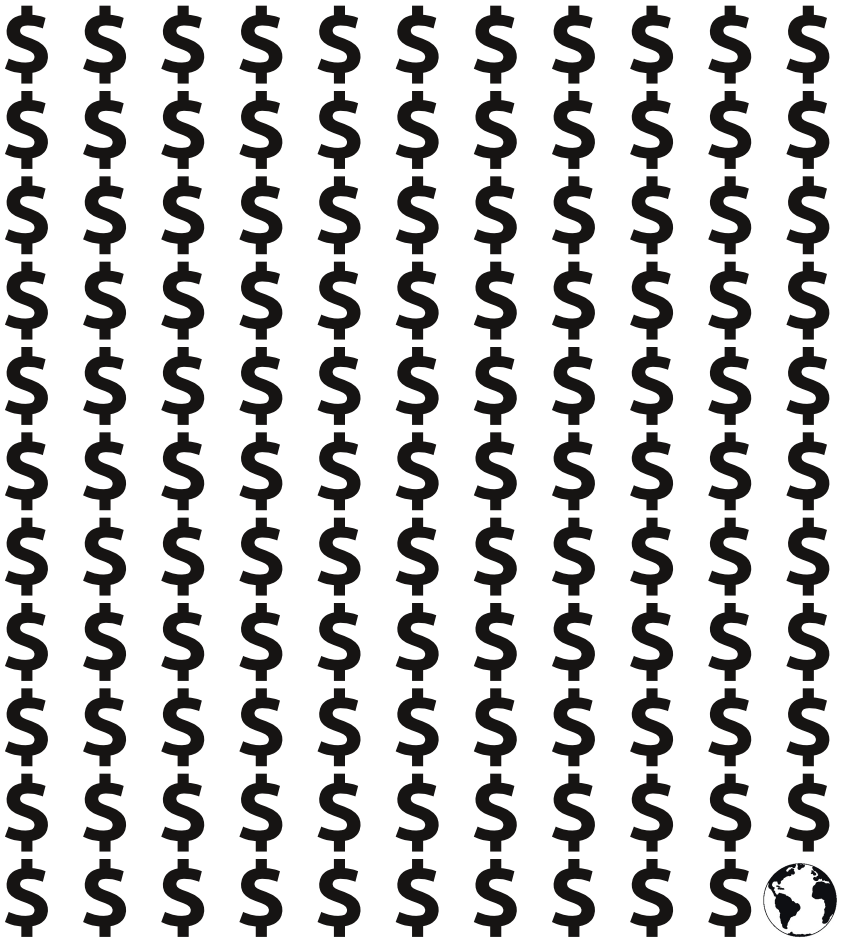


It's a

# Good Day to Face the Hard Things

beta / october 16 2011



# O C C U P Y M N

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Texts by Gerald Prokop except where otherwise indicated.

The title was taken from the song "Take Your Medicine" by Cloud Cult.

Remove staples and run through the copier's feeder as a double-sided copy to print and redistribute.

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## Preface and Licensing

I wanted to publish a printed document to this movement that centered around ideas rather than the logistics and news of the movement itself. Mostly this has to do with my own perspective: at this stage in my life I have taken to becoming a self-directed, non-institutional, DIY graduate student. I declared by current focus project in philosophical anthropology, and as this movement hit I was starting to zero in on philosophy, Marxism and ethics.

I envision this not as a magazine that will have one issue after another, but as a continual publishing project where I will put out new versions as the need arises. Expect the next issue to have some of the same content as well as new content.

All of my writing in this publication is licensed under the Creative Commons. Everything I publish will also be available on my blog, *Quelquechose*, which is at [www.geraldprokop.com/blog](http://www.geraldprokop.com/blog).

For now I am publishing this zine loosely under the GNU/Open Source Software model of licensing. I don't think there is an official license of this type, but I don't know. Basically, feel free to copy and distribute as you wish. Do not charge for it except for covering copying expenses. Publish it online if you want.

Feel free to take things out or add things and publish your own "version." Just leave all the essays intact and give credit where it's due. I ask that you not publish under the imprint of Prokiev Projects and Publishing if you are doing this, as I would not be in a position to receive correspondence about it. If you are simply copying and distributing, you can keep my contact information.

