



REVOLUTION NUMBER 99

America was full of angry people in September 2011, when a few hundred citizens decided to make their anger count. *V.F.*'s oral history of Occupy Wall Street shows how the spark was lit in Zuccotti Park as a disparate, passionate mix of activists, celebrities, and accidental protesters changed the national conversation

BY MAX CHAFKIN

With additional reporting by Alexandra Beggs, Mark Guiducci, Jaime Lalinde, Elizabeth Nicholas, Rebecca Sacks, and Kaitlin Sanders

On September 17, several hundred people marched to an empty square in Lower Manhattan—a place so dull that the bankers and construction workers in the neighborhood barely knew it was there—and camped out on the bare concrete. They would

be joined, over the next two months, by thousands of supporters, who erected tents, built makeshift institutions—a field hospital, a library, a department of sanitation, a free-cigarette dispensary—and did a fair amount of drumming.

It was easy to infer from the signs protest-

ers carried what the grievances that gave rise to Occupy Wall Street were: an ever widening gap between rich and poor; a perceived failure by President Obama to hold the financial industry accountable for the crisis of 2008; and a sense that money had taken over politics.

The amazing thing about the Occupy Wall

COMING HOME
 Occupy Wall Street protesters celebrate being allowed to return to Zuccotti Park after their early-morning eviction on November 15, 2011.



Street movement is not that it started—America was full of fed-up people at the end of 2011—but that it worked. With a vague agenda, a nonexistent leadership structure (many of the protesters were anarchists and didn't believe in leaders at all), and a minuscule budget (as of December, they'd raised roughly \$650,000—one-eighth of Tim Pawlenty's presidential campaign haul), the occupiers in Zuccotti Park nevertheless inspired similar protests in hundreds of cities around the country and the world. What they created was, depending on whom you asked, either the most important protest movement since 1968 or an aimless, unwashed, leftist version of the Tea Party.

Occupy Wall Street quickly attracted intellectual celebrities—and, eventually, actual celebrities—but its founders were an unlikely assortment of stifled activists, part-time provocateurs, and people who simply had no place else to turn. There was Kalle Lasn, who ran an obscure Vancouver-based magazine called *Adbusters* with just 10 employees and an anti-consumerist agenda. Another key organizer, Vlad Teichberg, was

a 39-year-old former derivatives trader who spent his weekends and evenings producing activist video art. David Graeber, an anthropologist at the University of London, quickly emerged as the movement's intellectual force. If he was known at all, it was not for his anarchist theories or for his research into the nature of debt, but for being let go by Yale in 2005—in part, he believes, on account of his political leanings.

It is unclear whether the impact of Occupy Wall Street will be lasting or brief. But the story of how these unlikely organizers—and the activists, students, and homeless people who joined them—managed to seize control of the national conversation is remarkable, miraculous even. This is how it happened.

I. "Hello, Citizens of the Internet"

VLAD TEICHBERG | People think this started in New York on September 17, but that's not true. From my point of view, it started in Egypt.

Former derivatives trader; co-founder, Global Revolution

JEFFREY SACHS | I was in Egypt after Tahrir Square, talking to young people who had accomplished something completely amazing. Two thousand eleven was a year of global upheaval—I'd seen it everywhere. And a number of times in the spring, I said in interviews: Don't be so sure that this can't happen here. Because the precursors—of inequality, of a sense of injustice—apply to the U.S.

Economist, Columbia University

KALLE LASN | The left had been chattering on about revolutions for a long time, but we've basically been howling at the moon. And then, all of a sudden, a bunch of young people [in Egypt] using social media were able to mobilize not just 500 or 5,000 people, but 50,000 people. They inspired us with their courage and with their techniques.

Co-founder, Adbusters

In our brainstorming sessions at *Adbusters* in February and March, we said, "Isn't some sort of regime change possible in the United States of America?" It wouldn't be a hard regime change like

PHOTOGRAPH © STEVEN GREAVES/CORBIS

what happened with Mubarak, who was basically torturing people every day. We called it a “soft regime change.”

VLAD TEICHBERG | Former derivatives trader; co-founder, Global Revolution | I'd been a Wall Street person and a revolutionary. It was like a double-agent thing. I'd make a few hundred grand and then do another project. My last job for a big bank was in 2008 for HSBC. Before that I was running structured-credit trading for mortgages for this big German bank, WestLB. I was managing a \$30 billion book.

demand that would change the world. There was some magic about it.

