

Anti-Wall Street protesters camp out at Los Angeles City Hall

Kevin Martinez
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An anti-Wall Street encampment outside Los Angeles City Hall has been underway for several days, inspired by the Occupy Wall Street protests in New York.

Dozens of tents are assembled, including a first-aid tent, a library and a kitchen. A crowd of a few dozen people was holding a general assembly Tuesday afternoon.

Banners and posters read, “We Are the 99 Percent,” referring to the fact that the vast majority of the world’s population is politically and economically disenfranchised. The *World Socialist Web Site* spoke with several of the protesters.

David is a photojournalist and a student attending Pasadena City College (PCC), a public community college. “I feel like a customer, not a student,” he said. “At PCC, it’s \$25 a unit for now and it might go up to \$60 a unit. It really bothers me that a lot of colleges are thoroughly exploiting people. I get the student fees waived and that’s it, I have to pay for everything else. I’m a dishwasher. I feel like cheap labor. I work with a lot of undocumented workers.”

Shelby, a designer, said, “I’m tired of seeing my brothers and sisters suffering. I believe our democratic system has been undermined for decades. It’s not the United States of America, it’s the United States of the Corporations. And the corporations control the White House. Our votes mean nothing.”

When asked her opinion of President Obama, she replied, “I voted for Obama. I’m still hopeful, but he sold out on a lot of issues. He said he was going to take

us out of the war and he didn’t.”

She then spoke of the social crisis facing millions in southern California. “People are living in their cars. People are retired, but are coming out of retirement to support their adult children. It’s not right, not when we’re spending money on the war machine.”

Shelby added, “I’m not a socialist, but I believe in democracy.”

Abe is a freelance journalist who graduated from UC Irvine last year. He told the WSWS, “I have some friends who are participating in this. I freelance for hyperallergic.com, an arts blog. Its tagline is “art for discontents.” We deal with radical politics and ideas. I came to get a perspective on how the arts can be a huge contribution to this movement.

“I have some student loans but I don’t have it as bad as some other people. As for the future, it’s not looking so good. The universities are basically being run like a business. The UC Regents is essentially a board of directors.

“Money is passing hands in very transparent ways. Last year there was a protest in March. There was a crackdown on organizers because some students tried to occupy an administration building. The administration in conjunction with the UC Irvine police department and, I’d imagine, Homeland Security filed criminal charges against 19 students. They’re being called the “UC 19.” This is coming right after the “UC 11” (Muslim students who were arrested for protesting a speech by the visiting Israeli ambassador to the US).

“The political climate in Orange County is pretty bad,

but it shouldn't discourage students or anyone wanting to protest. If anything, we should learn from what happened and support those who are being charged."



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