As for this version, I am putting this out as a beta or test version. I threw this together in the past week and may still go back and make changes to the texts, expand and condense things. Feedback is welcome.

Gerald Prokop.

## To the Occupiers, Now and to Come:

*I wrote this for my blog on October 11th after my first day at OccupyMN.*

Things are organized in such a way that anyone trying to meet their needs by making an honest living must first pay into a process that abuses the common good. Both in the work that we do and the dollars we spend, power drifts away from us, only to be applied against us. This, I believe, is the real essence behind those currently occupying Wall Street in New York City, and now in cities throughout the country—of which Minneapolis is one. On October 15th, other countries are joining in.

There are very few for whom this process works in their favor. There are a lot more for whom it necessarily must work against. This is nothing new—it goes back to the days of feudalism. The promise of capitalism was the “middle class,” where one can dream big and work hard to make a meaningful life for themselves. The middle class was always an illusion, though. Capitalism is not feudalism, but only insofar as sharecropping was not technically slavery. While it seems we’re earning our keep, what’s harder to see is that the most powerful, most wealthy link in the chain has the power to take their cut off the top. It’s always been that way. What’s different now is that in 2008, those wealthy and powerful segments of our society lost at their own game. And the way this game is designed, when they lose, everyone does. Only, they lose a percentage of their bottom line and others lose everything.

This is not necessarily about greed. We are all part of the same ideological framework and we all, more or less, believe in the same fantasies. It’s easy to justify your place or demonize someone else’s, as we’re all given an ideological bag of tricks with which to do just that. We all learn that and it keeps us comfortable, apart—and functioning in the system as such. Profit, money, abstract value—however you refer to it—*is an illusion*. It’s something we made up in order to make life function in a large community. Tribes of such unmanageable size cannot do business on trust alone. But what we see now is that the illusion has become more important than trust. We cannot have that. Trust cannot be replaced.

What this is really about is respect. We are not trying to protect property, wealth or other illusions. We are trying to protect the common good. The so-called 1% are part of that common good. In fact, they need us to set things straight. This is about respecting the inherent logic of nature and the real wisdom of humanity. We need to get the message across to everyone that humanity should be trusted before fantasies.

We have the danger of falling into a moralistic, us vs. them mentality, ready to fight and spin our wheels endlessly. But the real enemy is not a “them” but an “it.” It’s made up of all the hard, dark, crystallized parts

of human nature. Our society is one big pathological defense-mechanism-turned-machine and as a result our herd mentality operates on all of our most desperate instincts such as fear, greed and envy. The so-called greedy don't create the greed, they're just really good at the greed game, and thus they get rewarded for playing. And we're taking in a backwards, mixed-up message whenever we feel guilty or small for not being "successful" enough. We need to learn, as a society, that such success is a disease; a society fueled by it needs to heal.

I'm looking forward to this thing growing and really taking shape. While I am not reproducing the means of producing my existence, I will be helping to occupy Minneapolis. I will try to get over my cultural programming and do as much as I am capable of. It's not a battle; it must be a way of life. Let's keep the conversation going. I'm sick of talking to myself about stuff like this!

## Slavoj Zizek in NYC, October 9, 2011

*Transcription of his speech in Liberty Park. The Q and A follows with questions in bold. Taken from [www.imposemagazine.com](http://www.imposemagazine.com).*

They are saying we are all losers, but the true losers are down there on Wall Street. They were bailed out by billions of our money. We are called socialists, but here there is always socialism for the rich. They say we don't respect private property, but in the 2008 financial crash-down more hard-earned private property was destroyed than if all of us here were to be destroying it night and day for weeks. They tell you we are dreamers. The true dreamers are those who think things can go on indefinitely the way they are. We are not dreamers. We are the awakening from a dream that is turning into a nightmare.

We are not destroying anything. We are only witnessing how the system is destroying itself. We all know the classic scene from cartoons. The cat reaches a precipice but it goes on walking, ignoring the fact that there is nothing beneath this ground. Only when it looks down and notices it, it falls down. This is what we are doing here. We are telling the guys there on Wall Street, "Hey, look down!"