“Are you ready for a Tahrir moment?” a July 13 e-mail from Adbusters asked, announcing plans for the Wall Street protest. The proposed date, September 17, was Lasn's mother's birthday.

VLAD TEICHBERG | Not that many people read *Adbusters* itself, but that idea went viral. People were talking about it, discussing it, organizing around it.

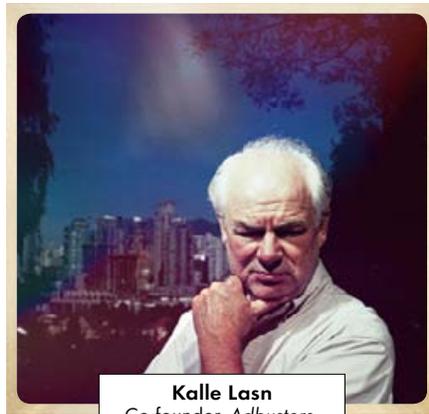
It was supposed to be a general assembly, but instead we had a top-down leadership group that was going to make all the decisions. They were going to make speeches, and then we were going to march under waving banners. Who fucking cares?

I started tapping people on the shoulder who looked like they were as annoyed as I was and said, If we actually did a real general assembly, would you come? We ended up forming a circle, and at that point everyone defected from the rally. There were maybe 60 or 70 people.

“UP UNTIL THEN IT WAS VERY INTERNET-BASED, AND THIS LOOKED LIKE IT WOULD TAKE A MORE OLD-SCHOOL KIND OF ACTIVISM.” —GREGG HOUSH



Vlad Teichberg
Former derivatives trader; co-founder, Global Revolution.



Kalle Lasn
Co-founder, Adbusters.



Gregg Housh
Spokesman for Anonymous.

It was ground zero for the financial explosion. We knew [the revolution] was going to happen. We just thought it would take a little longer. We decided to set up a base in Spain, because we thought it was going south to sub-Saharan Africa. Then suddenly the Spanish revolution started.

That May, as Teichberg watched, tens of thousands of protesters stormed into Madrid's Puerta del Sol. The demonstration, which became known as the Indignados movement, quickly spread to dozens of Spanish cities and became a sort of prototype for Occupy Wall Street. Decisions were made, anarchist-style, by consensus; and demonstrations were broadcast, often live, onto the Internet. On June 9, Lasn registered the domain name OccupyWallStreet.org—a coinage by Micah White, the senior editor of Adbusters.

KALLE LASN | Co-founder, Adbusters | We put together a poster for the July issue of *Adbusters*.

The poster was a ballerina—an absolutely still ballerina—poised in a Zen-ish kind of way on top of this dynamic bull. And below it had the [Twitter] hashtag #OccupyWallStreet. Above, it said, “What is our one demand?” I felt like this ballerina stood for this deep

SAM COHEN | New York civil-rights lawyer | In July, Vlad was in the office telling us that plans were on to occupy Wall Street in September. I told him, “You guys are crazy. You're going to get locked up in the first five minutes.”

Later that month, Adbusters and the leftist group New Yorkers Against Budget Cuts called for an August 2 meeting at Lower Manhattan's Bowling Green to plan the September protest. The proposed format was a general assembly—a sort of anarchist version of Robert's Rules of Order that allows anyone to speak and gauges feedback via hand signals. The system had been used successfully in Spain, but many of the New York activists who showed up that day were unfamiliar with the concept.

DAVID GRAEBER | Anthropologist, University of London | I strolled by Wall Street [on August 2], and there was an insane number of cops: horse cops, scooter

cops, platoons of foot soldiers standing around looking for something to do. I came up to Bowling Green and there it is: a rally. They had megaphones and a stage. There were banners and a couple of TV cameras. There were maybe 120 people.

KALLE LASN | Without anybody beside David Graeber, this thing started having a life of its own. *Adbusters* gave it the spark, but after that we've had almost nothing to do with it.

DAVID GRAEBER | On August 4, we came up with the “We are the 99 percent” idea. I just threw it out there. I'm sure a lot of people were thinking it—I just suggested it to the group. It was a reference to all those people who were talking about the 1 percent.

