

Wall Street Vs. Everybody

Written by Linh Dinh

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(Editor's note: A related commentary, "#OccupyWallStreet Is More Than a Hashtag. It's Revolution in Formation," can be found [here](#).)



"Wall Street got drunk [...] It got drunk and now it's got a hangover." – George W. Bush

As usual, Bush got it wrong. Wall Street soberly and cynically got the rest of us drunk on dreams of home ownership, a robust stock portfolio, and a cozy retirement. This slurry bacchanal was fueled by the housing bubble and, when that exploded in our faces, bailouts saved Wall Street from any hangover, so it's us who will suffer through a torturous, decades-long headache of a ruined economy.

But who are us, exactly? Us are the poor and the middle class, unions, retirement funds, and governments at all levels – federal, state, and city. Us are 99 percent, according to the mostly young protesters at Liberty Park in New York City. (Dubbed "Occupy Wall Street," this encampment in the financial district began on September 17 and, until videos of police brutality hit the Web, had gone largely unreported in the mainstream media.)

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Nearly everyone got ripped off, including the cops guarding these protesters. As a protest sign sweetly and innocently demands: "Say Sorry! To All of Us!"

After more than a week of protest, more than a hundred people have already been arrested. Several have been roughed up, with cops being caught on still and video cameras pepper-spraying or yanking the hair of young women, or slamming people to the ground. Sadly, these cops are fighting against their own interest. Bankrupted by Wall Street, cities all over America are laying off policemen left and right. Why defend the crooks of Wall Street, cops, when they have directly caused many of your colleagues to be thrown onto the streets? When you yourself may end up on a park bench in the near future?

The conflict between cops and protesters can be partly attributed to a clash of styles, to the eternal jocks-vs.-freaks dichotomy, but dear policemen, these young people are actually on your side. In spite of their colorful or eccentric clothing, odd haircuts, tattoos, or piercings, they are fighting for you, too. To their credit, the protesters have made overtures to these cops by offering them coffee and water, but the cops, keen to maintain separation, have declined.

During the massive protest at Tiananmen Square, there was initially much fraternization between protesters and soldiers. They conversed, established common cause, and did not wish to harm each other, so the government had to truck in troops from distant provinces, many of them not even Han Chinese, to commit the massacre. Also, in that famous photo of the protester who stopped a line of tanks, recall the restraint of that tank driver. Though trained and brought in to kill, this soldier couldn't do it, at least in that instance.

With these Wall Street skirmishes, and many more battles to come, one has to hope for that solidarity and fraternization. Though the belligerent will always gravitate toward jobs that allow them access to weapons, incorrigible psychotics are relatively few, for even in a gung-ho uniform, most men aren't overeager to inflict pains on another. In fact, before the Vietnam War, most soldiers did not even fire their rifles during battles, though improved reflexive trainings have "corrected" this natural reluctance to kill. United we must stand – Americans, clean-cut cops, and tattooed protesters alike – against that destroyer of America, Wall Street.

Last week, there was a New York City protest against cuts to the public schools. It took place at Tweed Courthouse, only half a mile from the Occupy Wall Street rally, but unlike the anti-Wall

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Street activists, these protesters were mostly above 35 years old, with many of them black or Hispanic. It would have been wonderful had these public-school teachers marched over to the Wall Street protest, for it is precisely Wall Street that has bankrupted their state and city, putting their jobs in jeopardy. Dear teachers, do join these brave young protesters, because Wall Street is also your enemy. Dearest everybody, Wall Street is the vampire who's draining blood from all of our bodies.

Linh Dinh is a poet, fiction writer, and photographer. His blog is State of the Union (LinhDinhPhotos.Blogspot.com

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