

Atlanta: Mayor postpones eviction of anti-Wall Street protesters

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The Occupy Atlanta protest that began on October 7 in solidarity with the Occupy Wall Street movement in New York City is in its second week. Tents have been erected by activists in downtown Woodruff Park that has been renamed Troy Davis Park by the protesters. Troy Davis was recently executed by the state of Georgia despite overwhelming evidence pointing to his innocence. Over the past 10 days the number of tents has swelled to around 30 or 40 from a mere handful that were erected on the first day.

Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed had issued an executive order to forcibly evict the activists from the park at 5 p.m. on Monday, October 17. The activists had vowed to resist and face arrest if the mayor acted upon his order. For unexplained reasons, Reed postponed this action and has now extended his “permission” to the protesters to camp out in the park until November 7. In a statement issued on the day of the deadline, Reed claimed that his order had never been cast in stone.

Although the protesters are undoubtedly motivated by a deep sense of injustice and anger over social inequality, the movement at present is vulnerable to manipulation by the Democratic Party and other pseudo-left organizations that seek to politically neuter the movement.

The Occupy Atlanta web site describes the aim of the protest as follows:

“By joining the nationwide Occupy movement, we will focus the attention of elected officials and the voting public on the majority’s desire to take our government and country back from the big money interests which currently hold undue sway over decisions affecting us all. We are coming together in large numbers to effect this change.”

Already the Democratic Party has made attempts to corral the movement and sow illusions in Barack

Obama. On Saturday, October 15, when a rally was held in coordination with worldwide Occupy protests, the activists who marched from the park to the state capitol were welcomed by the Democratic Party front organization Moveon.org, which had set up a voter registration table next to the speakers podium.

Several speakers from this organization urged the activists to support Obama and his fraudulent “jobs plan” that is to be funded through cuts to Medicare and Medicaid. One speaker claimed that 13,000 jobs would be created in Atlanta from an anticipated \$1 billion to \$1.5 billion that supposedly would be Atlanta’s share for infrastructure improvements.

The proposals of such Democratic Party proponents are at odds with the sentiments of protesters, who have joined the protest in large part due to opposition to the deplorable social conditions that have come to dominate every aspect of their lives.

The WSWS spoke to several protesters who are actively participating in Occupy Atlanta.

Britt works as a bartender and also goes to school full-time in Atlanta. She said, “This is the first time I have seen that people have come together to redress their grievances with the governments and corporations. They are also protesting the massive lobbying power that the corporations have.”

Laughing, she continued, “I mean I cannot afford to buy my senator or my congressman. Actually, I can barely pay my bills and my student loans that I am taking out to get an education. I am entering into a job market that has absolutely nothing for me. Our parents and grandparents always told our generation that if you go to school and work really hard then your college degree will take you places and get you far.

“I see so many young people coming into the workforce that have so much creativity and energy and

who have ideas about how to better change our society, whether through green energy or social change. They cannot even find a job that provides a livable wage. The minimum wage is not a livable wage. No family can live off it or send their children to school. I see so many of the young minds of my generation going to waste.”

Britt added, “When I saw Occupy Atlanta happening, I was very amazed to see that this is where the creativity and the intellect are being displayed. This is a movement to start a dialog, where the people themselves are giving solutions to the fact that 1 percent holds the majority of the wealth in this country and well-being of the 99 percent is put second to this 1 percent over and over and over again.

“We have waited for politicians to give us answers and for corporations to provide capitalist solutions and it has failed. It has failed my parents, my generation and will fail our children too unless things change.”

Scott Brown, who works as a freelance audio engineer, is camping out in his tent along with others. He told the WSWS: “I came out because, one, it was happening and, two, because of the financial crisis that screwed over the 99 percent. That was total bullshit and nothing has changed since then.

“The so-called financial reform has not fixed the problem with the mortgage and the housing market. The same thing is going to happen in another market. We have a lot of economic disparity and we are not represented by our politicians.”

When asked if pressure is enough to effect change, he said, “Well the Tea Party did put pressure, and you can say that it did change things in the Republican Party, but not for the better. I don’t know if putting pressure is going to do anything.

“There needs to be law enforcement in the financial sector, but that did not happen. The government has done a lot to cater to them and they have destroyed our economy.”

Austin, 18, is from eastern Maryland and has decided to camp out with the protesters since arriving with his friend in Atlanta about 10 days ago. “We were travelling down South and we were supposed to meet some friends, but they blew us off,” he told us, “So we said to ourselves, since we are here what is there to do here? We heard that there was an Occupy movement here so we decided to check it out. We became very interested and we have been here for eight days now.

“This is happening because it had to happen because of the way things are. It should have happened several years ago and it is about freaking time. The system is completely broken and it needs to change.”

“If you have been reading anything, this is happening all over the world pretty much for the same reason. The ruling classes are putting profits over humanity, profits over the earth and profits over everything else. So it is the same movement. People are facing the same reality, the same oppression every day and everywhere.

“The Occupy movement is what we can do at present to show our discontent and this needs to happen everywhere. We want change immediately and this is the best way to show our discontent by making it happen everywhere.”



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