In mid-April 2011, the Chinese government prohibited on TV, films, and novels all stories that contain alternate reality or time travel. This is a good sign for China. These people still dream about alternatives, so you have to prohibit this dreaming. Here, we don't need a prohibition because the ruling system has even oppressed our capacity to dream. Look at the movies that we see all the time. It's easy to imagine the end of the world. An asteroid destroying all life and so on. But you cannot imagine the end of capitalism.

So what are we doing here? Let me tell you a wonderful, old joke from Communist times. A guy was sent from East Germany to work in Siberia. He knew his mail would be read by censors, so he told his friends: "Let's establish a code. If a letter you get from me is written in blue ink, it is true what I say. If it is written in red ink, it is false." After a month, his friends get the first letter. Everything is in blue. It says, this letter: "Everything is wonderful here. Stores are full of good food. Movie theatres show good films from the west. Apartments are large and luxurious. The only thing you cannot buy is red ink." This is how we live. We have all the freedoms we want. But what we are missing is red ink: the language to articulate our non-freedom. The way we are taught to speak about freedom— war on terror and so on—falsifies freedom. And this is what you are doing here. You are giving all of us red ink.

There is a danger. Don't fall in love with yourselves. We have a nice time here. But remember, carnivals come cheap. What matters is the day after, when we will have to return to normal lives. Will there be any changes then? I don't want you to remember these days, you know, like "Oh, we were young and it was beautiful." Remember that our basic message is "We are allowed to think about alternatives." If the rule is broken, we do not

live in the best possible world. But there is a long road ahead. There are truly difficult questions that confront us. We know what we do not want. But what do we want? What social organization can replace capitalism? What type of new leaders do we want?

Remember. The problem is not corruption or greed. The problem is the system. It forces you to be corrupt. Beware not only of the enemies, but also of false friends who are already working to dilute this process. In the same way you get coffee without caffeine, beer without alcohol, ice cream without fat, they will try to make this into a harmless, moral protest. A decaffienated process. But the reason we are here is that we have had enough of a world where, to recycle Coke cans, to give a couple of dollars for charity, or to buy a Starbucks cappuccino where 1% goes to third world starving children is enough to make us feel good. After outsourcing work and torture, after marriage agencies are now outsourcing our love life, we can see that for a long time, we allow our political engagement also to be outsourced. We want it back.

We are not Communists if Communism means a system which collapsed in 1990. Remember that today those Communists are the most efficient, ruthless Capitalists. In China today, we have Capitalism which is even more dynamic than your American Capitalism, but doesn't need democracy. Which means when you criticize Capitalism, don't allow yourself to be blackmailed that you are against democracy. The marriage between democracy and Capitalism is over. The change is possible.

What do we perceive today as possible? Just follow the media. On the one hand, in technology and sexuality, everything seems to be possible. You can travel to the moon, you can become immortal by biogenetics, you can have sex with animals or whatever, but look at the field of society and economy. There, almost everything is considered impossible. You want to raise taxes by little bit for the rich. They tell you it's impossible. We lose competitiveness. You want more money for health care, they tell you, "Impossible, this means totalitarian state." There's something wrong in the world, where you are promised to be immortal but cannot spend a little bit more for healthcare. Maybe we need to set our priorities straight here. We don't want higher standard of living. We want a better standard of living. The only sense in which we are Communists is that we care for the commons. The commons of nature. The commons of privatized by intellectual property. The commons of biogenetics. For this, and only for this, we should fight.

Communism failed absolutely, but the problems of the commons are here. They are telling you we are not American here. But the conservatives fundamentalists who claim they really are American have to be reminded of something: What is Christianity? It's the holy spirit. What is the holy spirit? It's an egalitarian community of believers who are linked by love for each other, and who only have their own freedom and responsibility to do it. In this sense, the holy spirit is here now. And down there on Wall Street, there are pagans who are worshipping blasphemous idols. So all we need is patience. The only thing I'm afraid of is that we will someday just go home and then we will meet once a year, drinking beer, and nostalgically

remembering "What a nice time we had here." Promise yourselves that this will not be the case. We know that people often desire something but do not really want it. Don't be afraid to really want what you desire. Thank you very much.

