ONE WORLD ONE PAIN: Solidarity Statement from Occupy Madison to the Egyptian Revolution

Occupy Madison stands with the true revolutionaries of Tahrir Square and the rest of Egypt, those who have not opted for opportunism, and remain steadfast in their struggle against a military junta backed by our government that seeks to strangle the birth of democracy in its cradle.

The images of brutality at the hands of the SCAF, the police and their hired thugs have shocked, but not surprised, us. While the Obama administration seeks to keep those in power whom they "can work with", we support the Egyptian people's right to self-determination, which they have been denied for so long as a consequence of imperial machinations.

Egyptians know all too well that the new boss is just the same as the old boss, and that erstwhile allies will abandon the fight when they deem it in their parochial interest.

Occupy Madison and others in this country see the situation for what it is, and demand our government end all support for this repressive regime.

The Egyptian revolution stood with Wisconsinites this past winter in the struggle for our rights, the rights of poor and working folks. The inspiration we took from that support still warms our souls during these cold days as we continue that struggle.

We in turn stand with you, our sisters and brothers, in your fight for self-determination and democracy. We are all in this together. We face a common foe, and have throughout history, in those whose greed and lust for power dominates our world.

Solidarity is shoreless.

Your bravery in the face of the deadly force deployed against you is a testament to the depth of the human spirit, and has inspired us and so many others across the globe. If we are to realize our dream of freedom and justice, we all must muster that courage, and stand united in our determination to forge a new world in which dignity is accorded every single person on this planet.

In the end, that is our only hope. And it is our duty, and our honor, to keep that hope alive.

السلام يكون معكم، رفاقاً (Peace be with you, our comrades)
UPCOMING EVENTS:
Friday 12/30 4:30pm on the corner of State and Johnson
-Sign Making Fri Dec 30 at Rainbow Books
-Direct Action: Next Meeting Thursday, January 5 - 6:30 pm at Steep and Brew
- "Take the Hood Back" Campaign Milwaukee:
  Saturday, January 7 2:00pm until 4:00pm at Washington park library
  (Sherman & Lisbon Ave)

STRIKING WORKERS AT MANITOWOC CRANES ARE THE 99%
By Anne Lyttle

On a frigid windy day in December, hundreds (thousands?) of people traveled to Manitowoc, WI to show their support at a solidarity rally for the workers at Manitowoc Crane. Members of IAM Local 516, the International Aerospace and Machinists union, voted 180-2 to go on strike on November 15 after the company introduced last-minute language into their contract that mirrored the “reforms” that Governor Scott Walker imposed on public employee unions earlier this year. Manitowoc Crane’s “freedom to choose” proposal includes forcing the union to make membership dues optional and extend union benefits to non-union workers.

The crowd was a colorful mix of public and private sector unions including AFSCME, SEIU, TAA, Ironworkers, Steelworkers, and Teamsters, as well as many non-union supporters. Many of the unions represented at the rally presented donations they had collected for the Manitowoc machinists. It was inspiring to hear some public employees talk about how they felt they were “returning the favor” after the huge display of solidarity put on by private sector unions and the larger community at the Capitol in February.

I drove up from Madison with a small contingent of occupiers from Occupy Madison. Our “We Are the 99%” banner fit right in at this rally, and several of the striking machinists expressed thanks and helped us keep it from blowing away.

After about an hour of listening to speeches, we put on our comfy shoes and marched to the picket line, completely shutting down a major street for blocks and chanting slogans like “United we stand! Divided we fall!” and “What’s disgusting? Union busting!” Some wonderful folks from Occupy Milwaukee joined our small Madison group and helped lead the chants through chattering teeth.

Once at the plant, we joined the picket line briefly and marched with the striking workers. Amazingly, these workers are out picketing from 6am to 6pm Monday through Friday. This is not a one-day publicity strike aimed at making the company look bad; they’re really in it for the long haul.

