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The power of the 99%

By Joelle Fishman

A new social movement is rising up in our country out of years of outrage, heart-break, pain and anger at trying to make ends meet while CEOs and billionaires whistle all the way to the bank.

The extreme wealth gap has locked young people out of the promise of the American Dream for a good education and a decent job in a sustainable future, and consigned children to poverty.

“We are the 99%” “Tax the Rich” and “Jobs Not Cuts” are rallying cries that can be heard from Wall Street to K Street and in public squares from coast to coast.

At the Take Back the American Dream conference held in Washington, D.C. this month, a multi-racial gathering of grass roots folks from Wisconsin and Ohio, Montana and Oklahoma, Arizona and Alabama and all parts of the country hammered out their priorities, embraced Occupy Wall Street and wove together the largest social movement in recent times to Rebuild the Dream.

The impact of this movement on the 2012 elections can determine the future direction of our country. Will decades of corporate-driven policies aimed at limiting the role of government and leaving people “on your own” be rejected? Or will extreme, reactionary anti-union, racist, dog-eat-dog policies have their day?



Rep. Jan Schakowsky, D-Ill., echoed many others at the conference when she said, “Our country is at a crossroads, and we are at the frontline of a battle for our future. Our agenda is patriotic, true and practical. It is supported by the majority in the country. We need to inspire participation everywhere”.

The newly born American Dream Movement includes MoveOn with five million members, the AFL-CIO with 12.2 million members, SEIU with 2.1 million members, U.S. Student Association representing over four million students at 400

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campuses, the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights including over 200 organizations, and many long-standing women’s, immi-

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grant rights, LGBT, peace, environment and pro-democracy groups.

This movement emerges out of the epic battles in Wisconsin and Ohio to preserve union rights and collective bargaining for workers. It emerges out of an intensive summer of organizing and pressure on members of Congress for jobs not cuts, including the Congressional Black Caucus and Congressional Progressive Caucus jobs hearings and listening tours, and the roll out of the Contract for the American Dream.

“These are challenging and controversial times,” said Rep. Barbara Lee, D-Calif., “The Tea Party in Congress is playing with democracy. Our movement is about taking back democracy.”

Instead of being intimidated by the charge of “class warfare” the new movement understands that it is vicious corporate class warfare that the people of the country are up against.

“Bring it on,” said AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka to a roar of applause. “We are facing pain, loss and reversal of progress. We the people are angry,” he said placing the challenge, “Where will the anger go? Extremism? Or to build a future?”

Trumka called for “a massive movement for

jobs to turn the country right side up,” saying, “What unites us is so much greater than anything that divides us.”

The Contract for the American Dream reflects what a majority of people in the country support according to polls: large scale job creation to put people to work and meet community needs, funded by taxing the rich, ending the wars and bringing the money back to aid municipalities.

“These are majority opinions,” declared Senator Bernie Sanders, I-Vt.

While alienation from the entire political system is often expressed by the Occupy participants, that alienation is more specifically a rejection of the influence of money in politics and the Supreme Court’s decision in Citizens United establishing “corporate personhood.”

Sitting out the elections would be completely self-defeating. Without bringing the power of the movement to bear on the elections, and inspiring millions to overcome voter suppression, the vicious corporate class warfare taking place now will only get worse.



Joelle Fishman writes for the People’s World.

Alabama is no “sweet home”

By PW Editorial Board

The fear and panic in Alabama has become a nightmare for immigrant families now living under the state’s strict anti-immigrant law. But the worst aspect of the measure is taking a serious toll on the state’s schoolchildren.

Last month, U.S. District Judge Sharon Love-lace Blackburn upheld major provisions of the new law, which went into effect immediately. The law was passed by large margins in both chambers of the Republican-led legislature and signed by Alabama’s GOP governor.”

The law authorizes police to detain people “suspected” of being undocumented immigrants when stopped for any reason.