### **Do you have any suggestions how this movement can go forward after this?**

Such a difficult question that I almost want to take the fifth ammendment. I refuse to answer it because the answer might incriminate me. All I'm saying is, and I'm sorry this will hurt some of you, that this dream of local participatory democracy is not the universal answer. Look at ecological problems. It is clear that [...] large-scale decisions will have to be made. Probably millions of people will have to be moved. New desert in Africa emerging now. Somalia, Ethiopia, and so on. How will we do this? I think that the big problem is how to implement large scale decisions without falling into the trap of strong stage power. It can be done but we, the left, should also drop certain taboos: discipline, hard work, following orders on things on which we agree can be positive and important. It's not only a carnival. The difficult part is to do the work afterwards.

Do not allow the enemy to set your agenda. That if they say, "sacrifice, work", we should just say "No, freedom, enjoyment". We should take from the enemy their own tools. Think about family values. Many left liberals react to those who defend family values by criticizing family as a conservative insitution and so on. But should we not say, "The neo-liberal economics did much more to destroy family values than all the alternative cultures put together"? It's the same with private property. We should make clear to the people that we don't have a well-functioning system which for some irrational reasons we are trying to destroy. The system is destroying itself. So we are not against democracy. We are observing how democracy, in its present political form, is gradually undermining itself. And it's a very difficult task but there is hope. You here are the hope because you know Herbert Marcuse, the old leftist, who said something very nice: "Freedom is a condition of liberation". That is to say, to be engaged in fighting for freedom, you have first to free yourself from the chains of ruling ideology.

Did you see a good Hollywood Marxist movie? John Carpenter's *They Live*, you know, where a guy finds some strange sunglasses, puts them on, and he sees the true message. For example, you have an advertisement for a Hawaii vacation, you put on the glasses, and what you see is, "Be stupid, enjoy, don't think". So whenever you read the official media, imagine yourself putting these glasses on. I remember seeing, recently, an ad to help starving children in Africa. It said, "For the price of a couple of cappuccinos, you can save this child's life." Let's put the glasses on. What you see is, "For the price of a couple of cappuccinos, we allow you not only no longer to feel guilty but even to feel as if you are really doing something about poverty without really doing anything". We have to get rid of pseudo activities. For example, organic food. It's good to buy, I buy it. But remember



what the danger. Is it not true that many of us buy it because it makes you feel good? "Look, I'm doing something to help the mother earth. I'm part of a wonderful project of humanity". You know, it's an easy way out.

Charity, for me is not the answer. You know, once I called Soros, George Soros, who I appreciate. As a person he's not bad. I call him chocolate laxative. You know you can buy a laxative which has the form of a chocolate. But chocolate is usually associated with constipation. So, first they take billions from you, then they give you half back, and they are the greatest humanitarians. Of course, we should take this kind of money. But what we should fight for is a society where this kind of charity will not be needed. So I know I didn't answer your question, maybe next time better luck.

**Americans have long been divided by the two-party system that pits us against each other over emotional issues, like gay rights, abortion. This is a divide-and-conquer strategy. If we don't let go of our differences, we'll keep butting our heads together while corporatism and the military industrial complex gut our democracy. Americans need to come together.**

I agree with what the lady said but I prefer to put it in a more combative way. The divisions that the lady mentioned, I agree with her, are false divisions. These false divisions are here to cover up the true divisions and where the true enemies are. We need even more [...?]. So let's all come together, but to fight the real enemy. When I visit another country, I am not interested in their culture—this is for UNESCO and official representatives. I'm interested in their struggles. Solidarity is not "Oh my God, we are all parts of the same great humanity". Solidarity means we are part of the same struggle. [Break for mic check: two waves of crowd echo are being used for amplification at the moment]. You know, if I were to be CIA, I would have corrupted someone like you, to change it and censor it in a slightly different way [with each echo].