Overall, I think the rally was a huge success. It was encouraging to see such a great showing of support from so many different unions. However, and this might have something to do with having listened to hours and hours of speeches through a PA system at the Capitol last winter and spring, but I wish the format had been different. Personally, I’m a bit put off by a parade of union officials expounding on the virtues of the “middle class” and shouting the word “Solidarity!” repeatedly until it starts to lose meaning.

Having spent some time at a couple different Occupies, and having spent a great deal more time sitting at home anxiously watching the live feed from many moreOccupies, I saw stark contrast between the general assembly format used at these gatherings and being talked at by union leadership from a stage. More and more I’m buying into the idea of horizontal, hierarchyless democracy, and it’s time we apply this model to unions, too. A lot of the frustration I’ve heard expressed by union members relates to having little or no control of or involvement in (or even knowledge of) what their union leaders actually do. Why listen to Phil Neuenfeldt or Marty Biel talk about the strike when you could hear it from the rank-and-file workers who are actually on strike?
I would love to see a rally like this take advantage of the general assembly model to allow a greater diversity of voices to be heard. And while using the human megaphone can be a long and messy process, it brings a group of people together like nothing I’ve seen. I’ve heard what union leaders have to say (repeatedly), and I think it’s time for the hardworking, dues paying members of the working class to step up and take it from here (just imagine if the top-down business union model suddenly became obsolete!). We already have a great deal of power; we just need to learn how to wield it. The Manitowoc Crane employees are demonstrating this already.

In an era marked by less effective methods of direct action like publicity strikes and corporate campaigns, not to mention the failure to build an adequate strike fund, these workers are making a significant financial impact on the company by stopping production and withholding their labor. Rank-and-file members must wake up and realize that we can’t wait for someone to fight on our behalf. Spending a couple hours outdoors in the biting wind really makes one appreciate the hardship these workers endure on a daily basis. Not only are they sacrificing their comfort and health to hold the line, but the machinists receive only minimal funds from the strike fund to pay bills and feed their families. Sometimes striking workers are able to secure part-time work to make ends meet in lieu of a paycheck, but from what I’ve heard, employment opportunities in Manitowoc are too scarce.

The machinists at Manitowoc Crane aren’t just fighting for a better contract and the right to have a union, they are standing up for the entire working class. You can help by sending money to the strike fund, sending food and toy donations to the district lodge, and making sure to tell your friends and families about the strike.

MCI Strike Fund c/o Machinists Local 516
P.O. Box 222
Manitowoc, WI 54221-0222
IAMAW District Lodge 10
1650 S. 38th St.
Milwaukee, WI 53215

OCCUPANTS
TOUR UPDATE-WEST

Dear Occupy Family
Greetings from OccuPants. We are down to two. Dennis will sit for 28 days at Winter dathün and Malikhi has returned to Madison. Aly and Kevin are holed up in Denver with plans to head West soon. Upon arriving in Denver, we tested the effects of pepper spray largely out of curiosity. The spray was given to us by our host in Burnsville for protection. We now know a sliver of the pain to be endured in the case of chemical warfare. The capsaicin present in police mace/bear spray ranks at least several thousand units higher on the Scoville scale and the police are more inclined to brutality outside of the Midwest (it would seem). So we chose to brutalize ourselves in preparation. The experience lasted for about one and one half hours. Our host, Maggie, joined us. Aly had a strong allergic reaction, and the pepper spray affected her the greatest. Kevin had to pluck a film of white gel from his eye. Dennis was accustomed to pepper spray, and handled it the best (though after spraying the three of us, he admittedly had a lesser dose as the canister was nearly empty). A milk of magnesia rinse was used to neutralize the capsaicin (the active ingredient in mace). Water is NOT effective, as capsaicin is not soluble in water. However, it IS soluble in oils and alcohol. Thus, the most effective method we tried was coating affected areas in vegetable oil, and rinsing preferably with rubbing alcohol or friction and water (Note: do not get ethanol [or whichever alcohol you use] in your eyes). We have visited occupations in La Crosse, Minneapolis, Burnsville, Des Moines, Lincoln, Boulder, and Denver. We are welcomed with openness, generosity, and joy across the board. Everyone has stories to share, and we delight in sharing. The occupations all largely resemble Madison in number, structure, and process. Minneapolis and Denver in particular seem to represent a larger base of the ethnically diverse (which is likely the case as they are larger cities). Yet they have subtle differences especially in "local flavor" (i.e. in response to immediate concerns in their respective areas).