VLAD TEICHBERG | [By early September] it was a very cohesive group, 30 to 50 people, meeting publicly in parks. I started training people on how to deploy live-streaming teams on the day of. The strategy was to quickly edit videos and find ways to make them go viral.

DAVID GRAEBER | None of us knew how many people were going to show up [on September 17]. The *Adbusters* people said, We have 90,000 subscribers; we're hoping to get 20,000. We were like, Yeah, right. Those guys don't understand that these things just don't happen on the Internet. To make it real you have to do real on-the-ground organizing. We only had six weeks

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF SUBJECTS

with no money at all. With time and money you could organize buses and put up advertising. Our advertising [strategy] was “Someone has a photocopier at work? How many copies can we sneak out without anyone noticing?”

While Graeber coordinated weekly general assemblies, the Internet was alive with news of the planned occupation, thanks largely to the work of Anonymous, the collection of activist hackers—“hacktivists”—who had brought down the Web sites of Visa, MasterCard, and PayPal the previous winter.

GREGG HOUSH | What we had done up until then was very Internet-based, and this looked like it would take a more old-school kind of activism. I remember one [Anonymous member] saying, “I’m not taking part in any hippie drum circles. Stop talking about this.” But then you had all these vocal people that were like, “We can get this going in the right direction. We can help steer this thing through our media.”

So you started seeing, on some of the bigger Twitter accounts that have many thousands of followers, tweeting about what was coming. Then you started seeing a lot of Anonymous news sites reposting some of the information from *Adbusters*.

KALLE LASN | Anonymous came out of the blue with a video that was watched by a huge number of people. It gave us a huge boost; it gave us street cred.

The video, which began, “Hello, citizens of the Internet,” was narrated by a computerized voice, and was posted to YouTube in late August. Much of the script was copied, word for word, from Adbusters’ e-mail the previous month: “Anonymous will flood into Lower Manhattan, set up tents, kitchens, peaceful barricades, and occupy Wall Street for a few months.” The video showed protesters wearing Guy Fawkes masks, which commemorate the mustachioed 17th-century insurrectionist and were popularized by the film V for Vendetta. The masks had first been used during the group’s campaign against the Church of Scientology in 2008.

GREGG HOUSH | One of the [discussions] we were having was “With everyone going to the streets, we need to cover our faces if we want to remain anonymous.” So we started spitballing, throwing out a bunch of ideas. [Guy Fawkes] was one of them. We called around to all of the costume shops and comic-book shops in most of the major cities worldwide—from Moscow and Paris to New York. We realized that the *V* [for *Vendetta*] mask was in every major city in the world. It was cheap and available.

II. “A New Family”

Occupy Wall Street was set to begin at noon on September 17. Though a small committee of organizers had narrowed down a list of possible sites to occupy, they kept the list secret.

DAVID GRAEBER | I got there in the morning and took a couple of pictures and put them on my Twitter account. The Occupy Wall Street Twitter account put out a message saying, Hey, David Graeber is down there. He seems to know what’s going on. Within two hours, I had 2,000 followers. Suddenly I was the communications system [for the entire protest].

VLAD TEICHBERG | On day one, we didn’t know we were going to end up in Zuccotti Park. We were mobile. We were going to try to take the bull, but the bull was already occupied. By the police.

A barricade had been constructed around the iconic charging-bull sculpture near the New York Stock Exchange and was manned by New York City police officers. Organizers distributed a map with several possible locations for an encampment.

DAVID GRAEBER | At noon, everybody was supposed to show up. We thought maybe there would be a couple thousand. At first it didn’t seem like that. I was thinking, Oh, it’s a couple hundred people. This is O.K. I was feeling a little disappointed, but then more and more people started streaming in, and a lot of them were from out of town. They obviously had no place to stay. So they had to occupy something one way or the other.

SANDRA NURSE | I found out about it on Facebook. A friend sent an announcement to me, and she and I came together. We took the subway and showed up at Bowling Green.

NATHAN SCHNEIDER | The plan was to go to Chase Manhattan Plaza, which the night before had been completely barricaded off. There was a big debate, not only within the tactics committee [which had picked the locations and] which was consulting in a little circle at the time, but on the steps publicly. The whole group was debating what to do.

VLAD TEICHBERG | We basically had these mobile teams [with video cameras] chasing the march around, and we were sitting in Starbucks on Broad and Beaver Streets trying to mix the whole thing together. That was our position. It was us and a bunch of F.B.I. guys watching our screens very intensely.