**I would like your opinion on the consideration of a new form of government which relies on the structure of Anonymus.**

Let me tell you something horrible. We pretend to be leaderless. But then you look closely, and you see often a very tough hierarchic structure, and that we don't even want to admit it's hierarchy. So what I think we need a new figure of a leader who in a way admits that he is no leader. Marx said something wonderful, although wrong, about Abraham Lincoln. Marx said that in the United States, even a totally average person like Lincoln can become the leader. Marx was wrong here about Lincoln. So even an average person like Lincoln was able to do great historical acts. Maybe this is the order that we want. The leader is not anonymous but you don't need a genius to be your leader. Everyone can be [one]. And believe it or not, it can be done. Experts, they should know, but they shouldn't be given power. Power should be given precisely to the average people. If we abandon this principle, we abandon democracy.

**I've been having a lot of great conversations at this carnival. I don't consider myself to be a radical. I believe I'm of a privileged life and I have a good education. My question touches on what we already discussed. How do we have these conversations at home regarding anti-capitalism and socialism while gaining the support of people who share our ideas and beliefs? Without immediately frightening them and scaring them off? How do we have this conversation? What words?**

We live in sad times for those in power, where people are no longer afraid of Communism as an enemy. But they are getting more and more afraid of what is happening here. We are not scaring the people. Are they not a sign that people are scared? So the choice today is not: Are people scared or not? They are scared. The problem is, who will determine for them the meaning of this fear? [interruption for "mic check" of two waves of crowd echoes]. I feel with this echo, it functions a little bit like, remember that Janet Jackson scandal few years ago? Showing her breast for a second, and then your free TV adopted the Stanilist procedure in all live transmissions, you have a one second and a half delay. Sometimes I feel that this repetition in echo functions the same way.

**As somebody who's taking on a large amount of responsibility, I've heard a lot of inspiring speeches, yours is one of them. What I'm looking for is guidance in constructive movement strategy. And I don't know where to look and I don't know how to get people who are used to operating in a system who are often told what to do, to do a 180 and start taking responsibility to making a revolution happen. So my question is, where are the strategists?**

I think it's a crucial question. The only thing I can tell you is that if you want to convert them, you should do it an imminent way. You should show them how by what they are doing they are already undermining their own values. Even [...] in the long term, they are working against their own interests. Let me give you an example. Two years ago, the first wave of tea parties, I was sitting here in the United States in a hotel, watching TV, jumping between two channels. PBS, a documentary on Pete Seger. And of course on FOX TV, a report on a tea party in Texas, where there was a right wing folk singer singing a song against Washington and so on. When I compared the two singers, what surprised me, was how on abstract level, it was very similar, what they were singing. The tea party guy from Texas was also complaining how the rich guys on Wall St. and Washington are exploiting the poor working class. [...?]. They are practicing a false class warfare. Today in United States, the way to protect the interest of the rich people is to complain how the state is exploiting the poor working people. So the tragedy is that most of the tea party should be on our side. That's where we should work. They may be stupid but don't look at them as the enemy. I've now been ordered that we are closing.

## Notes on Marx and the Project of Ideology

*I'm acutely aware of right-wing polemics, so I always feel like it's dangerous to mention Marx today. The fact is that Marx theorized extensively about what is going on right now, but at the same time, merely mentioning his name leads us to an ideological trap. In the popular consciousness, Marx is synonymous with authoritarianism and the Communist State (which is not the same as the theoretical socio-political organization of communism—a distinction most people don't seem to make). The following is simply a list of points I want to make. Apologies for how they might read or flow together:*

Marxism is not an ideology—in fact Marx critiques ideology itself. Marx analyzed the concept of capital, reflecting on its history and future. Part of his importance is that he saw political economy and our social relations as interdependent. Ideology is the system of ideas that mediates how we all work in society as social subjects. To reject Marx completely is to say that political economy is autonomous and that we are free to act as social subjects independently of it. Who can seriously argue that this is true?

Marx's ideas as a whole are imperfect. To paraphrase Peter Singer, author of Marx: A Very Short Introduction: Marx created a painting of capitalism, not a photograph. There are many aspects to Marxist thought, only one of which is a call for revolution. By no means does that sum up his agenda, nor does the historical outcome of this one facet invalidate everything else he said.

