Occupy Wall Street Statement

As we gather together in solidarity to express a feeling of mass injustice, we must not lose sight of what brought us together. We write so that all people who feel wronged by the corporate forces of the world can know that we are your allies.

As one people, united, we acknowledge the reality: that the future of the human race requires the cooperation of its members; that our system must protect our rights, and upon corruption of that system, it is up to the individuals to protect their own rights, and those of their neighbors; that a democratic government derives its just power from the people, but corporations do not seek consent to extract wealth from the people and the Earth; and that no true democracy is attainable when the process is determined by economic power. We come to you at a time when corporations, which place profit over people, self-interest over justice, and oppression over equality, run our governments. We have peaceably assembled here, as is our right, to let these facts be known.

They have taken our houses through an illegal foreclosure process, despite not having the original mortgage. They have taken bailouts from taxpayers with impunity, and continue to give Executives exorbitant bonuses.

They have perpetuated inequality and discrimination in the workplace based on age, the color of one's skin, sex, gender identity and sexual orientation.

They have poisoned the food supply through negligence, and undermined the farming system through monopolization. They have profited off of the torture, confinement, and cruel treatment of countless animals, and actively hide these practices.

They have continuously sought to strip employees of the right to negotiate for better pay and safer working conditions. They have held students hostage with tens of thousands of dollars of debt on education, which is itself a human right.

They have consistently outsourced labor and used that outsourcing as leverage to cut workers’ healthcare and pay. They have influenced the courts to achieve the same rights as people, with none of the culpability or responsibility.

They have spent millions of dollars on legal teams that look for ways to get them out of contracts in regards to health insurance. They have sold our privacy as a commodity.

They have used the military and police force to prevent freedom of the press.

They have deliberately declined to recall faulty products endangering lives in pursuit of profit. They determine economic policy, despite the catastrophic failures their policies have produced and continue to produce.

They have donated large sums of money to politicians, who are responsible for regulating them.

They continue to block alternate forms of energy to keep us dependent on oil.

They continue to block generic forms of medicine that could save people’s lives or provide relief in order to protect investments that have already turned a substantial profit.
They have purposely covered up oil spills, accidents, faulty bookkeeping, and inactive ingredients in pursuit of profit.

They purposefully keep people misinformed and fearful through their control of the media.

They have accepted private contracts to murder prisoners even when presented with serious doubts about their guilt.

They have perpetuated colonialism at home and abroad.

They have participated in the torture and murder of innocent civilians overseas.

They continue to create weapons of mass destruction in order to receive government contracts.

To the people of the world, we, the New York City General Assembly occupying Wall Street in Liberty Square, urge you to assert your power.

Exercise your right to peaceably assemble; occupy public space; create a process to address the problems we face, and generate solutions accessible to everyone.

To all communities that take action and form groups in the spirit of direct democracy, we offer support, documentation, and all of the resources at our disposal.

Join us and make your voices heard!

*The statement issued from Zuccotti Park, by the general assembly, at Occupy Wall Street.*
Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek, spoke at Zuccotti Park, where the historic Occupy Wall Street events are currently unfolding. He spoke Saturday, October 8, 2011.

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 decaffeinated 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 nostaligically 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 amendment. 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 institution 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 Anonymous.**

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.
Occupy Wall Street
Distributist Review — Posted by Ryan Grant on October 17, 2011 6:12 AM

Over the last 30 years, the 1% have created a global economic system—neoliberalism—that attacks our human rights and destroys our environment. Neoliberalism is worldwide—it is the reason you no longer have a job, it is the reason you cannot afford healthcare, education, food, your mortgage.

Neoliberalism is your future stolen.

Neoliberalism is everywhere, gutting labor standards, living wages, social contracts, and environmental protections. It is “a great vampire squid wrapped around the face of humanity, relentlessly jamming its blood funnel into anything that smells like money.” It is a system that ravages the global south and creates global financial crisis—crisis in Spain, in Greece, in the United States. It is a system built on greed and thrives on destabilizing shocks.

It allows the 1% to enrich themselves by impoverishing humanity.

This has to stop!

We must usher in an era of democratic and economic justice.

We must change, we must evolve.

With this, Occupy Wall Street (OWS) launched a national “Occupy Uprising.” While the impressive formulation more or less describes a Distributist critique of the current economic system, what exactly is Occupy Wall Street? It is a spontaneous grass roots movement, which is on the one hand its strength and on the other its weakness. Its origin as a spontaneous grass roots movement is clear from the crowds it draws: Democrats and Republicans, working class people, veterans, and retirees; everyone but the top 1% the conservative talk radio personality Rush Limbaugh defends, but then again, Rush has always been an establishment mouthpiece who simply has the gift of “entertaining.”

It is no surprise, however, that the wealthy—who have no concept of what it is like to work—shockingly have nothing good to say about OWS. “If you’re not rich, blame yourselves,” was the response from Herman Cain, former Federal Reserve tycoon and 2012 presidential hopeful. Indeed, this response is a clear example of what some do not understand about the spirit and motivations behind OWS. The protestors are not mad because they are not rich, but because they can’t subsist. They stand against giving away their hard-earned money to the likes of Mayor Michael Bloomberg, Ben Bernanke, and the financial firms on Wall Street.

Protestors have also shown an amazing and resilient adaptability. They have randomly, yet efficiently, managed to set up a cafe with free Wi-Fi, manage trash and clean up their New York City park headquarters with environmentally safe cleaning products to address the city’s concerns. To someone like myself who has witnessed out of control riots in the United States and Europe, or has watched the Greek riots and the London riots streaming on the Internet, this is quite impressive. What we are witnessing is common and hardworking people demanding not wealth, but subsistence, and the pleas of OWS protestors have taken Occupy protests nationwide. On 15 October every major city had occupy movements moving in, waking up the masses. OWS is also hitting countries as far away as Thailand. In a word, this is a powerful movement.
On the other hand, while OWS has organizers, it is a radically diverse movement that does not have concrete goals. This creates a problem. Without an organized and internal vision, the protests cannot effectively produce any coherent effect. As with the Tea Party, it will be simply co-opted by the establishment, the corporations and the banks. Case in point: Ben and Jerry’s, which is actually owned by a Dutch company, have “endorsed” OWS. Why are corporations beginning to endorse OWS? For the very same motivations that the OWS exists to protest: they can make some money. This is only the beginning. The media is also specifically ignoring protestors with anti-bank messages and instead come up to Michael Moore-type protestors and only airing messages that are more in line with our current President’s agenda.

Without plans for managing the OWS protest and what demands to sign onto, big business and big government will step in and choose the agenda for the protestors. It’s a classic trick going back to Caesar dressing like a commoner during the Saturnalia, or Lafeyette putting the tri-color French Revolution symbol on the King’s hat at Versailles to calm down the mob. It’s an old trick and it has worked in this country for the populist movement and may very well work again.

What ought OWS to do? It needs to adopt a Distributist platform of local accountable government, local business, local infrastructure, local banks, and justice. The Distributist plan is the only one that cuts across liberal and conservative lines; it is the only plan that defends our sovereignty, encourages jobs of our own, and subsistence. Some people will be rich in a Distributist economy, but Distributism doesn’t aim on being rich. It aims on private, productive property. If OWS took on its platform demands for more access to productive property, more access to subsistence, more access to living wages and investment in America, rather than market fundamentalism and the gambling of Wall Street and the big banks, of traders who “dream of recessions” so they can make money, then there would be a coherent message that is neither Left nor Right, nor in this anomalous concept of the “center,” but rather just.