can easily afford the estimated $30 billion annual cost of free college education; a financial-transactions tax would raise many times that sum, and it would inhibit destabilizing speculation on Wall Street. We would reap the benefits of a better-educated citizenry, and young people could be more entrepreneurial and more public-spirited.

But Washington is too paralyzed by the elite fixation on austerity and too polarized by partisan divides to consider anything this bold. The Occupy Student Debt Campaign is right: reform will come only from outside the Beltway, when students, parents and those who understand how student debt weighs down our economy come together to demand it.

The Editors
May 2, 2012 | This article appeared in the May 21, 2012 edition of The Nation.
ANTI-FLAG, *THE GENERAL STRIKE, 2012*
“The album is directed towards the masses of dissatisfied citizens currently protesting around the world.”

**General Electric Faces Occupy Protest Over its Low Taxes, CEO Falsely Claims it Pays a High Rate**
Pat Garofalo, News Report, NationofChange, April 30, 2012: “GE’s low taxes stem mainly from its finance arm, GE Capital, which makes big profits, but generates huge tax “losses” that reduce GE’s taxable income from its other operations. Over the past decade, GE has paid virtually nothing in federal income taxes, paying a paltry 2.3% tax rate on its $83 billion in pretax U.S. profits. 26 major corporations, GE included, had no federal income tax liability for the period between 2008 and 2011 (thought they might have owed something in an individual year)” READ | DISCUSS | SHARE http://www.nationofchange.org/general-electric-faces-occupy-protest-over-its-low-taxes-ceo-falsely-claims-it-pays-high-rate-133570

The ANSWER Coalition would like to share with its members and supporters the email below issued by the Partnership for Civil Justice Fund (PCJF). In addition to providing support for the Occupy movement in cities throughout the United States, the PCJF has issued numerous Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests seeking information to determine the level of federal government involvement in the coordinated nationwide crackdown against the Occupy movement that took place starting in the Fall of 2011. Please share this email with your friends.

**Homeland Security Documents Show Massive Nationwide Monitoring of Occupy Movement**
Documents just obtained by the PCJF from its FOIA request show massive nationwide monitoring, surveillance and information sharing between the Department of Homeland Security and local authorities in response to Occupy. The PCJF, also on behalf of author/filmmaker Michael Moore and the National Lawyers Guild Mass Defense Committee, has made a series of FOIA demands regarding law enforcement involvement in the Occupy Crackdown.
"These documents show not only intense government monitoring and coordination in response to the Occupy Movement, but reveal a glimpse into the interior of a vast, tentacled, national intelligence and domestic spying network that the U.S. government operates against its own people," stated Mara Verheyden-Hilliard, Executive Director of the PCJF. "These heavily redacted documents don't tell the full story. They are likely only a subset of responsive materials and the PCJF continues to fight for a complete release. They scratch the surface of a mass intelligence network including Fusion Centers, saturated with 'anti-terrorism' funding, that mobilizes thousands of local and federal officers and agents to investigate and monitor the social justice movement," Verheyden-Hilliard stated.
This set of released materials reveals intense involvement by the DHS’ National Operations Center (NOC) in these activities. The DHS describes the NOC as, "the primary national-level hub for domestic situational awareness, common operational picture, information fusion, information sharing, communications, and coordination pertaining to the prevention of terrorist attacks and domestic incident management. The NOC is the primary conduit for the White House Situation Room and DHS Leadership for domestic situational awareness and facilitates information sharing and operational coordination with other federal, state, local, tribal, non-governmental operation centers and the private sector."
A sampling of documents reveals:
NOC Fusion Desk on November 5, 2011, collected the identity and contact information of a group of Dallas Occupy protesters who were arrested demonstrating against the Bank of America.

A DHS "Significant Incident Report" reflected step-by-step reporting on a ceremonial meeting on the Rainbow Bridge in Niagara Falls, New York by a small group of OWS members from the U.S. and Canada. According to the monitoring report, the people at the meeting included Occupy Toronto, Occupy Niagara, Occupy Buffalo and Occupy Philadelphia. Multiple law enforcement agencies met in advance on December 29 and "stood ready to assist" during the January 1, 2012 meeting.

DHS coordinated with Portland, OR regarding the eviction of the Occupy encampment and discussed obtaining "soundly based' evidence of public health and safety concerns" to evict from Schrunk Plaza. On November 9, 2011 -- two days after a dramatic street protest by 1,500 seniors and Occupy Chicago against social service cuts -- the NOC Fusion desk sent out a request from the Chicago police department seeking information from "state Fusion Centers" and requesting coordination and information-sharing about Occupy encampments and arrest charges in New York, Oakland, Atlanta, Washington, D.C. Denver, Boston, Portland OR, and Seattle. This request was subsequently recalled by officials in DHS, who directed that it should instead proceed through "law enforcement channels."