The terror of immigration enforcement is now in effect in the Alabama classroom. It’s traumatizing the most vulnerable members of our society, our children. Despite Alabama’s deep history of civil rights struggles, the state has now become the first to officially legalize racial profiling.

The day after the court ruling, over 2,400 Latino students in Alabama were recorded absent, or about seven percent of the 34,657 enrolled statewide.

Students like Jose, a 16-year-old undocu-

mented immigrant originally from Mexico and now living in Pelham, says he’s afraid to travel to and from school. “A policeman could arrest me just because of the color of my skin,” he told Reuters. “I have to be afraid of my teachers, the people I look up to.”

Meanwhile, the estimated 75,000 to 160,000 undocumented immigrants living in Alabama are fleeing.

The horror of this unconstitutional law legalizing the separate and unequal treatment of Latinos and immigrants must be stopped.

Images of immigrant families in hiding, fearing for their lives and going underground, recall the ugly ghosts of Nazi branding of Jewish families (and others) with the infamous yellow star, an act that preceded mass round ups and concentration camps.

There is no exception for such an inhumane and un-American enforcement and we urge Alabama lawmakers and the federal courts to reject such treatment. We cannot allow Alabama’s courageous civil rights history to be rolled back. The racist criminalization and demoralizing law must end. Living in fear under the Alabama law is not our America. We are better than that.

Living in fear under the Alabama law is not our America.

Occupy Wall Street blocks eviction attempt

By John Wojcik

After a firestorm of protests that involved hundreds of thousands of online petitions, signatures and phone messages to New York's Mayor Bloomberg, and the arrival in lower Manhattan overnight of thousands of Occupy Wall Street supporters, a threatened "clean up" eviction of the demonstrators was postponed Friday morning.

Yesterday, Bloomberg had threatened that the city would use force if necessary to evict the protesters who have been camped in the privately owned Zucotti Park for nearly a month. Bloomberg said the eviction was necessary to "clean up" the park and that the protesters would be allowed to return, but under strict rules. The rules he put forward would have, in effect, shut down the round-the-clock protest.

As soon as the threat was announced, thousands of demonstrators began a highly publicized clean-up of the park showing the national media that they have been taking good care of the area throughout the occupation.

MoveOn.org and the AFL-CIO cranked up an enormous on-line and email campaign to fight the threatened eviction. In just two hours, more than 20,000 signed the AFL-CIO petition calling on Bloomberg to respect the First Amendment rights of the demonstrators.

Vincent Alvares, president of the New York City Central Labor Council, rushed to City Hall where he met with Bloomberg, urging the mayor to allow the demonstrators to remain in the park.

AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka denounced the threatened closing of the park: "It is clear that what is being threatened in Zucotti Park is nothing but silencing the voices and stomping out the rights of Americans. The AFL-CIO stands



with Occupy Wall Street and the 99 percent of Americans just trying to level the massively unequal playing field."

Representatives of the real estate firm that owns the park met with Occupy Wall Street supporters early this morning and reached an agreement to develop a clean-up campaign that would not include forcible eviction.

The victory was celebrated by everyone in the encampment today.

People camped out in the park note that they have been cleaning the park since the protests began. They have formed an official Occupy Wall Street Sanitation Operation.

The National Nurses United announced today, meanwhile, that it will set up a first aid and medical station in Zucotti Park to provide basic medical assistance to the demonstrators. The medical center will be staffed by RNs who are members of the union.

The nurses say they will be establishing similar medical centers in other cities where the Occupy Wall Street protests are growing.

The victory was celebrated by everyone in the encampment today.

Message from Occupy Missoula

By Diane Keefauver

As compared to New York City, we in Missoula, Mont., are a sleepy little town of about 60,000 people. Saturday morning not much happens here. Our farmers market at Caras Park is where we meet Oct. 8.

I cross the bridge over the Clark Fork River and see about 20 people gathered near the Fish. Within the next 15 minutes, we swell to 400 or 500 people and children.