What works... The 99% of Des Moines are structurally most sound, both in terms of GA process and buildings (including fire-retardant tarps, a fantastic kitchen, etc.). They pay $25/week for a permit to occupy a park two blocks from the Iowa State house. During GAs, proposals are introduced and clarifying questions are asked. The proposal is then set aside for 24 hours of reflection. Proposals are revisited at the next GA after allowing for discussion and consensus decision making. Des Moines occupants are preparing for a week of action leading up to the Iowa Caucus and urge the rest
of the country to join them. Included in the plans are teach-ins, affinity group occupations of various campaign offices, and a Peoples’ Caucus to highlight concerns of the 99%.

Photo by Malikhi Mac

It has been a pleasure to meet the street medics of Minneapolis and Des Moines. They are both small, but dedicated and well prepared crews. One medic from Des Moines spoke of international medic solidarity at the Occupy Medical Team Collaboration Facebook page.

What’s not working well... In Boulder a no-camping law is being enforced. Police allow tents on Pearl Street Mall, but cite folks for sleeping in them. Our run-in with the law in Boulder went as follows: An officer comes a knockin’ at our tent door. Kevin responds after the officers identify themselves. They ask, “Why aren’t you occupying in Wisconsin?” Easy. “Because mountains are beautiful.” The police are brutal, strictly safeguarding the interests of the 1%, not public welfare. After discovering that there are four bodies in the tent, they demand everybody exit and go so far as to rip a sleeping Aly out by her ankle, without shoes, onto the icy ground. They did so under the pretense that she “looked pale, and could possibly be hypothermic” and force her to answer a million questions in an ambulance. In dialogue, one officer insinuates that Dennis is fabricating his story of military service. “Why would a veteran be homeless and supporting the 99% movement?” We are subject to verbal humiliation and $100 citations each for camping. The first violation is a citation and the second is time in jail. Several Boulder occupants have been jailed for this reason. There will be a warrant for our arrest if we are unable to make the court date or pay the citations. Finally, the 99% of Denver seem to be a phoenix. Structures are routinely deconstructed by the police, and are routinely rebuilt new and improved. The Denver Police Department (DPD) has thus far spent $750,000 to surveil and arrest Denver occupants. At times there have been more police on site than 99%ers. As one occupier put it, the DPD is more brutal than the NYPD. Who’d have guessed?" Set in between the Colorado state house on the East, and the courthouse on the West, the Occupy Denver encampment thrives in the 5-foot sections between the road and the sidewalk adjacent to the Civic Plaza. GA’s are held on site circling up in the open air and utilizing the human mic. Upon arriving at the camp after dark, we are greeted by enthusiastic voices. One such voice, Anthony, speaks of weekly themed marches for families, children, immigrants, workers, etc. He says flatly, “We will soon reach critical mass.”