Marx's thought is centered on the Hegelian concept of humanity's liberation as the goal of history. He saw that capitalism did not accomplish this, but would in fact lead to more oppression. Thus, communism is not theorized by Marx as a system of oppression, but rather as one holding the potential for freedom.

Our awareness of the mechanics of capitalism is extremely sophisticated today, in part due to Marx's influence. That is, even those in power think in Marxist terms in order to be better capitalists. Right-wing rhetoric claims that socialized medicine, welfare and other extensions of public funding push us dangerously towards communism. Marx's claim was that capitalism would gradually lead to class warfare, where the masses would overpower a rich ruling class. The presence of social programs in a capitalist economy makes more sense as a band-aid for the failures of capitalism. It's absurd that the ruling class would be building towards communism. The essence of communism is common ownership of wealth and the means of production. These things are not given up by the ruling class. What the ruling class can do, however, is create a charitable element within the system to give the illusion of security. To me, the socialist element of our society is a concession to do just this.

Ideology essentially consists of a system of messages we receive and act on. Marx theorized that these messages work so that we keep ourselves working

within the system's parameters, even to the point of unknowingly helping to build the system so that it remains oppressive. Slavoj Žižek argues that much of the time, we *do* know what our actions are supporting, but we do it anyways. This means that even though the system is the root problem, it makes us part of the problem. We then grow aware of our role as citizens, and that awareness then needs to incorporate itself back into us-as-part of the problem. Once we understand this, we will take no bullshit from anyone.

Ideology's project is to keep us functioning within a social system. Therefore, the problems arise not in *that* we are ideological, but in *how*. Ideology becomes oppressive insofar as our social relations are mediated by power. That is, the systems of power in which we function work to keep us oppressing ourselves. It is the project of ideology to keep us thinking of things such as the economy and the political process as natural and unchangeable. The phrase "you can't fight city hall" is one such example of an ideological message.

As we grow up, we are socialized to function in a human community. That is a natural and timeless process. What is not natural for us, I think, is incorporating such a large number of abstractions into our systems of thought. If not for civilization, maybe we would not have anything to call ideology—it would be very simply referred to as culture.

"Capitalism seems different [than feudalism] because people are in theory free to work for themselves or for others as they choose. Yet most workers have as little control over their lives as feudal serfs. This is not because they have chosen badly. Nor is it because of the physical limits of our resources and technology. It is because the cumulative effect of countless individual choices is a society that no one—not even the capitalists—has chosen. Where those who hold the liberal conception of freedom would say we are free because we are not subject to deliberate interference by other humans, Marx says we are not free because we do not control our own society.

...

"Economic relations appear to us to be blind natural forces. We do not see them as restricting our freedom—and indeed on the liberal conception of freedom they do not restrict our freedom, since they are not the result of deliberate human interference. Marx himself is quite explicit that the capitalist is not individually responsible for the economic relations of his society, but is controlled by these relations as much as the workers are."

Peter Singer, Marx: Very Short Introduction, pp. 91-2

# The Roles of Philosophy and Mindfulness

For the past week, I've had a question on my mind as I walk around People's Plaza, overhearing and engaging in conversations: what place does philosophy have in what is going on? We attach many different meanings to the word philosophy. Etymologically, it means "love of wisdom," but this plays out in different ways: a personal set of ideas, a system of opinions, a way of thinking, a "world view." These definitions usually constitute the meaning of philosophy in terms of one's personal wisdom, which I will discuss later. Philosophy is more acutely acknowledged as a field of discourse or an academic discipline—in a sense, as a language through which we communicate ideas and develop systems of thought between us. Specifically, philosophy is needed when we are trying to get to the heart of complex matters and the language of everyday life won't do.

As contemporary philosopher Slavoj Žižek claims, the role of philosophy is not to solve problems, but to reformulate them. How might we be looking at a problem in the wrong way, or not seeing it for what it is? What are we taking for granted and how is that keeping us from getting to the heart of the matter? As a detective might ask: who are we trusting in this case that we shouldn't be? By looking at a problem philosophically, we may gradually move from trying to solve a false problem to seeing and understanding a real problem.

