



Written by [Ralph R. Reiland](#) on October 28, 2011

“Occupy Pittsburgh” Encounters

With an estimated net worth of \$340 million, Simmons acknowledged that he was part of the targeted "1 percent" at the top. "I don't pay enough taxes and I know it," he said.

He was willing to pay more. Just not yet. "I want to write my check when everybody else does," he stated.

Mr. Simmons didn't say anything about the "Eat the Rich" posters or whether he was willing to end up in a Crock-Pot.

Rapper West, who is also a restaurateur, producer and actor and worth a reported \$70 million, didn't dress down when he showed up to take a look at the other "99 percent."



"Kanye West Visits Occupy Wall Street Without Removing Gold Chains," said the headline in *New York* magazine, implying a certain level of risk related to public displays of affluence. Fox News commentator Geraldo Rivera got a bucket of white powder dumped on his head during a visit.

Showing some solidarity, not one of the redistributionists in the park tried to steal Mr. West's chains. And TV footage showed no one among the pro-leveling activists said even a peep about the thick and flashy gold chains.

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We weren't so lucky when my wife and I showed up in Market Square for the kickoff of Occupy Pittsburgh.

As soon as we got to the demonstration, we got our fair share of abuse. A woman, incited by the sight of a columnist she judged to be insufficiently left wing on economics — me — came dashing over to say that I should be "ashamed" of myself for writing the "crap" I write.

Turning to everyone within hearing range and pointing at me as if she had just unmasked an enemy spy, she yelled "Ralph Reiland, Ralph Reiland" to the crowd.

Her next target was my wife's jewelry. "Look at her," she yelled, pointing to what my wife calls her stink-bug necklace. The woman was mad as a hornet about my wife's stink bug because she saw it as an ill-gotten gain from my allegedly malicious writing.

What was really bugging her, however, was how somebody could change like I did from when she said she knew me at the Thomas Merton Center 40 years ago.

In fact, my change wasn't all that big. We worked for peace and against poverty back then and I'm still against poverty and still opposed to mismanaged wars that are launched by way of bad or faked data. On being anti-poverty, my only change from four decades ago is that now I focus more on jobs as the solution and on the need to clear away government disincentives to investment, entrepreneurship, and economic growth.



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I didn't have time to explain that because just then our golden retriever, Simba, perceiving we were under attack, jumped into the fray and lunged at a little dog next to him who wasn't doing anything.

Another guy, out of work and just as red-faced and angry as the anti-necklace lady, asked me why I lied in my columns and didn't tell people that Reagan was to blame for our imbalance of incomes and overall joblessness. I explained that unemployment and inflation both dropped significantly under Reagan, directly and appreciably helping the non-rich, but he just switched to yelling about Reagan firing the striking air traffic controllers.

Other people at the Pittsburgh rally seemed to have more balanced views, with speakers and signs pointing to the role that both Big Business and Big Government played in producing the current economic crisis.

"I can't buy a Congressman, so I just made this sign," said one woman's homemade poster.

"They outsourced the factories, and I didn't speak up. They outsourced the office workers, and I didn't speak up. They outsourced America, and no one was left to speak up," said another.

Another poster pointed to Wall Street's shenanigans and the decline of U.S. manufacturing: "More durable goods, less financial schemes = jobs + wealth."

As we were leaving, we met Mark Miller, owner of Double M's Pizza in the nearby small town of Charleroi, handing out copies of the U.S. Constitution.

"We shouldn't be divided by Occupy Pittsburgh versus the tea party, Republicans versus Democrats, or by liberals versus conservatives," he said. "We can't eliminate corporations, capitalism or the U.S. Constitution. What needs to be eliminated is the corruption that's perverting all three."

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