DAVID GRAEBER | At about 2:30 P.M., [organizers] distributed a map with backup places and numbers on them. And then a guy on a bike came up and said, “O.K., it’s Zuccotti Park.” And when I got there, the park was completely full. We had at least 2,000 people. That was when it turned around for me.

SANDRA NURSE | I’d never been to a general assembly before. I wasn’t aware of this process they used, so it seemed bizarre. But it was also fascinating.

VLAD TEICHBERG | One of the people who was running the [live stream] Web site for us called me and said, “Vlad, you broke the Internet.” It was 300 tweets per second. Our service went down.

That night, many of the protesters went home, but 60 or so slept in sleeping bags and on cardboard boxes in the park.

SAM COHEN | Over the first week, the mood of the encampment shifted from fear and paranoia to a lot of hope. The weather was not great. People were without shelter, and there were some hypothermia cases. The police were strictly enforcing bans on tarps and tents. When there was rain, people would hold up tarps over computers—holding them because police were responding to people who attached tarps to anything.

MICHAEL LEVITIN | It rained like hell. We had some nights that were just non-sleeping nights. You had to jockey for space, find your spot, and lay down your cardboard and your sleeping bag. But there was this incredible energy, staying out there with those people and making a new family.

NIRAL SHAH | I heard about it on September 18, but I probably didn’t get down and check it out until a few days later. I think I’d grown away from the activist version of myself, and I was ready to go in pretty skeptically like “Aw, these people don’t know anything. These are weird leftists that are going to make the cause look bad.” But then I saw all the enthusiasm that was going on there. There was just something that felt really empowering about it.

SAM COHEN | I got asked to do some research into the legal status of Zuccotti Park. I went back up to the office and that’s when I discovered the phenomenon of privately owned public spaces. It’s a very weird quirk.

The quirk, which was unknown to many city officials and protesters, stemmed from the fact that, although Zuccotti was a public park, it was technically owned by a real-estate developer, Brookfield Office Properties, as a result of a 1968 agreement with the city. Unlike Central Park and Union Square Park, not all public-private parks have explicit closing hours. Neither the city nor Brookfield could legally evict the protesters—or so it appeared at the time. In order to get around city rules about the use of amplified sound without a permit, the group adopted a technique known as “the people’s microphone”—in which a chain of human voices is used to impart information.

SAM COHEN | The people’s microphone—all strangeness aside—was an incredibly effective

concerned people who were doing live streams when the protesters did marches and putting the videos out virally. I was like, “Wow. We can control the narrative.”

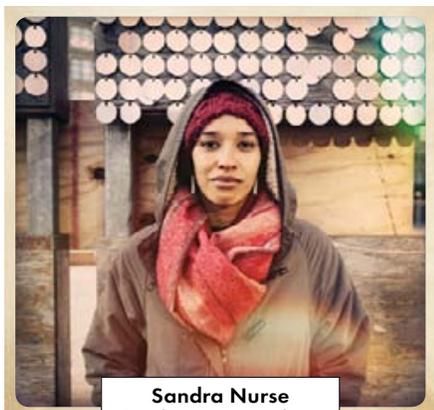
RAPHAEL ROSARIO | I was on my way home from work, and a friend of mine said, “Let’s go see the protesters.” I didn’t want to go, but he was like, “Come on, Raph.” I fell in love with this place. There were so many people who felt the same way I did, people from all walks of life. I just didn’t want to stop talking to these people. I called my wife and I said, “I’m going to be babysitting at my sister’s house tonight.”

The next morning, CNN put a camera in my face. I thought my wife might have seen

RAYMOND W. KELLY | You need a permit to have a parade—that’s 50 or more people. In our minds, if you’re not having an actual parade, we’ll let you walk on the sidewalk. But on Saturday in Union Square Park, they decided to violate the tacit understanding that they would stay on the sidewalk. It was at University Place where they ran down the street and started blocking traffic. I happened to be in the area that day and I actually saw people doing this. That’s where the first large number of arrests took place.

CHELSEA ELLIOTT | I was on the sidewalk at 12th Street and University, and this group of cops stood in front of me and said, “You can’t go past here.” There was this girl be-

“THE PEPPER-SPRAY VIDEO SHOWED THAT WE WEREN’T JUST A BUNCH OF QUOTE-UNQUOTE ANARCHISTS. IT SHOWED OUR HUMANITY.” —VLAD TEICHBERG



Sandra Nurse
Development consultant.