Union people hug the young professionals and the small business people. Democrats wave to Republicans. Baby boomers hug students. Anarchists hug everyone. We are so happy so many of us showed up to support Occupy Wall Street, creating Occupy Missoula. The downside is we are all sick and tired of taking it. We have lost our jobs, our self-respect, our patience. We have worked so hard and we still lost our retirement and our homes. This is our chance to speak out, even though we were taught to follow the rules, and not make trouble.

After we rant and rave, we decide on a course of action by consensus. We march down Higgins Avenue to the Missoula County Courthouse, chanting slogans - "the people united will never be defeated" - waving multiple signs "- Tax the Rich Feed the Poor" and "Peace is the Only Answer" or "Bail Out Students not the Banks." Some of us just had to march in the streets to catch the attention of our sleepy little town.

Thirty of us got tents and sleeping bags to spend the night on the courthouse lawn. By morning a hundred people had joined us, and people kept coming with tents, blankets and food.

Did anyone doubt that our cause was righteous? We all watched as an eagle slowly circled o'er us - and knew it was.

Vuelven a huelga de hambre presos de California

Por Dan Margolis

Dicen algunos de los hombres que esta vez están listos a morir porque creen que de todas maneras ya los están matando poco a poco".

Esta cita proviene de un partidario de Solidaridad con la Huelga de Hambre de los Prisioneros, una coalición establecida en apoyo a los presos huelgistas en el sistema penitenciario de California. Reiniciaban los presos el 26 de sept. una huelga de hambre que se había suspendido y que ahora está en su segunda semana.

"Esta es la mayor huelga de presos de cualquier clase en la historia reciente de EEUU," dijo Ron Ahnen, de Enfoque sobre las Prisiones de California en un informe de prensa. "El hecho de que tantos presos están participando subraya a las extremas condiciones en todas las prisiones de California así como la oportunidad histórica que ha sido ofrecido al estado de California por realizar cambios históricos".

En realidad, indican reportes que los presos se están poniendo más militantes. En la ola de la huelga en julio, se estima que participaban algunos 6.600 presos. Ahora, durante la primera semana de la huelga renovada, se reporta que participaban más de 12.000.

Comenzó la huelga en la notoria penitenciaria estatal de máxima seguridad de Pelican Bay, específicamente en su SHU, o Unidad de Dormitorios Seguros, y luego se extendió por todo el sistema, a 13 de las 33 prisiones así como a cárceles privados contratados fuera del estado.

Comenzaban los reos su huelga de hambre en primer lugar el 1º de julio para protestar las "condiciones crueles, inhumanas y de tortura de su

encarcelamiento [y] a menor el trato a presos de estatus SHU por toda California".

"Durante los últimos 10 a 40 años," declaraba un informe de prensa de la coalición de solidaridad, "miles de presos en California han sido detenidos por tiempo indefinido en [Unidades de Dormitorios Seguros] basado sobre su estatus [es decir, ser etiquetados como pandilleros, clasificación de pandillero activo basada sobre actividades inocuos de asociación, y acusaciones hechos por informantes confidenciales entre los presos] sobre el cual han sido satanizados como los peores de los peores, eso para justificar décadas de violaciones a los derechos humanos, incluso torturas sancionados por el estado con fines de quebrarles a los presos y obligarlos a servir como informantes conocidos del el estado, así poniendo a esos presos y a sus familias en serio peligro de la retribución".

Las cinco "demandas centrales" de la huelga incluyen un fin a los castigos colectivos por violaciones a los reglamentos por un solo preso, acabar con la política que bajo la cual los presos se ven obligados a transformarse en "soplones" uno a otro y a la detención de reos en las SHU por actividades pandilleras percibidas, un fin a la detención solitaria a largo plazo, "comida adecuada y nutritiva" y "programas y privilegios constructivos," tales como llamadas telefónicas semanales, una foto por año, educación, etc.

Los presos no son los únicos que critican a las cárceles de California. Una de sus demandas claves es un fin a la detención solitaria a largo plazo, medida todavía utilizada en las prisiones estatales.