The NOC went into high gear requesting urgent communications for Obama's DHS Secretary in advance of the planned December 12th port protests nationwide by OWS. The communications from a senior officer of the NOC ask field offices from Houston, Portland, Oakland, Seattle, San Diego, and Los Angeles to provide information about "what actions they will be taking to prepare" for the protests by the "Occupy Movement."

DHS went so far as to keep the Pentagon's Northcom (Northern Command) in the intelligence loop in advance of the November 2nd port protests organized by Occupy Oakland and supported by ILWU workers. In a "Significant Incident Report" DHS officials were "advised that this [port] closure is a combination of Longshoremen dissatisfaction of working conditions...and to show support for the Occupy Oakland Protest."

DHS monitored and reported on Occupy protests from Atlanta to Washington, D.C. to El Paso to Detroit, among many other cities around the country.

The DHS was in direct communication with the White House for approval of public statements denying DHS's involvement in Occupy actions.

DHS's Office for State and Local Law Enforcement, which collaborates with "non-federal law enforcement and private associations" issued its "Weekly Informant" for December 5th including an update from the Police Executive Research Forum about Occupy. The PERF is the group that organized a series of multi-city law enforcement calls to coordinate the response to Occupy.

To read more about PCJF's OWS FOIA initiative and to read additional documents click here.
To get email updates from the Partnership for Civil Justice Fund, click here.
http://www.justiceonline.org/

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The Partnership for Civil Justice Fund (PCJF) is a not-for-profit constitutional rights legal and educational organization which, among other things, seeks to ensure constitutional accountability within police practices and government transparency in operations. The PCJF filed the class action suit challenging the NYPD's October 1 mass arrest of more than 700 protestors on the Brooklyn Bridge. It has brought class action cases in which more than 1,000 persons were falsely arrested during protests in Washington, D.C., resulting in settlements totaling $22 million and major changes in police practices.
The PCJF previously brought the successful litigation in New York challenging the 2004 ban on protests in the Great Lawn of Central Park. It is counsel with the National Lawyers Guild in Oakland, CA challenging police mass arrest tactics. It won a unanimous ruling at the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals finding the MPD’s unprecedented military-style police checkpoint program unconstitutional. The PCJF previously uncovered and disclosed that the D.C. police employed an unlawful domestic spying and agent provocateur program in which officers were sent on long-term assignments posing as political activists and infiltrated lawful and peaceful groups. For more information go to: www.JusticeOnline.org.

A.N.S.W.E.R. Coalition
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Saturday, 12 May 2012 Wall Street and Their Purchased Representatives
Shelly Bernal, News Report, United Re, NationofChange, May 12, 2012: “Linked very closely with lobbying is the high-income revolving door. Practically every industry hires lobbyists to represent and defend their interests in Washington, D.C. But some industries specialize in employing those who previously worked for the federal government they’re now tasked with lobbying. Open Secrets has profiled 826 people who passed through the golden revolving door into this particular industry, capitalizing on the connections that they forged while in public service. Could these connections assist in influencing financial reform legislation?” READ | DISCUSS | SHARE
http://www.nationofchange.org/wall-street-and-their-purchased-representatives-1336827827

How Huge Paychecks for CEOs and Wall Street Traders Increase Income Inequality
Pat Garofalo, News Analysis, NationofChange, May 12, 2012: “These estimates understate the role of executive compensation and the financial sector in fueling income growth at the top because the increasing presence of working spouses who are executives or in finance is not included. Over the last 30 years, CEO pay has increased 127 times faster than worker pay. The average Fortune 500 CEO is now pay 380 times as much as the average worker; in 1980, those CEOs received 42 times the average worker’s pay.” READ | DISCUSS | SHARE http://www.nationofchange.org/how-huge-paychecks-ceos-and-wall-street-traders-increase-income-inequality-1336828570

Robert Reich | How J.P. Morgan Chase has Made the Case for Breaking Up the Big Banks and Resurrecting Glass-Steagall
Robert Reich, Op-Ed, NationofChange, May 12, 2012: “Only a few years after the banking crisis that forced American taxpayers to bail out the Street, caused home values to plunge by more than 30 percent and pushed millions of homeowners underwater, threatened or diminished the savings of millions more, and sent the entire American economy hurtling into the worst downturn since the Great Depression — J.P. Morgan Chase recapitulates the whole debacle with the same kind of errors, sloppiness, bad judgment, excessively risky trades poorly-executed and poorly-monitored, that caused the crisis in the first place.” READ | DISCUSS | SHARE http://www.nationofchange.org/how-jp-morgan-chase-has-made-case-breaking-big-banks-and-resurrecting-glass-steagall-1336830881