Michael Levitin
Co-founder, *Occupied Wall Street Journal*.



Niral Shah
N.Y.U. law student.

tive tool to get around the amplified-sound permit because you need an amplified-sound permit to use a bullhorn or microphone. Everybody within earshot repeats what you say. Speaking in that context was a bit of a challenge: “Parsing my speech. Into sections that can be repeated. In front of large groups of people. While maintaining emphasis.” That was the cadence I would use.

BRENDAN BURKE | I was in Tompkins Square Park when I was a kid [during the 1988 protests that ended in rioting]. That was just people shooting heroin and having babies and smoking crack. So I thought that’s what this was going to be. But it wasn’t just people doing nothing. They had a media center in the middle of the park with a bunch of people on laptops seriously working. These were college-educated, smart,

so I called her. She was really pissed. She threw me out. She said, “You can stay there if you want to.” I stayed in the park another night. By the second day, I was hooked. I couldn’t leave.

III. “Marches Are So Fun”

In the early afternoon of September 24, hundreds of people—including residents of the park—marched uptown to Union Square, chanting “Occupy Wall Street, all day, all week.” Police intervened, ostensibly to keep them from blocking traffic.

CHELSEA ELLIOTT | I’d gone there the first week, and I was telling my friends about it: “Oh, there’s this great march on Saturday. Marches are so fun. We dance, and there’s music, and we laugh the whole time.” I mean, parts of it were like that, but it was huge and there was chaos.

hind me who was getting upset, screaming “Fascists.” A cop came and slammed her down on the ground and dragged her by her hair. I just started screaming. Then another officer walked over and pepper-sprayed us. It took a few seconds to actually feel it. I was like, “What happened? Why am I wet?” And then all of a sudden it hurts to open your eyes and you can’t really breathe. It’s this horrible burning all over your face.

Elliott was never arrested. She fell to the ground and was attended by volunteer medics. The officer who sprayed her was later identified by Anonymous as Deputy Inspector Anthony Bologna. A Police Department review found that he had broken protocol and docked him 10 vacation days as punishment.

CHELSEA ELLIOTT | I walked back to the park. I talked to some of the people I knew, and

they were like, “Yeah, there’s already a video online.”

VLAD TEICHBERG | When the pepper-spray video came out, that was the hook. That’s what made people focus on [Occupy Wall Street]. The video showed that we weren’t just a bunch of quote-unquote anarchists. It showed our humanity.
Former derivatives trader; co-founder, Global Revolution

NATALIA ABRAMS | I was driving home and I heard about the girls who were maced by Anthony Bologna in New York City. The moment I heard about the police brutality, that made me want to investigate what the cause was—the
Co-founder of Occupy Colleges, the nationwide student chapter of Occupy Wall Street, established on October 2

plutocracy; it was white girls getting nailed unjustifiably.

The video clip of Elliott being sprayed was viewed more than a million times on YouTube. (“What the fuck was that all about?” Jon Stewart asked on The Daily Show. “What? That’s here in America?”)

KALLE LASN | Every few days, a luminary would come to Zuccotti Park and give a speech that would circulate around the Internet. All of a sudden it was cool to be a lefty again.
Co-founder, Adbusters

MARK RUFFALO | I had seen an *Adbusters* blog post, and I saw that it had been building and that it sounded like a real populist answer to the Tea Party. So I

doing demonstrations in support of it. I went to Zuccotti Park as soon as I got back and sang to them:

Who are the men who really run this land?
And why do they run it with such a thoughtless hand?
[From his 1971 song “What Are Their Names.”]

And you know, when they started singing along—no nothing, just human voices, and guitars—it was very inspiring. Truth is, it gave us goose bumps.

Twenty-six days into the occupation, on Wednesday, October 12, the city announced that it would clean Zuccotti Park, which now had an estimated 200 nightly residents. The cleanup, which was planned for Friday, was seen as a backdoor attempt to end the occupation, and

“EVERY FEW DAYS, A LUMINARY WOULD COME TO ZUCCOTTI PARK. ALL OF A SUDDEN IT WAS COOL TO BE A LEFTY AGAIN.” —KALLE LASN



Chelsea Elliott
Freelance graphic designer.



