

# Was occupy wall street a failure?

Business



The Occupy Wall Street (also called OWS or Occupy) protests erupted in Zuccotti Park on September 17th, 2011. Originally thought up by Canadian anti-consumerist magazine Adbusters, the protests gained mass media attention for months before the number of protesters dwindled. Until the main protests diminished, OWS started a nationwide discussion of class division and inequality. The protest made the terms “ the 99%” and “ the 1%” part of our national vocabulary and sparked numerous debates on police brutality, corporate power, and the merits of our economic system. The protests were a part of the news for months, with even the president of the US making a comment on them.

A largely decentralized movement, the protests were organized online on social media. There was no “ head” of Occupy, only protesters. This meant that it was easy for people to set up their very own occupy protests around the country and even the world, with varying levels of success. Yet even with a media firestorm, the blogosphere on full blast, and the number of protests growing by the day, the protests fizzled out with only a few stragglers hanging behind. Why? What caused the most visible and widespread protest in recent history to basically end? With all the shares, likes, tweets and posts, what did the protests actually do to fix the problems that were brought up? Were the protests pointless, or did they change things in ways that cannot be seen? What happened to the protests, and what did they accomplish? In 2011 the Occupy Wall Street protesters encamped and protested in Zuccotti Park and other areas in NYC. They protested against wealth inequality and the general tenets of wall street, at the same time the

protests attracted other dissatisfied people who felt that the politics of the US were not what they wanted them to be.

2 years later the big areas of protest such as Zuccotti Park are cleaned and mostly empty. The grand protests against inequality and politics eventually had people leave and were, in a sense, fizzled out. College student Phill Lentz felt that the diminished amount of protests could be attributed to a federally coordinated effort to crack down on the protests, such as when the NYPD arrested 700 protesters as they tried to cross the Brooklyn Bridge. Lentz also felt that a focus shift inside the protests led to its fall from grace. “ Shortly after I was arrested during a protest action blocking traffic on the Brooklyn Bridge, I saw the crowd change. Suddenly there were more people with donation buckets set up than protesting.

The people in the park became less interested in engaging in debate with each other, and more interested in garnering individual validation and attention. When the protest started, you could sit down and easily overhear people engaging in political or theological debate. It devolved to individuals that were somehow simultaneously browbeating each other and begging for money,” Lentz said. The downfall of OWS by the hands of authorities was echoed by independent software developer Marc Stein. “ The protests were forced out of Zuccotti Park by the NY City Police Department.

At that point, a lot of the energy dissipated, and it was harder to just ‘ drop in’ and be a part of a big scene, so I sadly retreated back to my normal routines and stopped going to the site. But I never considered that I was ‘ stopping.’ There were still Internet activities, etc,” Stein said. Stein also said

his job prevented him from being at the protests for extreme amounts of time. “ I had the luxury to spend several days there in September and October 2011.

I showed up as soon as I heard about it onTwitter, which is where the news broke for many people that Wall Street was being occupied. Unfortunately, also because I work as an independent software developer, I couldn't always stay for very long. In the first two months I went down there maybe 10 times, spending a couple of hours each time. I brought as many friends and family members with me as I could.

But I was never an ‘ occupier’ who slept there in a tent. I would have been if I didn't have a job and responsibilities to get back to,” Stein said. Michael Levitin, Journalist at Occupy. com, said that the downfall of OWS not only fell prey to authorities, but was also hindered by public citizens who did not feel that OWS was the protest for them. “ A movement without a central platform or plan for moving forward, fell prey to the establishment and to people who wanted more structure and – direction,” Levitin said. Levitin spoke of how, due to OWS's spontaneous nature, the people who could join were those without jobs and had more disorganized characteristics.

“ It was so spontaneous- the people who joined were–” Levitin paused, searching for a word. “ Hippies,” he finished, but then he corrected himself: “ The word hippy is pretty outdated, disorganized anarchist is more fitting,” he said. Levitin also said that the international protests in response to the original OWS protests were very well organized, with people joining together and creating meeting centers, libraries, and other communal organizations..

Marc Stein, agreed with the picture painted of hippie activists, and doesn't believe this is a bad thing. " Some of our greatest political activists were hippies — John Lennon, Yoko Ono, Abbie Hoffman, Angela Davis, Allen Ginsberg.

I know that many people like to make fun of hippies but I think they're just jealous of their self-proclaimed freedom. The hippies of the 1960s helped to end the Vietnam War, so I think hippies have a lot to be proud of! If the hippies of Occupy can ever be as successful as the hippies of the Vietnam War era were, that will be a great thing," said Stein. A common criticism of Occupy Wall Street is that it was ineffective. Jared Kraham, a writer at DailyOrange. com, said, " The parallels between OWS and the Tea Party movement are worth noting. Both built grassroots campaigns in response to policies they deemed unconscionable.

But the Tea Party, as flawed as it is, has actually become a political force in our democracy. It has affected public policy. Americans take it seriously. How many OWS protesters will be elected to Congress in November? Who in the 113th Congress will join the ' Occupy Caucus?'" Michael Levitin thinks differently. " It awoke many people to conditions that were unsurfaced for various reasons that were not reported by the media" he said.

He also said that it changed the conversation, put equality on the map, and made inequality the crisis of our time. " it woke people up, they had been asleep," he said. The protests made Americans aware of inequality and the media paid attention. " I think the main social impact was indirect, a result of the media coverage, which was very positive and encouraging. It showed

Americans that there are still enthusiastic liberal/progressive voices out there.

It also reminded liberals to stop letting the conservative Tea Party have all the fun, because for a few years before Occupy Wall Street, the only big street protests that were going on were conservative protests for the Tea Party. This changed with Occupy — it reminded liberals that they could get out on the streets too,” Stein said. After the number of protesters went down, a lot of people were asking what would come next. Levitin said that he predicts the next movement that springs out of Occupy is going to be a longer, more organized movement. Stein spoke of how OWS gave some people visibility.

“ Other political voices like the writer David Graeber and the politician Elizabeth Warren gained more visibility when they spoke at Zuccotti Park. I personally hope that Elizabeth Warren will be President of the United States someday, and if she ever gets there, I hope she’ll remember that many people heard of her for the first time when she bravely showed up for Occupy, ” Stein said. The OWS protests gave visibility to many and opened the eyes of a new generation of liberal activists. The eventual effects on the future of politics and society, however, remains to be seen.