

# Fearlessness Grows From the Grass Roots: US Protest Movement against the Banksters

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*As more people see that the [government represents Wall Street](#) and concentrated wealth, instead of them; that the government continues to give the [banksters who crashed the economy](#) a break while cutting access to basic necessities, that the government continues to put big energy profits ahead of protecting the planet - more people are becoming fearless.*

Last week, front-line environmental groups including climate justice activists, opponents of tar sands, mountaintop renewal and many others who oppose the extraction economy that poisons our land, water and air while risking climate change, announced "[Fearless Summer](#)." They announced a week of actions from June 24 to 29 to begin "[an epic summer of actions](#)." The rising tide of courage in the environmental justice movement is one we also see growing in many communities on many issues.

When people stand up against the destructive extraction industries of big energy interests, we gain community support and sometimes we win. This week in New York communities got a lot of power when a [court upheld their right to ban fracking](#). This happened because people stood up for their communities.

Long-time activist, [George Lakey, describes how he and 17 colleagues protested Mountaintop Removal at the PNC Bank shareholder meeting](#). They broke all the middle class rules, gave a mocking-award to the outgoing CEO and sang songs. Efforts to drown them out failed and in the end, the meeting was adjourned - and the protest was covered in the media, forcing the bank to respond for the first time. Now, their accountability campaign focused on bank board members will escalate. There are lots of lessons for all of us in this experience.

Another group that has awakened in the last year has been members of the first nations. Ever since the Idle No More campaign began last December, native Indians have been standing up across the continent. One issue that [Indians are focused on is the extraction economy and the KXL pipeline in particular](#) which will cross hundreds of indigenous sacred spiritual sites and burial grounds, as well as two major sources of drinking water, the Ogallala aquifer and the Mni Wiconi water line for the Pine Ridge and Rosebud reservations.

From Chicago to Detroit, from San Jose to Portland, from Oakland to Newark, IL [people are standing up and saying "NO" to austerity](#). Whether it is school closures, mass lay-offs or cuts to essential programs - people are protesting. People know that austerity ensures the economy will remain in collapse; and they know that the real cause of the budget problems are corporate tax loopholes, low tax rates on the wealthy and giveaways to crony capitalists. People also know - [it does not have to be this way](#).

Students are also standing up. For years there have been protests against tuition hikes and mass student debt. This week students at Cooper Union, who are assured of free tuition, are standing up not for themselves but for the students that follow and demanding that Cooper Union continue the 144 year old mission of its founder that college education should be free. This week [they took over and occupied the president's office](#) to protest plans for tuition at the school. We believe college education should be free for all.

Low wage workers, almost always without a union, are protesting across the country. Most recently they protested in [Detroit](#), [St. Louis](#) and [Chicago](#). [Wal-Mart workers, taking a lesson from the Civil Rights Freedom Rides](#), are planning bus caravans to the annual meeting of Wal-Mart shareholders on June 7. And, now people are realizing that [the federal government is the largest employer of low-wage workers](#), (full-time workers paid under \$24,000 annually) and that President Obama could change that with a stroke of a pen. He talks about raising wages, but so far he is only talk.

Among the lowest paid and most mistreated workers are farm workers, but after years of organizing they are beginning to win [victories in their fight for justice](#). In 2011, The United Farm Workers, after a 200-mile, 13-day march through California, won state legislation which protects workers from employer intimidation during union votes. The Coalition of Immokalee Workers, which has been organizing tomato growers in Florida since 1994, has been winning battles against individual corporations for fair wages and treatment of workers, most recently Chipotle Mexican Grill and Trader Joe's. Now their [targets are Publix and Wendy's](#). And, the Farm Labor Organizing Committee has been winning better working conditions for thousands of cucumber pickers through successful boycotts and strikes aimed at Campbell's, Heinz, and Mount Olive Pickle Company. Standing up, organizing and mobilizing improves people's lives.

People who are homeless are also organizing for respect and justice. Here is a [group of homeless advocates](#) working for civil rights, e.g. not being harassed for being in public and not being provided lawyers who do not push them to plea bargain. They advocate for housing when they see thousands of vacant homes around them, and they advocate for community land trusts which would keep housing affordable.

And, activists are coming to the aid of people threatened with eviction and foreclosure. This week in [Seattle](#) and [Los Angeles](#) people stood up against the big banks seeking to put people on the street.

You do not hear about these revolts happening across the United States because the corporate media does not want you to know that [America is in revolt](#). But, if you think the media is bad now, watch what happens if the Koch brothers are able to purchase a large chain of newspapers that includes the *Los Angeles Times*, *Baltimore Sun* and many others. People in LA are not waiting to find out, they are [organizing protests now](#); and writers at the *Times* are pledging to quit rather than work for the extreme right wing Kochs.

What we are reporting in this weekly review is something we have seen [in previous weeks](#), indeed for the last several years, even before Occupy began. A popular resistance is developing throughout the nation; and the more the government fails to listen, the more the media fails to report it, the bigger the explosion of resistance will be. We've been working with some of the best resistance activists in the nation and will soon be announcing a new project to help bring the popular resistance to a new level. The success of this effort depends on you getting involved. [Sign up now](#), so you are there to help make

transformation from a money-centered oligarchy to a people centered democracy and an economy that works for all of us a reality.

*This article is based on the newsletter of [OccupyWashingtonDC/October2011](#). You can [see the newsletters and sign up for them here](#).*

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