Mark Ruffalo
Actor.



Keegan Stephan
Bicycle mechanic.

moment that I saw the violence against people for doing nothing.

RAYMOND W. KELLY | Any arrest can be made to look difficult; they’re not pretty things. Particularly if someone wants to make it look difficult, they can do that. They can go limp, and it can be required that they be dragged—that’s a photo op you see sometimes. People who put snippets on YouTube will put only the part that fits their position, so you seldom see the precipitating event before an arrest. What you will see are the people who appear to be arrested with a lot of force. Because they want it that way.
New York City police commissioner

MICHAEL LEVITIN | White girls. It’s kind of sad to admit it, but that’s what it took to wake people up. It wasn’t the argument of 1 percent versus 99 percent or the outrageous bonuses for the
Co-founder, Occupied Wall Street Journal, the unofficial newspaper of the protests

said, “I’m going to go down to check it out on my own.” It was dark, and I had my baseball cap on. I just happened to come right when they were starting their general assembly. I was moved by the sweetness of the place, and just the amount of hope and dignity that they comported themselves with. It was the power of democracy at its purest.

RUSSELL SIMMONS | I visited every day. From the very beginning I liked the idea that they were at Wall Street; I liked the idea that they were against Wall Street’s control over government. I think that most people in America, or in fact 9 out of 10 Americans, believe that Wall Street and corporations and special interests have too much control over our government.
Hip-hop mogul

DAVID CROSBY | We were in Europe on tour. People all over Europe knew about it. As a matter of fact, people all over Europe were

volunteers began frantically sweeping and mopping. The following evening, protesters made their way into the park to try to prevent the police from entering. “The whole world is watching,” they chanted (borrowing a phrase from the protests at the 1968 Democratic Convention, in Chicago). “The whole world is watching.”

MICHAEL LEVITIN | A thousand people descended on the park in the dawn hours, defying Bloomberg’s threat to clean it. The energy in the park was palpable. It was unique, it was giddy, it was precarious.

NIRAL SHAH | It was fucking packed. Shoulder to shoulder, maybe 2,500 people in the park. They started doing a people’s mike to get us ready. It was pretty tough to hear. One person was talking in the middle of the park, and it took, like, eight rallies of yelling for it to get back to the end of the park. The first thing [announced] was “There’s going to be
N.Y.U. law student

people who hold the outside of the park. Everyone who doesn't want to get arrested, go across the street."

So the next thing that happened was that there was about to be someone from the legal team to come up and get people who are going to be arrested prepared for that. And so right as this is about to happen, someone passes a statement from Bloomberg's office. And I heard the first part of it through the people's mike, but before the next line was read and repeated, the crowd just erupted. [It was a] tears-to-your-eyes moment, just out of a movie. Everyone hugging, couples making out.

At 6:20 A.M., 40 minutes before the scheduled cleanup, the city issued a press release announcing that the raid had been called off. Mayor Bloomberg insisted later that day that the raid was called off not in response to pressure from protesters but at the behest of Brookfield Properties. The explanation was widely deemed unconvincing. (Mayor Bloomberg and his deputy, Howard Wolfson, declined Vanity Fair's repeated requests for comment.)

MICHAEL LEVITIN | That was the major turning point. After that, the tents went up. They had had this rule where we could stay in the park—but no sitting on tarps, no bags, no benches. But after that night it was complete defiance. The city loved us. The country loved us.

IV. "There Was a Lot of Drumming Going On"

By October 15, Day 29 of the occupation, rallies had spread to hundreds of cities around the world—Tokyo, Chicago, London, Manila—where violent confrontations with police in subsequent weeks, most famously in Oakland, would keep the movement in the news. In New York, the original encampment—now with tents, electricity, wireless Internet access, and a kitchen that offered free meals—continued to grow, but the amenities began to attract growing numbers of homeless people, drug users, and criminals. Protesters tried their best to keep the peace by increasing the number of security and sanitation volunteers.

RAYMOND W. KELLY | The demonstrators had expanded their footprint. Their plan was to bring in even larger tents. You couldn't walk through the aisles. There was kerosene and gasoline being used to fuel their generators.

