

Support builds for Occupy Chicago protest

Our reporter
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The Occupy Chicago protest has been taking place on the corner of Jackson and Van Buran St., across the street from both the Federal Reserve and the Chicago Board of Trade, with a police presence outside both buildings and wooden barricades now lining the former.

On Thursday, the east side of Jackson was lined with protesters playing plastic drums and other instruments while chanting slogans such as “We are the 99%” and “banks got bailed out, we got sold out.” Protesters regularly received honks of support from passing motorists, including Chicago transit workers, truckers and taxis. Protesters have also set up tents for shelter and the free distribution of food, water, rain ponchos, and other supplies to participants.

Despite falling temperatures and a constant downpour of rain, the protest Thursday swelled from around 40 people in the late afternoon to twice that by early evening. Some students were seen crouched under umbrellas in the pouring rain, displaying signs and posters while multi-tasking their educational demands, completing work for their college assignments.

The grievances voiced by protesters, indicated on protest signs and in discussions, include opposition to the conditions of vast social inequality, the increasing levels of child poverty, home foreclosures, and the bank bailouts.

Charles, a middle-aged African-American man, explained why he was participating in the protest. “I have two degrees and am unable to find a job,” he said. “All the rich are concerned about is finding new ways to make money instead of finding ways to help ordinary people make money to survive ... we can’t even obtain proper housing.” He added, “All the young people

coming out of school with no jobs and all that debt. It is all set up as failure for us. There is no hope for us.”

Since the Chicago detachment of the Occupy movement began on September 23, the Chicago protest has gone from being composed largely of college students and youth to attracting broader sections of the population. Steve, 53, who is homeless, explained how he was laid off several years ago from a job at Chicago’s Navy Pier and has since become homeless and resorts to selling *Chicago Sun Times* newspapers on Jackson and Wabash in order to survive.

He described how he was attracted to the protests and the social dynamic between participants. “Everyone shares food and meals together,” he said. “In turn I try to help out picking up trash, keeping the protest area clean. I do what I can to help.”

“We live together. We eat together. Being homeless has been tough. I’d rather be in the company of other people ... we’re all in the same situation.”

While largely unseen at Thursday’s protest, there has been no shortage of attempts to co-opt the Occupy Chicago protests back into the orbit of the political establishment and the Democratic Party. On Friday, October 7, the protest’s General Assembly was graced with the presence of Rev. Jesse Jackson, who addressed the assembly meeting via microphone, encouraging the promotion of racial and identity politics and Democratic Party politics.



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