

Challenging the US Economic Power Structure: Popular Resistance Percolates Throughout the Land

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Every week we are inspired by the many people throughout the country who are doing excellent work to challenge the power structure and put forward a new path for the country. The popular resistance to plutocracy, concentrated wealth and corporatism is decentralized, creative and growing.

One growing series of protests has been the “Moral Monday” demonstrations in North Carolina. They do not have ‘one demand’ but rather are challenging the systemic corruption, undermining of democracy and misdirection of a state government that puts human needs second to corporate profits – which they have dubbed ‘Robin Hood in Reverse.’ [This week 49 of 200 protesters inside the capitol were arrested](#) singing, chanting and echoing many of the same concerns that demonstrators have for the past three Mondays. Last week there were 30 arrests, the week before 17. Among those [arrested was an 83 year old retired minister](#), Vernon Tyson, who was merely a spectator, but he gave a great interview cheering on the protests after his release. And, [a group of historians were among those arrested](#) who put these protests in the context of US history.

Another courageous protest involved [seven undocumented immigrants who blocked the Broadview Detention Center](#) where immigrants are being incarcerated. They blocked the doors to the detention facility, linking arms together using pipes, chains, and locks. They were protesting the record-high deportations under President Obama, and the lack of leadership from Illinois representatives to call for a suspension of deportations. On the West coast, the always creative Backbone Campaign supported allied faith communities with a giant banner lift over the private for-profit immigration detention center asking [“Who Would Jesus Deport?”](#) and an inflatable lady liberty exposing the unjust policies that break up families.

There was a recent [victory for Seattle teachers and students](#) that resulted from their citywide protests against standardized testing. The school district announced that testing in the high schools would not occur next year. The teachers said they will keep protesting until the tests are banned from lower grades as well.

We hope the Chicago teachers, who [won a major battle with Mayor Rahm Emanuel earlier this year](#) when they went out on strike, have great success [this weekend when three days of marches are held against the mass school closings](#) in Chicago. The teachers union has developed a great organizing strategy that unites teachers with students, parents and communities. This battle is one of many across the country to [stop the thinly veiled corporatization of education](#).

In another education protest, the students [@FreeCooperUnion continue to occupy the office](#)

[of the president after one week](#). They are painting the walls black until he agrees to step down, and are highlighting his \$750,000 annual salary. They are protesting a plan to begin to charge tuition at the university; this plan will not affect these students, but future students who attend Cooper Union.

The heart of the conflict faced in the United States is the inequity of an unfair economy supported by a corrupt two party system. This week there was a [very creative protest in New York City against the world's richest man, Carlos Slim of Mexico](#). He's made his billions with the help of government allowing a monopoly on phone service resulting in Slim gouging the public. Now he gives a small percentage of that wealth back in philanthropy and people applaud him. But, the protesters were very effective, laughing out loud whenever he spoke. They responded when someone asked "Why is everyone laughing?" with "Because Slim's philanthropy is a joke!" and followed with mocking kazoos.

In contrast to the world's wealthiest was [the Poor People's Campaign which marched from Baltimore to Washington, DC](#) ending at Freedom Plaza. The march occurred on the anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s campaign and raised issues of poverty, police violence, unfair economy and non-responsive government. [Another march was announced in Pennsylvania from Philadelphia to Harrisburg](#) from May 25 to June 3 to stop spending on prison construction and instead invest in building communities. Also, from Philadelphia the ['Operation Green Jobs' March from Philadelphia to Washington, DC](#) will begin on May 18 and is organized by the Poor People's Economic and Human Rights Campaign.

A campaign that is growing every week is the fast food worker strikes. The [largest fast food walk out](#) was held [in Detroit](#) last week, even the scabs walked out, and this week the strikes [spread to their fifth city, Milwaukee, WI](#). It is great to see these workers, who no doubt saw themselves as powerless, standing up and demanding fairness. If you eat at fast food restaurants, this would be a good time to stop, and let them know why - you support the workers who are demanding a living wage.

US Empire and imperialism continue to cause protest. Obama's Asia Pivot, moving 60% of the US Navy to the Asian Pacific is causing a lot of distress. On [Jeju Island people are fighting for their survival](#) against a massive Navy base. Jeju is the "Peace Island" that was [harshly abused during the US occupation](#) of South Korea after World War II before the Korean War. And, South Koreans, who regularly protest against the US military, are [protesting the US war games that are practicing dropping nuclear bombs on North Korea](#) and invading it.

