Wall Street protesters: “The whole system is broken”

A WSWS reporting team
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On Friday over 3,000 people marched to New York Police Department headquarters to protest the over 80 arrests and pepper-spraying of unresisting demonstrators the week before. Dominating the march were large numbers of young people whose futures have been gravely undermined by the economic crisis and the response of the political elite to it. The World Socialist Web Site spoke to a number of them.

Xenia Ellenbogen, a student from the New School in New York City, spoke to the WSWS in Liberty Plaza shortly before Friday’s march at Police Headquarters at One Police Plaza.

“I was pretty disgusted with Officer Bologna’s pepper spraying those women when they weren’t doing anything wrong. This is while the Wall Street bankers get away with everything they are doing. I’m hoping the press coverage of Officer Bologna will reduce the police brutality. I think the more people we have protesting, the better chance we have.

“I don’t know what Obama is doing about these things. I have about had it with Obama after the execution of Troy Davis. Carrying out the death sentence against Troy Davis is inhumane and racist. The fact that the death penalty continues to exist is unethical and appalling.

“The wars that are going on are pointless. I don’t believe in killing. The fact that wars are still going on is a sad reality. I don’t think the bombing that is going on in Libya is justified on the humanitarian grounds that they claim. Using humanitarian and war in the same sentence is oxymoronic.

“I think the corporations and banks had a lot to do with the economic crisis. I don’t think there is a recovery. In my family, we lived a comfortable life before the economic crisis. Now, my dad doesn’t have the opportunity to switch jobs so he is stuck in a job he hates so he can continue to pay the mortgage. The economy I support is one where everyone would have what they need to live comfortably, and they could do what they love.

“There will be a lot of people in other states occupying places in their states like here. I think it is good we don’t have a central demand. This adds to the fact that this could be a revolution. I think it could take a revolution to change things.”

Mariah Bracken and three other students traveled up from Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond on Thursday night to join the protest.

Mariah said, “I think the police attack on the demonstration last Saturday is completely unacceptable. These are our rights. These are our rights to free speech, and nobody should interfere with these rights. I understand the police need and want to protect and keep order, but the way they are doing it is all wrong. Going into demonstrations undercover and pretending to be part of the demonstration is not fair to the people who want to speak out.

“I think conditions are going to continue with few jobs and cuts to education. We need to keep standing up, and we need to keep going. We may not get change right away. We are a generation of instant gratification, but we need to see that things take time. We need to understand our context. We need to understand our historical context and re-evaluate our situation. I do think people need to re-evaluate what they believe and what the two parties stand for.”

Jenelle Tisdale attended the demonstration to protest police brutality and show her solidarity with the Occupy Wall Street demonstrators.

"I'm still living with my parents because I can't afford to move out. All my friends are in the same situation with only a few exceptions. We all were told if you

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work hard and get an education, that would lead to a good job. But where is it? I've got experience and a college education, but there's nothing but low wage jobs.

"The whole system is broken and needs to be reformed. I don't want to stop until something happens. I think everyone needs to shut down the whole city till we get some agreement--jobs that pay, an end to the wars, basically a future for this generation and the next."

Abraham Crook and a friend came from Philadelphia to support the Occupy Wall Street movement.

"I am a student at Drexel University," he said, "where I am also working in a materials engineering coop, that is part of the engineering program. I am paying $50,000 a year just to insure myself a job after graduation. I have $60,000 in loans already and I am only in my second year.

"I see a need existing for a long time to show big business and government that we have a voice, many voices, to start saying Wall Street and their power are ruining this country. It has become a country of corporate greed instead of freedom and people's voices. I felt this almost hopelessness that things will be getting worse while the top one percent benefits and lives prosperously.

"People in Philadelphia are just finding out now about the Occupy Wall Street movement because of the media blackout, and in New York too many people do not know about it.

"The top one percent has the money. They say, it will trickle down but it never does."

Michael told us, "I found out about these protests on the Internet. And after considering the facts I decided to get involved. The facts are that these corporate bosses are getting tax subsidies all year round, despite the fact that they are earning millions of dollars per year. In the meantime, taxes have increased and will continue to increase on ordinary workers like me. There is something seriously wrong with that. They are treating us like suckers.

"I think the Obama administration is really Bush's third administration. Obama has simply allowed Wall Street to step all over him while continuing to pump billions of dollars into military activity. The Obama administration has simply failed.

"The only solution is to show the banks how serious we are about these protests by staying here indefinitely. That's what I intend to do."

Elena Spence works at a café in New York City, and has a three year old son. She explained, "I was at Occupy Wall Street last week, and I was on the march Saturday. I was netted in and couldn't get out with the women who were pepper sprayed. We were kettled in on a sidewalk near a Pizza Shop on 12th St., I believe. Kettling is being captured and controlled in the orange plastic net. The police put it around the people on the sidewalk, and we were trapped there.

"I was told at one point to get off the street. I was complying. Then I was shoved by a lieutenant with a white shirt. I have a picture of him, but I haven't zoomed in to get his name. Then after I was on the sidewalk, there were about eight officers holding the net. I went into the pizza shop and tried to hide there because I was afraid. Then I heard they were kettling us and we couldn't get out. There were at least a dozen people there including a customer and three workers. With the people kettled out on the sidewalk, there was no provocation or warning at all before the pepper spraying.

"There were four or five women who were sprayed. At this point, I was hiding against the wall until people left. I have asthma. I couldn't breathe, and I had a period of time where I hadn't been able to take a breath at all. I used my inhaler. I was terrified because I was trapped, and it was unprovoked.

"Before Saturday, I had never attended a protest like this, and I had never seen the police like this before."

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