



Written by [William F. Jasper](#) on December 19, 2011

OWS Port Shutdown Strategy May Backfire

Police in some cities prevented demonstrators from blocking port traffic. In Oakland, however, several hundred OWS activists were allowed to close entrances to America's fifth busiest port, costing the city, workers, and businesses several million dollars. Under orders from city officials, Oakland police allowed the Occupy demonstrators to carry out their day-long disruption without police interference, in an effort to avoid violent confrontation. However, when organizers voted to continue the disruption through Tuesday, December 13, Oakland Mayor Jean Quan accused them of economic violence against the city and the 99 percent they claim to represent.



By Friday, December 16, Oakland city officials were feeling political and economic pressure to prevent any further port disruptions. I think it's embarrassing for the city, for the mayor, for the ports and for the council to keep saying that we're not going to let this happen, but then it happens anyway, said Councilman Ignacio De La Fuente, one of the officials who is urging tougher actions against OWS protesters who break the law by blocking traffic and using other disruptive tactics.

Since the OWS protesters were evicted from their tent city encampments (in most cases, by police action), they have been searching for unifying themes and projects that might catch media attention and draw support from various grievance groups. Many OWS organizers have been working on recruiting students who are upset over tuition increases, as well as those burdened by huge student loans and zero job prospects. Others have focused on families that are facing foreclosure and eviction. But one of the biggest targeted efforts has been to establish working solidarity with unions already embroiled in battles with dominant shipping and port corporations aligned with Wall Street. They have specifically targeted EGT, the large multinational grain export company, and Stevedoring Services of America (SSA), where Wall Street giant Goldman Sachs owns a majority share of stock.

However, organizers of the port shutdown strategy have [failed to win](#) critically needed support from the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU). Rank and file union members, as well as labor officials, have expressed anger at the hardship the port stoppages are causing for working families, even while acknowledging their own dissatisfaction with Wall Street bailouts and corporate-government cronyism.

Likewise, Americans in general share many of the concerns expressed by the OWS demonstrators, but surveys by [Pew Research](#), [ABC News/Wall Street Journal](#), and other opinion polling groups indicate that favorable opinions toward Occupy activists have dropped dramatically, while unfavorable ones have soared as the OWS antics have dragged on and have grown increasingly confrontational and lawless.

Blowing Their Anti-capitalist Capital

In short, the Occupy Wall Street agitators have blown much of their anti-capitalist capital. The longer



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they remain in the public eye, the more obvious it becomes that the major organizers and spokespersons of the OWS events are more interested in [socialist/communist revolution](#) than reform, more focused on destroying free-enterprise capitalism than correcting the corporatist abuses and corruption that are carried out in the name of capitalism. This has been the case, more or less, for OWS encampments from New York's Zuccotti Park to Los Angeles City Hall Plaza. The radical bent of the OWS organizers has been especially evident in Oakland, where they have made little effort to camouflage their ultra-leftist ideology.

As we have [noted](#) previously, lesbian-feminist Professor Angela Davis, a former leader (and vice presidential candidate) of the Communist Party USA and former Black Panther Party revolutionary, has been one of the leading lights of the OWS movement. On December 12 she made one of her repeat appearances at OWS Oakland to urge support for the port shutdown effort.

Not surprisingly, she utilized the opportunity to thump one of her favorite themes: equating capitalism with racism and the oppression of women and ethnic minorities.

This protest is connected to the anti-racism protest because capitalism is racist, she [declared](#). On December 12 she was interviewed as she marched in the Occupy Oakland port shutdown demonstration, as shown on this YouTube video:

Oakland hip hop activists Boots Riley and Jabari Shaw, both outspoken Marxists, have been regularly featured speakers at OWS Oakland activities, as well as providing support and leadership to many other San Francisco Bay area revolutionary causes. Boots Riley, lead rapper for The Coup and front man for the Street Sweeper Social Club and the Mau Mau Rhythm Collective, told lyricstime.com, in an October, 2001 [interview](#): "I am a communist. I have been a communist/socialist since I was 14 years old.

Riley has been a member of the Progressive Labor Party, a radical Maoist-communist offshoot of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and helped found The Young Comrades communist organization.

Oakland, home of the revolutionary communist Black Panther Party, is also the centerpiece of the Ninth Congressional District, represented by Rep. Barbara Lee, one of the most radical members of Congress and an [ardent supporter](#) of Occupy Wall Street and Occupy Oakland.