RUSSELL SIMMONS | It was nothing but tent. A third of those tents were homeless people. Some of those homeless people, or homeless families, were inspired and became part of the movement. Also, there were people with mental-health problems. The oc-

cupiers tried to feed them, clothe them, and educate them. But it ultimately proved to be a burden that was damaging because the media, like the *New York Post*, would take their erratic behavior or violent behavior and would assign that to the protest.

From the New York Post, October 26: "Newly sprung ex-cons and vagrants roused from other parks are crashing the Occupy Wall Street protest, where gourmet meals are free and boozy, drug-fueled parties are on tap."

RAPHAEL ROSARIO | You had kids who used to hang out at the ferry

Computer technician; married with five children [terminal—about six blocks south]; for years it's been a magnet for kids to hang out and drink and smoke a little pot. And they all wished they had a little tent somewhere to lay a girl. And all of a sudden this utopia opened up where there was free food and clothes, and they're giving out tents. It was heaven for them.

RAYMOND W. KELLY | [On October 28] the Fire Department went in to take out the generators. Generators started popping up again, and we were taking them out on a regular basis. And there were obviously concerns from the community. There was a lot of drumming going on. There were violations of the noise code, and complaints about people defecating and urinating in the neighborhood.

RUSSELL SIMMONS | The police were dropping Rikers Island people [recently released from the famed New York City jail complex] right down the block. Those people had nothing to do with Occupy. And if somebody was sleeping in any park nearby, the police would say, "Go sleep over there. There's food." They were directing people there. So that sped up the process.

RAYMOND W. KELLY | We have had no proof of that [accusation] at all. I asked Russell Simmons, who had been putting it out there, "Tell us where [this is happening]." No one could show us an example of it happening. If you're going to have a demonstration that attracts media attention around the world—and you're going to give out free food and you have tents—guess what: you're gonna become a mecca for homeless people. This is just common sense. You don't need the police directing them there. And yet the police were blamed for this. That's totally unfair.

KEEGAN STEPHAN | One night the city raided the camp and took away all the gas generators. It was right before that big nor'easter on Saturday [October 29]. There were 40 cases of hypothermia

Bicycle mechanic; member of Occupy Wall Street sustainability committee

that night. People thought it was fucked up and were looking for answers. Occupy Boston said that they had five bike-powered generators that they could get there the next day. Somebody from M.I.T. who was at Boston came down with supplies and helped us build a ramshackle system made out of wood but that actually charged batteries.

BRENDAN BURKE | The movement was be-

Truckdriver, Occupy Wall Street security volunteer coming about taking care of people in a park rather than holding Wall Street accountable for crimes against our Constitution. My personal opinion was that we'd done the park. We occupied it and held it with class and dignity. It smelled fine. It was mellow. I never saw a rat. But at some point it had to transform into something else.

KALLE LASN | The original idealism had been compromised by these homeless people. We lost the narrative. It's a bit like falling in love. You have these incredible first few weeks and then things change. It just felt like that first idealistic, magical phase was coming to a close. And not only that, but winter was approaching.

V. "A Punch and a Kiss"

On the evening of November 14, Adbusters sent an e-mail to subscribers urging the protest to declare victory and to put less emphasis on occupying parks. "[Let's] dance like we've never danced before and invite the world to join us," they wrote. "Then we clean up, scale back and most of us go indoors while the die-hards hold the camps. [We'll] use the winter to brainstorm, network, build momentum so that we may emerge rejuvenated with fresh tactics, philosophies, and a myriad projects ready to rumble next Spring." Hours later, in the early morning of November 15, hundreds of New York City police officers with riot shields and helmets began assembling around Zuccotti Park.

RAYMOND W. KELLY | We went in at one A.M. The notice was given: "We need you to evacuate the property. You're going to have to take all your personal gear with you." Anything that wasn't taken would be, in essence, abandoned. We gave them 45 minutes before any property was taken.

KEEGAN STEPHAN | I went to a Time's Up [a bicycle activist group] meeting. We got an early call. We all left on our bikes, just flew down there. The police were already blocking off a block north of Zuccotti Park. You could see the lights they had; you could see the sound cannon moving

through. You could see people being arrested and thrown into buses.

RAYMOND W. KELLY | A core group of people went to the middle of the park and locked arms. Police didn't do anything to disturb them. They were free to get up and leave.

KEEGAN STEPHAN | All the possessions were being thrown into garbage trucks and compacted. I kept trying to go through [to retrieve the energy bikes], and they kept grabbing me and throwing me out. I threw my hands in the air and started to walk away, and one of the officers just lost it after dealing with me for too long and threw me to the ground. Then a bunch of them jumped on me and threw me into the paddy wagon.