Kevin said that in Denver, Direct Action (DA) group is a 24/7 pro-active crew that goes to it, and the day that the cops burned and bulldozed the encampment, the occupiers prepared with a HUGE Beltain and solstice celebrations with multiple bonfires, decorations, and building projects. Occupying space into a free-speech zone is a direct action is what Kevin left me with and Aly give me the details of their expected trip to SF, they are leaving this afternoon. Denver Occupy is resetting up and will continue to do so. Aly Kaplin and Kevin Schiesser (proud parents to a new puppy), our westward travelers, leave Denver in van with 3 dogs, 8 puppies and 9 humans. They are in San Francisco now.
WOMEN AND PEOPLE OF COLOR AT OCCUPY MADISON
by Thistle
www.thistlespace.org
Point Person for the Women and People of Color Committee. White supremacist patriarchy is at the core of the suffering and oppression we are experiencing movement is taking place in the moment. This could include WORT, 89.9 FM, our community radio station in Madison, if occupy activists are there and go on the air. The phrase "Occupy Everywhere" is particularly resonant for me as I see more and more people saying "enough! Ya basta!" and taking up space. Those spaces, *our* collective, joint spaces, need to be zones free of patriarchy and white supremacy if we are truly going to rise up and transform current capitalist systems of economics and politics to systems that serve the interests of the land, water, air and species on this earth. The entire web of natural life is being systematically killed on a daily basis due to the racist, sexist, greedy and ignorant assault on our life ways. Women make up 52% of the 99%. Arguably, people of color make up a large percentage of the 99% in America and Madison as well. About 35% of the general US population is white male, so proportionally, they are not the majority of the 99%. There are more women and people of color in the 99% than there are white males. Since we have lived with a system of white male domination for over 500 years, it seems reasonable to try to balance that out with a new system of female, non-white domination for at least 75 years before we could go into a system where white men would be equally as empowered as women and people of color. This is an issue of social justice, something that many men claim to care about in the Occupy movement. A truly anti-racist, antisexist OM would look like men stepping back, stepping down and actively, consciously promoting the leadership of women and women of color in every sphere of our lives. This would include at committee meetings, GA's, working groups and everywhere. It would look like men not defending themselves and their rights as equal rights to those of women and women of color. I am talking about matriarchy here folks. It would mean that men could be called out for arrogant, destructive, passive/aggressive or aggressive behaviors and they would listen, rather than get defensive.

I am unclear about how to collectively shift into a womon-dominated and enlivened world where our children are also at the center, but here in Madison, I will continue to work for it at our h-OM-e base(s). If you are interested in joining me in this goal, please contact me through the Occupy Madison web site. This essay is a work in progress with the hope that it
SOLIDARITY SINGERS DEFY UNCONSTITUTIONAL NEW PERMIT REGULATIONS

The Department of Administration has recently come out with a ridiculous new list of requirements for gatherings inside the Capitol, including the need to apply for a permit for 4 or more people 72 hrs in advance and the billing of organizers for any police presence. The Solidarity Sing-a-long, which has met inside or outside the Capitol every day for the past 10 mos, issued a call-out to protect the right of citizens to speak and assemble inside their house in defiance of these edicts. At least 1000 people answered the call, showing up over lunch on Mon, Dec 19th to sing sans permit. Here is an Occupier who showed up in support of this action.

OCCUPY THE RV!
Regional Road trip a little to the West.
Occupy Des Moines follow their work at:

http://www.occupyiowacaucuses.org/

Occupier Kellie is HEADING TO DES MOINES! OccupyWI (Kellie) Occupy St.Paul, Occupy Minn, are heading by an RV, meeting at the Gov Plaza in Minn.in Des Moines and says that is going really well. Occupy Des Moines ten people got arrested yesterday, including an elder. Kellie is heading out now! Follow news and events at: http://occupywi.org/

• OCCUPY THE CANDIDATE - HEY MILWAUKEE is running A people's candidate!!! On Jan 7th Occupy the Hood will hold a benefit to pull together people toward support their occupy candidate, Muhammad Mahdi for County Supervisor, 5th District! Muhammad was on the ground from the beginning of the occupy in Milwaukee. The benefit is 2:00pm until 4:00p Washington Park Library-Sherman & Lisbon Ave. More info: mkeoccupythehood@gmail.com

BANK BANK a NEW BANK!

Occupy Milwaukee is organizing around a Location that they can sustain. Please join them for a planning meeting at:
Wright Street Resource Center, 901 E. Wright St.
THIS Friday, 7:00pm until 8:30pm

LOTS OF LINKING HAPPENING:
NEW WEBSITES: BLOGS
Stay up-to-date
Occupy Riverwest: http://occupyriverwest.com/
STATE EVENTS/NEWS:
http://occupywi.org/
More (building this one, if you want to blog at it: email jonathandedering@gmail.com http://occupyjournals.org/