

Student march backs Occupy Boston

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On Monday afternoon, several thousand students from the Boston area came out to back the Occupy Boston movement. They rallied in Boston Common and then conducted a spirited march to Dewey Square, where protesters have operated a tent city for a week and a half, inspired by the Occupy Wall Street protest in New York City.

Carrying a wide assortment of signs and banners, students expressed their opposition to the domination of corporate America over every aspect of social life, in the form of skyrocketing tuition and student debt, home foreclosures, unemployment and war.

The *World Socialist Web Site* spoke to Allison and Michelle. “Education should be affordable to the common person,” Allison said. “I’m not sure if this protest is going to do anything about it, but if it’s possible to reform things at all, I hope this is a start.

“I think an important issue is student loans and about how inaccessible education is for the common person. And then once you’re out of school how impossible it is to actually get a job that will support you. I have a job. I love my job, but I’m not getting paid what I should be getting paid. I graduated from Boston University, in communications. I luckily don’t have loans myself, but I feel like I should be in solidarity with everyone here.”

Michelle added, “I’m \$100,000 in debt. It’s hard for me to even comprehend what that number means! We came down here last night, and you can see all the different issues people are facing. They’re here because they’re \$100,000 in debt for school, or they can’t afford their homes.”

“It’s a really diverse group,” Allison told us. “People are fighting for the homeless community, against racism. But the media is not reporting any of that. We were down at the Fed yesterday, and all the media could report about it was the police barricades. They don’t want to talk about the issues; why people are out here.”

The student protesters left the Common and wound their way down to Dewey Square, site of the Occupy Boston tent city, attracting other participants on the way. They were met there by others who had traveled to downtown Boston to show their support, including retirees, workers, high school students and others affected by the social crisis.

A contingent from Lynn United had come to protest spiraling home foreclosures in Lynn, Massachusetts. The city is one of the top 10 hardest hit communities in the state for foreclosures, with the vast majority of homeowners there underwater.

Mary Rosales, a mother of four, came to the protest with one of her children. “I’m in foreclosure,” she said. “We’ve had the eviction notice, but we’re still in the house. I’m here with my daughter Tatiana. She loves her house, and she drew a picture of it to bring down here today. We’ve been working so hard to keep the house. We’re working with an organization that tries to help keep people in their homes after foreclosure.”

Mary could not refinance her mortgage because she wouldn’t qualify because she owes more than her house is worth. “We’re trying to save our house. That’s why we’re marching.”

The Occupy Boston tent city is growing, despite indications that city authorities and the Boston Police Department would like to see it shut down. While Monday’s protest was going on, protest organizers were unloading and erecting new tents, and protesters were beginning to expand the occupation to the next section of the Greenway, private land operated by the Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Greenway Conservancy.

The WSWWS spoke to Francisco and Courtney, college students who are upset about the high cost of tuition and other issues affecting young people and society as a whole.

Francisco, a Boston College student, said, “The majority of people are here because they’re kind of tired. Congress was elected by the people and for the

people, and what's going on in Congress is not for the people at the moment. I think a lot of lobbying efforts and this corporate mentality and perspective are blurring what our Congress is actually supposed to be.

"And it's both the Democrats and the Republicans; they're not making these decisions for the people. Instead it's for corporate America, corporate interests. And that's definitely changed in the past 20, 30 years, as more people try to maximize profits. They're pumping more effort into passing more laws that benefit corporations; for instance, passing laws that allow more oil exploration and not for alternative energy."

Courtney is a nursing student at Fitchburg State. "I think college tuition and loans are ridiculously expensive," she said, "and they're going up every year. I don't think it should be that high. Every school is basically teaching you the same thing. Like Boston College, where Francisco goes, it's \$55,000 a year for tuition and room and board. That's ridiculous!"

"Let's just say it's ridiculous to put a price on something like that," Francisco added, "something that will increase the productivity of people. Education offers people ways to be able to think differently, and also to be more productive. When you're making that an impossible dream for so many high school students, how do you expect the whole population to advance? The increase in the price of college is twice as high as inflation. Tuition at my college went up 5.5 percent last year."

Courtney continued, "I go to Fitchburg State, and it was about \$15,000 last year and now it's about \$17,000. And even if you make it through college it's not a guarantee that you're going to get a job."

"I'll tell you this," Francisco said. "Half of the people who do find jobs will be working in a place that doesn't even require a bachelor's degree."

"And then we're tied down by loans for who knows how many years," Courtney added. "I'm going for nursing, so when I finish my four years I'm going to be a registered nurse. The demand for nurses goes up and down. But a lot of the places you go to, they don't want to hire new nurses if you're just out of college."

"So, what are you supposed to do? And then a lot of places will make you get a contract. So if you take the job you have to stay with them for a year or two, and if you leave before that time is up you have to pay a ton

of money. So many things are just tying us down. But we're human beings; there shouldn't be so much BS."

Chris Sturr is from Boston, but had been to Occupy Wall Street in New York. "I think people are fed up with the aftermath of the financial crisis," he said. "It's a tipping point. My sense is the reason it's so youth-dominated now here is that they realize that they're saddled with debt. And either they're not getting degrees or they're getting degrees that have no prospects for jobs in this economy."

"My sign says, 'Capitalism, let's end it, not save it.' Because I think that the Democratic Party and Paul Krugman and the *New York Times*—they are circling like vultures around this movement to try to save capitalism, to co-opt it, to save this system."

"A lot of these people here, I hope they will use this as an occasion to move on to another system. It could be bit by bit. For instance, single-payer health care. Let's get that and take it out of the capitalist market. Or education; let's first take public education and then private education out of the private capitalist market. Let's do that gradually, and pretty soon you'll have a post-capitalist society."

Later in the afternoon, a small group of protesters left Dewey Square and headed up Atlantic Avenue, the main thoroughfare that runs along the Greenway. They marched all the way to the Charlestown Bridge, where they met several hundred protesters who were already on the scene.

According to a plan most likely designed by the local unions, the protesters were to hang a sign on the bridge demanding that the government repair it, thereby creating jobs. The bridge, a dilapidated iron structure, is apparently on the list of infrastructure repair projects included in the Obama administration's phony "jobs plan."

After a standoff with Boston Police, the protest broke up and dispersed. One protester was arrested, according to local media.



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