

Police attack Occupy camps in Los Angeles and Philadelphia, arresting 350

Rafael Azul

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Shortly before 1:00 am on Wednesday November 30, more than 1,400 Los Angeles Police officers, many of them in riot gear and toting rubber bullet shotguns, surrounded the Occupy Los Angeles camp at City Hall. Nearly 300 protesters were arrested in the police action.

The shutting down of Occupy Los Angeles is part of a nationwide crackdown that has led to nearly 5,000 arrests. Many of the most brutal actions have been in cities with Democratic Party mayors, including Los Angeles, which is headed by Antonio Villaraigosa, a former union bureaucrat.

Also on Wednesday, Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter, another Democrat, oversaw a police operation in that city, leading to the arrest of 52 demonstrators. The police operation was “tremendously well planned and executed,” Nutter declared.

The actions in Los Angeles and Philadelphia follow similar police raids in cities throughout the country, including New York City, where the Occupy Wall Street movement began. The actions of mayors have reportedly been coordinated with the Obama administration's Department of Homeland Security and the FBI.

Los Angeles police, rubber bullet guns drawn, methodically removed occupiers who had locked arms in civil disobedience. Police fired rounds of bean bags at occupiers who had set themselves up on trees. Those arrested are being kept in jail on \$5,000 bail, a draconian amount for the misdemeanor violation of “failure to disperse.”

Embedded with the police officers, which carried out their work with military precision, was a pool of selected reporters from the mainstream media—a well-known tactic designed to control the public's access to information. The media, along with police officials and

Villaraigosa, have sought to present the police operation as a “peaceful” and “orderly” raid.

Eyewitnesses to the events reported that as the operation was proceeding out of sight from the embedded reporters. Police used batons against independent reporters who were trying to photograph and videotape the operation. One reporter was forced out of the park after being hit in the chest with a baton.

A photographer who had just come into the area as an observer was arrested, hit with batons and had his camera stolen.

An eye-witness report by blogger Ruth Fowlers that was distributed to the media states that when protesters were dispersing, “police ran after them and started beating protestors with batons repeatedly as they were running away trying to escape. I saw about ten police hit protestors. I did not get video footage or photographs as I was running...The violence I witnessed was pretty intense. Those cops were pissed and wanted to hurt people.”

The LAPDs control of the media extended to TV helicopters. According to a report by the *Los Angeles Weekly*, which was not included in the pool of embedded reporters, local news Channel 9 stopped transmitting images from its helicopter of assembled police officers being deployed toward City Hall because of an agreement that the channel had made with the LAPD not to “reveal their tactics.” Above Solidarity Park, the LAPD imposed an air space blackout prohibiting all but police helicopters from filming.

At 1:01 am, as the operation was proceeding, Mayor Villaraigosa issued a press statement that whitewashed the operations as a defense of the right to free speech and assembly. In Orwellian double-speak, the mayor called the LAPD a “shining example of constitutional

policing.”

At the same time Villaraigosa cynically placed himself on the side of the Occupy movement, which he congratulated. “In the days ahead, we must build on the foundation of cooperation that we have established over these last two months...The movement’s message of restoring the balance to American society is too important to be lost amid clashes and conflict.”

Villaraigosa and Democratic Party municipal officials across the country have during the last few weeks carried out this same two-pronged campaign—ruthlessly repressing protests while posturing as supporters of the aims of the protesters.

Before the police raid, the *World Socialist Web Site* spoke to several of those protesting. Jose, a laid-off aluminum warehouse worker, said, “People have to fight for jobs and for their rights. There is too big of a difference between the poor and rich right now; also there are too many wars. Resources go there instead of going to the poor.

Jose said he was fired from his job in 2008. “After spending 99 weeks on unemployment without finding a permanent job, I have been working through temp agencies. I tried to get on General Relief and food stamps but could not survive on that.”

“People voted for President Obama because he represented hope,” Jose added. “Mexican immigrants had hope for a better immigration law. But he is really a figurehead, a puppet of big business, just like Bush was.”

Odara, an education student at the University of Southern California, said, “I come here to fight for human rights, for education, for the future parents who wish to give their children opportunities, and for present parents that see their children coming out of college and facing very limited opportunities.”

She added that she had read the ISSE statement (Unite the working class to defend public education and democratic rights!). “It is very educational,” Odara said. “Many people that are drawn here have never been exposed to something like this before because they lack the education. They are drawn here for whatever reason. Once they come here, it is inevitable that they are going to be educated.

“I think that the problem extends further than political parties. It is rooted in the entire system of government. I think that people, little by little, are

starting to realize that it is not about changing a law, or changing a policy here or there, changing some faces or some party. It is about change from the roots up and really having some true democracy so that people in a town or in a community can have their needs met. I am actually very pro-socialist.”

Jimmy is a film student at the Art Institute of California in Santa Monica, a suburb north of Los Angeles. “I go to a very expensive school. Since my financial aid mostly goes to my living expenses, I am building up student loans at \$24,000 per year that I will have to pay for.

“This movement at first made me really proud of people becoming a community, of finally setting the blindfolds aside. People are not as afraid as before. Corporations are not people. The banks are another tool for blood sucking.

“I think that both the Democrats and Republicans in the two-party systems are basically the same. Not to put a label on it, but I see the contest between both those parties are basically a boxing match where the outcome is already decided. It makes me sick.”



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