Protests are mounting in the United States against the abusive Guantanamo Bay prison where more than 100 of the 166 prisoners at Guantanamo are participating in a hunger strike and two-dozen are being brutally force fed. These prisoners have been held without trial for over 10 years, and even though 88 have been approved to leave, they remain. The [Green Shadow Cabinet came out with a statement describing how Obama could close the prison](#) (and why Congress is not an excuse) and [what you can do](#) on the 100th day of the hunger strike this Friday. Show solidarity with these prisoners who are being abused by the US government.

Diane Wilson, a shrimper from the Gulf Coast who works with CODE PINK and Veterans for Peace, is [on her 15th day of an open-ended solidarity hunger strike](#) in Washington, DC. [She](#)

[explains why she is taking the extreme step](#) of a hunger strike to support the Guantanamo prisoners. And S. Brian Willson is joining Diane in hunger strike.

Another protest related to US Empire occurred in Oak Ridge, TN where [Transform Now Plowshares activists protested nuclear weapons](#) by cutting through four chain-link fences and spray-painting biblical messages of nonviolence on a building that warehouses an estimated 400 tons of highly enriched uranium, the radioactive material used to fuel nuclear weaponry. This week an 83 year old nun, Sister Megan Rice, and two other activists were found guilty of damaging government property. As the jury left the courtroom the people in the courtroom sang to them “Love, love, love, love. People, we are made for love.” Sentencing is several months away and they face a potential 30 years in prison.

Environmental protests are boiling up throughout the United States. When President Obama came to New York for a fundraiser (where he raised \$3 million), protesters [greeted him with signs calling for him to “End the War on Mother Earth”](#) and opposing the KXL pipeline.

[Protesters from the Appalachian Mountains came to the EPA](#) in Washington DC to protest polluted water caused by Mountaintop removal for coal. The protesters displayed the dirty, opaque water in jars in front of the EPA. And Climate Justice activists from CoallsStupid.org [blocked a freighter delivering coal in Boston](#) with two men on a lobster boat on May 15th.

But more and more Americans are realizing that while we protest the extraction of oil, gas, uranium and coal, the reality is that the root of the problem is in the American Way of Life (AWOL). One activist from Portland made the point that [the Tar Sands starts in our driveways](#) and we need to change the AWOL in order to truly combat it. We agree that our strategy has two prongs: protest and build i.e. Stop the Machine and Create a New World.

In addition to how much energy we each use, we need to look at where our food comes from. An Occupy group in Berkeley, [Occupy the Farm, made that point this week when they took over University of California land](#) to grow farm for the community locally.

Another area where we are seeing continued growth in the movement is in thinking through how we do our work and in developing strategy to achieve our goals. We published a [live streamer “Code of Ethics”](#) developed by people who work in the citizen’s media. Note the high ethics and cooperative approach they take to getting the media out.

Many are thinking about strategy to make the movement more effective. Gar Alperovitz, a political economist who has been writing about alternatives to big finance capitalism in the United States has a new book out focused on strategy, “What then Must We Do,” and we published a review of the book by Sam Pizzigati of Inequality.org entitled: [A Promising Path for Pummeling Plutocracy](#).

Upcoming actions:

May 17th, [Support the Guantanamo hunger strikers](#) on the 100th Day of their hunger strike with phone calls and tweets to the White House and protests in DC, NY, Chicago and other cities.

May 18th, [‘Operation Green Jobs’ March from Philadelphia to Washington, DC](#) organized by

the Poor People's Economic and Human Rights Campaign.

May 18th to 23rd the [Home Defenders League Week of Action](#) against the banks and foreclosures in Washington, DC.

May 18th to 20th there is a [weekend of protests against the closure of schools in Chicago](#).

May 22nd [Stop the Frack Attack People's Forum](#) in Washington, DC.

May 25th [Protests against Monsanto everywhere](#)

May 25th to June 3rd [March from Philadelphia to Harrisburg](#) against prison spending.

June 1st, [Get on the Bus For Bradley Court Martial Trial](#) with buses leaving from Baltimore, MD, Washington DC, New York City and Willimantic, CT.

June 14th to 16th [Trade Justice Action Camp](#) in Bellingham, WA by the Backbone Campaign

June 24th to 29th is the beginning of "[Fearless Summer](#)" that starts "[an epic summer of actions](#)."

You can order or print [OccuCards](#) to bring with you to these actions. There are cards for all of the issues being protested above and new cards are being created.

And watch for the transformation of October2011/Occupy Washington DC into Popular Resistance, daily news and resources for effective activism, coming in June. [Sign up here](#) if you want to be notified of the launch.

This article is based on a weekly newsletter for [October2011/Occupy Washington, DC](#). To sign up for the free newsletter, [click here](#).

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