Rep. Lee got her start in Oakland politics in the 1960s as a member of the Black Panther Party and as a campaign worker on Black Panther Party co-founder Bobby Seales Oakland mayoral campaign. She subsequently became an aide to Rep. Ron Dellums, one of the most radical, pro-communist, pro-Soviet, pro-Castro members of Congress. When Dellums retired from his Ninth District House seat, he endorsed his longtime aide, Barbara Lee, virtually guaranteeing her election. She won handily, taking 67 percent of the vote.

Like Dellums, Lee has been especially chummy with communist dictator Fidel Castro. In 2009, Rep. Lee [led](#) a congressional delegation to Cuba, where she met with the aging despot Fidel, as well as his brother, Raul Castro, who runs the island dictatorship today on behalf of Fidel. Rep. Lee is a past Chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, a member of the Congressional Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Equality Caucus, and a former Co-Chair of the [Congressional Progressive Caucus](#), the congressional arm of the Democratic Socialists of America, which is, in turn, the American arm of the [Socialist International](#), the radical global organization of Marxist, socialist, social democrat, and communist parties.



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Another key player in the Occupy Oakland drama is Dan Siegel, a lawyer and longtime Berkeley-Oakland activist who was an SDS leader in the 1960s. While student body president at UC Berkeley in 1969, he delivered an inflammatory speech that incited the student riot known as Bloody Thursday, over the eviction of OWS-type protesters from the occupied property they called Peoples Park. Siegel and his wife, Ann Weills, have been active members for decades of the National Lawyers Guild (NLG), cited as the foremost legal bulwark of the Communist Party by the House Committee on Un-American Activities. The controversial attorney, who describes himself on his Twitter account as a grown-up 60s activist, [resigned](#) as legal adviser to Oakland Mayor Jean Quan on November 14, when she ordered police to dismantle the Occupy Oakland encampment at Frank Ogawa Plaza (renamed Oscar Grant Plaza by OWS activists), Oaklands equivalent of New Yorks Zuccotti Park.

Mayor Quan is herself a lifelong activist and community organizer in the Obama tradition, going back to her UC Berkeley days in the 1960s, where she was an organizer with the Third World Liberation Front. But with Oakland tens of millions of dollars in debt and the Occupy movement having already cost the city \$1 million in cleanup costs and even more in lost tax revenue, Quan was forced to listen to taxpayers, workers, and business owners who demanded that the OWS attacks on the rights of others be stopped.

Following his resignation, Dan Siegel launched a media blitz. Among the many interviews hes done is this one with MSNBCs Rachel Maddow, one of the Occupy Wall Streets biggest boosters:

Oakland activist Van Jones, President Obamas former Green Jobs Czar, is certainly one of the more important activists in the Oakland OWS movement. Jones was a member of the ultra-radical STORM (Standing Together to Organize a Revolutionary Movement), which claimed to stand for revolutionary democracy, revolutionary feminism, revolutionary internationalism, the central role of the working class, urban Marxism, and Third World Communism." Jones is the founder of the Oakland-based Ella Baker Center for Human Rights, which has been a hub of radical organizing in the city for over a decade. It is run now by Jones protg Jakada Imani. Both Jones and Imani have been very active in firing up and turning out the troops for various Occupy Oakland events. Jones and Imani co-wrote a [column](#) for the Huffington Post on October 26 condemning Oaklands removal of the Oakland OWS encampment.

On December 1, Jones sent out a message on his Twitter account announcing that the move to shut down our nations ports on December 12 is the beginning of the OWS Post-encampment phase. The Jones tweet stated: "Its the 99s turn, again. Post-encampment phase begins Dec. 12th."

He then directed followers to the link for an Agence France-Presse [article](#) detailing plans for shutting down West Coast ports.

Yet another Oakland OWS leader/organizer is Mike King, a Ph.D. candidate at UC Santa Cruz and East Bay activist. [King writes](#) for a number of leftwing publications and websites, usually stressing Marxist themes of class struggle, class warfare, and the alleged crimes of capitalism. Like Angela Davis, he sees capitalism as inherently racist; ergo, overthrowing capitalism is a prerequisite for ending the evil of racism. He is frequently quoted in media reports on OWS activities in Oakland, San Francisco, and elsewhere.