When a problem must be solved, the answer is action, not philosophy. Philosophy takes patience, time and reflection. A philosophical problem is like a can of worms: while you're trying to count the worms, measure them and weigh them, they are all slithering away. In such a case, you do not want to skip the question of whether or not the lid should be replaced.

This is one problem we face in a time like this: a movement has started; we are mobilized. We are ready with our slogans, convictions and prejudices. To the casual observer, (and the press loves to jump on this) it seems a mish-mash of political causes, even though it's not hard to see that they all fit snugly together into the same puzzle. The Occupy movement is in fact defined by and unified by its pluralism. 99% of the population do not hold their fair share of political and economic power, such that individuals do not even feel in control of their own lives. As such, each individual feels constricted in different ways—although *by* the same thing. As we work to change those facts, we must see the difference within the movement as a strength—as an opportunity to get over our sense of entitlement to immediate gratification and learn how to work together.

In the conversations I've had in the past week, there is a strong emphasis on patience, listening and understanding. There is a sense of self-awareness; we know that it's too tempting and too easy to succumb to anger and self-righteousness—and we know ourselves well enough to know that doing so would be unproductive. We are holding our ground, and in so doing, we are demanding our right to take care of this thoroughly. We don't

need to storm the powers that be as quickly as possible—that is not our goal. It is our right to hold our solidarity for as long as it takes to see the problem, and then to work together and act.

Philosophy *in action* spreads out via other forms of cultural discourse. Any and all types of ideas spread more effectively in groups that foster communication. If there is one thing we are doing in common, it is this: we are gathering in public and staying there. This is important. In a society that values private property over public, the organic exchange of ideas becomes constricted. When we occupy, we work directly against that. We are reclaiming the public square, and that adds power to the ideas that circulate—philosophical or otherwise. Ideas build, and people come together.

So why am I bringing philosophy into the picture, if all I mean to say is that there are lots of ideas floating around? It is simply because I see the world that we want to change as being philosophically very complicated. We need to see that world for what it is. Seeing the big picture will sometimes mean letting go of the bit of it that we're fixated on. We may be so hell-bent on a particular piece of action that we fail to see how it plays a role in a more common problem. Also, I want us to challenge ourselves. Let's not just talk about procedure, schedules, and agendas. Let's break the problems down. Let's not just try to convince each other what we believe, but let's also try to teach each other *why* we believe what we do. With a new, dynamic social environment, now is the time to apply philosophy so it can lead to more than just interesting arguments.

Paragraphs ago, I mentioned philosophy as a product of one's personal wisdom. If the role of philosophy in the acute sense is to reformulate problems rather than find solutions, it is the role of philosophy in this broader sense to do just the opposite: to answer questions, guide action, and collaborate on solutions to what we see as a real problem. The common roadblock here is our attachment to our own individual perspective.

Just as we must cultivate patience and open-mindedness as people when participating in cultural exchange, we must also be mindful from within as we participate in our own individual mental universe. The seeds of the change we want are within all of us. As individuals, we need to see those; as a community, we need to cultivate them. To do this, we all must be flexible. Often we find ourselves arguing or getting frustrated out of attachment to very specific ideas. It can be hard to let those ideas go to build a connection. Being flexible as such doesn't mean that we are compromising ourselves. The seed is the same. It will not change. Loosening judgments and egos will lead us to see what we have in common. And we will not be hindered by what we, as individuals, hold in private. This takes looking inward but acting together. It takes humility and curiosity in knowing ourselves and our world. We all have our wisdom, but this society is a monster that corrupts everyone. Our anger, resentment, hatred, greed and envy are poisons to that wisdom; mindfulness is the practice of not having such things control us.

Mindfulness is rooted in the Buddhist philosophy. It is a way of being where one experiences what is happening without judgment.

Something like anger, when judged, is negative. Thus we follow the cue to either act in a destructive way or repress the feeling itself. But denying our experience does not make it go away. By experiencing but not judging, something like anger becomes a warning light that says: “Alert! Something is wrong!” In mindful practice, we use our wisdom to decide how to act when given such a message.

