

Oakland police shut down new Occupy encampment

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Oakland Police officers raided another occupy encampment Wednesday evening, after protestors had claimed the empty lot as a drug-and-alcohol-free “winter safe haven” for occupiers and the San Francisco Bay Area’s burgeoning homeless population.

The most recent attack on the occupy protestors is of a piece with efforts to suppress the protest movement since its inception.

In tandem with local media outlets, a host of Democratic Party mayors and local officials throughout the Bay Area have directed police to brutally attack and jail protestors, threaten them with false or trumped up charges and destroy their property. In Oakland, the suppression of protests has been led by Democratic Party Mayor Jean Quan.

The most recent police raid was conducted at the request of the owners of the roughly one-acre patch of empty asphalt where protestors had gathered. After the raid, 14 demonstrators were cited for criminal activity and one was arrested for trespassing on private property. Protestors promised that they would return to a new lot, however, explaining that many simply have nowhere else to go during the cold winter months aside from dangerous and crowded homeless shelters.

As police defend an owner’s right to unused property by removing protestors and homeless people from their impromptu protest encampments, they blatantly illustrate the ruling class’ contempt for the basic rights of the working class.

Police raids on camps have become commonplace in Oakland. Other encampments in the area have been

removed recently as well, including in San Francisco, Santa Rosa, and Berkeley.

The continued presence of encampments brings to the surface the unacceptable levels of homelessness and poverty that exist in the United States.

US Census data revealed recently that nearly half of all Americans qualify as poor or low-income. As both Democrats and Republicans work tirelessly to slash funding for social programs like food stamps, unemployment benefits, Social Security, Medicare, and other social programs, the living standards of a vast majority of Americans continue to fall.

The amount of people forced out of their homes by banks and predatory lenders has risen throughout 2011. In California, 1 in every 248 homes has been foreclosed on. A total of 1.6 million homes were in foreclosure proceedings midway through 2011. Many experts expect this number to climb through 2012, as wages remain stagnant and debt continues to accumulate.

Since the housing bubble burst, Oakland, a heavily working class city, has had one of the highest foreclosure rates in the nation. As recently as March, Oakland’s foreclosure rate was double the national average.



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