David Hollinger, the Preston Hotchkiss Professor of American History at UC Berkeley, is another one who pops up in many news stories on Occupy Oakland. Hollinger, apparently, is one of the principal go-to experts reporters can rely on for a tweedy, professorial comment on OWS activities. Hollinger doesnt hide his sympathy for the left-wing aims of the movement, or his hope that it can be used to further



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empower the Democratic Party to build even bigger government.

The current movement is generated by the growing gap between the rich and the poor that is finally being articulated clearly by more activists and pundits.... We are finally moving to confront economic inequality head-on, he said in an interview with the *Irish Times*. The mission is to get the Democratic Party to align itself with the movement, just as in the 60s it was important to get the Democrats to align themselves with civil rights and anti-war stuff, he added.

Like many of the other professors supporting the OWS, Hollinger, who is a past chair of the American Association of University Professors' (AAUP) Committee on Academic Freedom, has a history of his own. He was a student activist in the Free Speech Movement in the 1960s at UC Berkeley, and for the past few decades has been infusing his '60s radicalism into his writing and teaching. But his commitment to genuine free speech and academic freedom is certainly in question. In an essay entitled, [The Lopsided Ivory Tower](#), Paul Trout, an English professor at Montana State University-Bozeman, cites abundant evidence that Hollinger and his AAUP comrades have succeeded in imposing a left-wing ideological straitjacket on most of our colleges and universities. This is not news to anyone in the least familiar with the overwhelming ideological bias of the faculties at our institutions of higher learning. However, to whatever personal and anecdotal knowledge the average person might bring to the table concerning the leftward tilt of the college campus, Professor Trout provides additional copious data from academic studies, as well as self-indicting statements by Hollinger concerning the rigid leftist conformity that he helps encourage and enforce in academe today.

Oakland OWS activist Aaron Brady, a Ph.D. student at UC Berkeley, shares Hollingers leftist ideology a prerequisite for studying at Berkeley, it seems and writes regularly for a number of progressive publications and websites, including the influential, far-left (UK) *Guardian*, which KGB defector Oleg Gordievsky has said was one of the KGBs favorite papers. ("The KGB loved the *Guardian*," [said](#) Gordievsky. "It was deemed highly susceptible to penetration." And was penetrated. Prominent *Guardian* journalist Richard Gott, who had reliably retailed the Soviet line for decades, was forced to resign from the paper in 1995 when it was revealed that he had been a KGB agent of influence. Gott admitted, I took red gold. If other writers at the *Guardian* were not paid agents like Gott, it was probably because they were doing the same work for free. Seumas Milne, for instance, a current associate editor at the *Guardian*, previously was a writer for the Communist Party of Britains publication, *Straight Left*.)

In a December 13 *Guardian* article entitled, [Occupy Oakland's port shutdown has re-energised the movement](#), Aaron Brady, who participated in the Port shutdown, writes that the Oakland port is thriving while the city's coffers are running dry. It is the perfect target to restore Occupy's momentum.

Key OWS supporters and strategists share Bradys opinion that an ongoing effort to close U.S. ports is a winning strategy to refocus and re-energize the fragmenting Occupy movement. Other OWS activists disagree, pointing out that closing ports disproportionately hurts the 99 percent OWS claims to represent far more than it does Wall Street, affecting not only the dock workers, truckers, shippers, warehouse workers, freight forwarders, tug operators, and service workers employed directly at the ports, but many more whose employment is indirectly related to the ports. And these workers both union and non-union will not support OWS efforts that threaten to take food from the family table and the roofs from over their heads.

However, there is another issue that few of the street-level activists in the Occupy Wall Street movement appear to have taken note of: The OWS escalation of disruptive and unlawful activities and



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its increasingly confrontational tactics such as have attended its port shutdowns have been occurring precisely at the same time that Congress has been engaged in debating and enacting the [National Defense Authorization Act \(NDAA\)](#), the draconian new law that grants the President sweeping new police powers, including the ability to arrest American citizens and place them in [indefinite detention](#).

Few of the Occupy demonstrators seem to understand that their increasingly aggressive and disruptive actions may provide the pretext for President Obama to wield his newly minted unconstitutional powers and pave the way for the imposition of tyranny.

However, while the street activists may not realize that they are perilously close to providing the justification for unprecedented absolutist rule in this country, [George Soros](#) and the other 1 percent Wall Street elites who support OWS surely understand and approve of the path toward dictatorship that the Occupy movement is helping to build.

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