RAYMOND W. KELLY | These were tumultuous situations. Police are human beings. Did

RAPHAEL ROSARIO | I spent the night [after the raid] at Middle Collegiate Church. I don't know what I'm going to do. I may just wind up staying [in shelters] for a while. You know how there are certain things you feel you have a once-in-a-lifetime chance to be a part of? I've never felt more right about anything I've ever done.

Protesters were allowed into the park later that afternoon, but they were required to pass a security checkpoint and were not allowed to bring in tents or sleeping bags. Over the following weeks, protesters continued congregating in the park, but in much smaller numbers. At any given time, there would be a few dozen people there, huddling together to stay warm. On November 16, an Adbusters briefing recommended using the winter to regroup and prepare for a "Spring Offensive," but it was unclear if anyone would heed their advice.

JOAN BAEZ | There's a wonderful element in this movement that we didn't have: there wasn't too much fun back then. There's a lighter spirit now. I don't know why that is, but it's just lovely.

MAX | What is Occupy Wall Street to me? It's the grown-up equivalent of sort of a mass tantrum. Which isn't to say that sometimes temper tantrums don't have some sort of root cause. But they're not necessarily the best way of getting what you want and achieving anything productive.

MOHAMED A. EL-ERIAN | I think when we step back in 20 or 30 years, we're going to see that Occupy Wall Street was a signal of a massive multi-year adjustment. At the end of all of

“THE PARK IS SYMBOLIC NOW; IT'S IN THE LEXICON AND IN THE CULTURE. THE PROTEST IS BIGGER THAN THAT.” —BRENDAN BURKE

we have some over-reaction? Probably. Was there instigation [by protesters]? Absolutely. People were in [the officers'] faces calling them names. We had a line of [police] scooters pushed over. I've been involved with police work for many years. It never goes with absolute precision, particularly where people want to have a confrontation that can generate a reaction from the police. Sometimes you have an over-reaction.

SANDRA NURSE | I didn't cry [when the raid was happening]. I was trying to put aside the emotional loss that I felt and just help everyone else.

KEEGAN STEPHAN | I'm just devastated that we lost the park. I just loved the space and loved the people there.

People felt like they had a voice again because we had that space. I don't know if it's going to continue to happen if we don't have that space. We'll see. I hope it does. I hope we retake the space.

BRENDAN BURKE | The raid was a punch and a kiss. It's a punch because the park got taken.

It's a kiss because now the narrative is back on Wall Street. It's not about policing people. Sex abuse, drug abuse, sickness—that's all gone. Thank God. The park is symbolic now; it's in the lexicon and in the culture. The protest is bigger than that. People who want to hang on to Zuccotti Park will hang on to it.



Joan Baez
Folksinger.

JOAN BAEZ | Occupy Wall Street is crazy, and that's part of the glory of it, as long as they get their hands on the reins. It was clearer to us [in the 1960s] what we were fighting for.

There's been a lot of stupid behavior. The protesters need to respect Mayor Bloomberg. You don't get to shout, "Fuck you, Mayor Bloomberg." It shows you don't have respect for human life.

JEFFREY SACHS | I've seen in my classes over the years this intensity of a desire to fix things. There's a lack of the cynicism that is so pervasive in my generation. I subscribe to the idea that there are these long waves of American history and we're due for one.

this, it's my deep belief that we're going to end up with a better balance between labor and capital, between finance and the rest of the economy, and between current and future generations. The reason why this is a youth-driven movement—like the Arab Spring—is that the young people realize that their future was mortgaged in order to allow some other sector of society to enjoy a standard of living beyond what they deserved.

MICHAEL LEVITIN | It's already starting to affect politics. Look at the way they broke out the congressional

budget report, into the 1 and the 99 percent. It's our fucking Congressional Budget Office! Whether or not Obama wants to admit it, it's helping him. The irony is we're only here because of our outrage that he hasn't done what we asked him to do.

PAT | I've never been involved in activism, not even in the Vietnam War era. I guess I was too busy trying to be the perfect suburban housewife. I have a kid in his late 20s; he lives in Las Vegas and he's laughing about his mom being an activist. He sent me the mask with a message: "Go cause trouble." □