

Las Vegas: “I have so many friends and family out of work”

Roger Herman
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Over 500 people marched up and down the Fremont Street Experience in downtown Las Vegas on Saturday. The march, sponsored by Occupy Las Vegas was the second such demonstration in the space of two weeks. The first, held on October 6, saw over 1,000 occupiers marching down the Las Vegas strip.

For several hours, the march wound its way back and forth through the Fremont Street Experience (FSE), a popular tourist spot lined with casinos and a strip club. The march was legally allowed, as the FSE is officially designated as a public park.

Among the protesters was a wide mix of students, retirees, casino workers, financial service workers, teachers, the unemployed, veterans and a few union contingents.

Some demonstrators beat drums and shouted numerous slogans, many of the same slogans heard at other demonstrations around the world: “The banks got bailed out, we got sold out!”; “We are the 99 percent!”; “Whose street? Our Street!” “What do we want? Jobs! When do we want them? Now!”; and “This is what democracy looks like!”

There were numerous people who came out and either lined up along the buildings or thronged in the middle of the FSE to shout out their support for the marchers, join in the chanting, and take photos. Many joined the march. There were less than 300 in attendance when it began, and the size of the march swelled to over 500 after an hour.

Many of those at the occupy event had either taken part in the previous march, or had attended one of the nightly meetups at the UNLV Student Union or the nightly occupation taking place in front of the New York, New York Casino on the Strip.

This reporter distributed 150 copies of the leaflet “The way forward in the fight against Wall Street,” and talked to a number of people taking part in the occupation.

A casino worker in her 20s explained that she was there because “I have so many friends and family out of work and I am out here to support them.” When asked what she thought of the “no politics” stance being promulgated, she said, “That’s ridiculous. This is political.”

A loan manager said that he was there because something had to be done. The foreclosure crisis was devastating, he said, and “something had to be done, being out here is better than sitting at home on the couch being pissed.” Las Vegas has experienced among the worst housing bubbles and collapses in the country over the past decade, sending thousands of people into bankruptcy, foreclosure, and destitution.

A retired teacher said she was “tired of seeing corporations drown out the voices of 99 percent of the rest of us. This is not going to go away, and neither are we.”

A foreign student from Cameroon stated, “This needs to be an international movement—the problems are the same all over the world.”

Frankie used to be a small business owner in Portland, but moved to Las Vegas after her business was decimated by the economy. She now writes for an online publication and takes part in the nightly occupation. She explained, “We are raising awareness that all economic classes are affected by this crisis except the 1 percent. This economic system is broken, corporations are a poison, and I’m not going to stay at home and occupy my couch.”

Nina Phillips, also a nightly occupier, told the WSWS, “I’m a grandmother, and I’m disabled, so I

don't work. But both of my sons are unemployed; one is in his 20s the other in his 30s and they can't find a job.

“One of my sons is a veteran, he did a tour in Iraq, and while he may be home now, he is still in the National Guard so I have to worry about him being sent back.”

Nina described how union workers in the 1970s used to have a good standard of living, but that she doesn't see that anymore. “Things need to change, and I'm doing what I can.”



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