In my mind, the world we are seeking to create would engage a societal level of mindfulness. As things are, greed and resentment become societal emotions. We will not get rid of greed and resentment, but we can teach each other to set such things aside for long enough to act from a societal wisdom.

On the Buddhist path, you encounter your habitual responses which keep you in the cycle of suffering. An unenlightened society is the same way. As one begins to meditate, a common experience is for them to have a sense of “heightened neurosis.” This is the mess within, which we are able to ignore by being mindless and habitual. Looking deeply into yourself for the first time, the mess is all you see. This is analogous to the stage that society is in right now. We are surprisingly self-aware. But we are a mess because we haven't yet used our self-awareness to change what we do. We know we are destroying the planet, but continue doing more or less the same things. On the Buddhist path, a way out of habitual action is to first resolve to do something *different*. We use our wisdom in hard times to experiment, and we must remain curious as we go through that process, as we know what we don't want to do: we don't want to be trapped forever.

# Statement on Occupy Wall Street by Ralph Nader

*From www.prnewswire.com*

The frustration seen in the protests on Wall Street over the past few weeks demonstrates a widespread and growing citizen discontent with the two political parties in Washington, D.C. and with a political system that is dominated by corporate interests.

It is time for citizens to push their elected officials to break the corporate stranglehold on our economy. Congress should start by enacting a financial speculation tax that would help curb the wheeling and dealing on Wall Street and that could raise hundreds of billions of dollars in revenue to help with the our country's economic recovery.

Congress has done more to bail out Wall Street than Main Street. Wall Street crooks have avoided penalties and prosecution and continued to receive bonuses and excessive compensation while pensions and savings have been looted.

Wages have remained stagnant while the largest corporations and executives have seen record profits and bonuses year after year. Congress has done little in the face of a staggering – and growing – income inequality in this country, where the top 1 percent of the population has financial wealth equal to the combined financial wealth of the bottom 95 percent of the people.

And Congress has done nothing either to disclose or stem the flow of millions of corporate dollars into the electoral process. Corporate Political Action Committees are corrupting the electoral process and blocking the voices and concerns of millions of people.

These are not the signs of a healthy democracy. Those taking part in the "Occupy Wall Street" protests and in similar protests cropping up across the country are working hard to make their voices heard. It is way overdue for the President and Congress to listen.



# 62 Green Candidates Endorse “Green New Deal”

*Press From [www.greenchange.org](http://www.greenchange.org)*

Sixty-two Green Party candidates nationwide today called for a “Green New Deal,” to cut military spending by at least 70%, provide single-payer universal health care, make tuition free at public universities, create millions of new green jobs, abolish corporate personhood, ban usury and legalize marijuana.

Green candidates calling for the Green New Deal include ten candidates for governor, nine for the U.S. Senate and seventeen for the U.S. House of Representatives.

“The Green New Deal is a complete break from the failed policies of the Democratic and Republican parties that have led us to economic and environmental disaster,” said Gary Ruskin, co-founder of Green Change, a national political organization.

“The Greens will pick up the New Deal torch the Democrats have dropped, reclaim the goals they have abandoned, such as job creation through public investment and single-payer health care, and expand the goals to include a sustainable green economy,” said Howie Hawkins, Green candidate for governor of New York.

These are the ten planks of the Green New Deal:

- \* Cut military spending at least 70%
- \* Create millions of green union jobs through massive public investment in renewable energy, mass transit and conservation
- \* Set ambitious, science-based greenhouse gas emission reduction targets, and enact a revenue-neutral carbon tax to meet them
- \* Establish single-payer “Medicare for all” health care
- \* Provide tuition-free public higher education
- \* Change trade agreements to improve labor, environmental, consumer, health and safety standards
- \* End counterproductive prohibition policies and legalize marijuana
- \* Enact tough limits on credit interest and lending rates, progressive tax reform and strict financial regulation
- \* Amend the U.S. Constitution to abolish corporate personhood
- \* Pass sweeping electoral, campaign finance and anti-corruption reforms

Green Change is a national political organization based in San Rafael, California. We aim to build the Green political and cultural movement in the United States. For more information, see [www.greenchange.org](http://www.greenchange.org).

