

99

DISPATCHES FROM
OCCUPY TORONTO

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Rain Soaks Camp But Can't Quench Hopes

Megan Kinch

The OccupyTO camp at King and Church faced its first major test last week, as a rainstorm descended during the night. Residents spent an entire afternoon preparing for the onslaught of wind and rain, pegging down tents, covering the info booth and library in tarps and tightening tent lines. Throughout the night the wind raged, and the campers awoke to find much of the area flooded, but the preparations paid off.

"We did excellent last night" said Bruce, who helped organize a contingent from Oshawa. "The people were prepared. If we survived this storm last night we'll survive anything."

A large puddle had formed near the centre of the site; someone jokingly made a sign which read "Lake Occupy"

and pretended to fish in the pond, but by the following day the drains cleared and the 'lake' disappeared. Swampy areas were covered in straw donated by rural residents, in solidarity with the occupation.

"I couldn't really get a proper sleep because it was so cold", said Sunny, who is living at the camp. Nonetheless, she thinks that camping out is worth it. "I'm here because I want to be actively learning the things I need to live communally. Normally I live in a single room in

Kensington [Market], but here I am living in a community which is something that reflects my values."

Ana looked damp but enthusiastic. "There is lots of taking care of each other. We got soaked last night, so one of the girls got some dry blankets. I think I just accept that I live here now; I pretty much only leave to go to work."

The weather is not the biggest concern to many on the site. "I'd rather face rainstorms than police batons" joked one protester, referring to the police repression experienced by many of the 'occupy' protests in other cities.

The encampment is gaining an air of permanence, and people are starting to winterize their tents with donated tarps provided by logistics. The food and media teams have power



Occupy Toronto, October 22, 2011.

Photos: Mike Barber



provided by generators, and a mini-society has emerged with its own medics, a safe space for women, and a free school for workshops. The people's library, which started out as a few stacks of books on a blanket, has its own comfy tent and a well-organized collection, which includes not only radical literature but also plenty of fiction.

There are now over 250 tents in the park.

Get videos, podcasts, stories and more (or upload your own!) on the #occupy movement across Canada at mediacoop.ca/occupy.

A Message from the Food Team:

"We are serving over 1000 meals a day for this movement, we cook off-site in commercial kitchens and bring it in via the food fleet. We need more commercial kitchens! If you can help, write occupytofood@gmail.com"

99 is a project of Toronto Media Co-Op which operates as an independent outlet for grassroots journalism, radical media and non-corporate coverage of the Occupy Toronto movement and related global struggles

Briefs

Occupy Oakland is one of a number of U.S. cities to face intense repression. After Tuesday evening, one man is in critical condition after being shot with a projectile police when police used tear gas, rubber bullets and concussion grenades to disperse protestors.

Occupy Edmonton demonstrators remain in place after a Sunday night eviction deadline passed without incident. The group has been in written contact with Melcor, a real-estate development company which technically owns the park being occupied.

Occupy Sacramento dem-

onstrators arrested in Cesar Chavez Park and charged with 'unlawful assembly' will not be prosecuted under state law. The District Attorney refused to prosecute the charges, siding with demonstrators who recently announced a civil rights lawsuit against city council.

Occupy Melbourne is the latest group to call for a long-overdue treaty between the Commonwealth of Australia and the nation's Indigenous Peoples. The proposal was passed at the 8th General Assembly of Occupy Melbourne.

Participants in the Tahrir Square uprising earlier this year drafted

an open letter of solidarity to the Occupy movements taking place in North America and Europe. The statement, published on the Occupy California website, drew direct links between the current occupations, the Arab Spring and the anti-capitalist uprisings that have taken place since the financial crisis.

Clergy at St. Paul's Cathedral remain uncertain over the Occupy London protest camped outside, with reports that at least one church official may resign if the city authorizes the use of force against it. The Cathedral has closed its doors in response to the camp, for the first time in almost 70 years.

Commentary – The Undocumented 99%

Gurdit Singh

One in twenty-six Canadian residents, fully 1,290,000 people, do not have full citizenship status. Look around you: one in every twenty-six people here might be a non-citizen. This movement, the Occupy movement, is about everyone who lives here.

These residents pay taxes, live and work here, create art, and have friends...but they cannot vote. Many of them are people of colour. They are poorer than the average Canadian citizen, and get paid less for doing the same job. Banks charge them higher interest rates on loans. They are harassed more by the police, and are denied many rights. They are part of the 99%.

Over 300,000 of them are temporary migrant workers. Migrant workers do jobs that no one else wants, for wages that no one else will take, in conditions that are absolutely horrifying. Every few months, a migrant worker dies or is seriously injured working, growing and packing food that we eat, working in the back of a restaurant or a coffee shop, or taking care of children and the elderly.

Migrant workers pay full taxes, but can't get full health care, go to school, or get the pensions that are cut from their paycheques each month. The simple truth is that this is not fair. To create a fair economic system, we have to get to the root of what it is that keeps

these members of the 99% poor and without rights: citizenship status.

Another 500,000 have no immigration papers at all. These people are the undocumented. Undocumented people pay sales tax, property tax, and often income tax, yet receive no social services. These people, who have first been refused citizenship, are then forced to live in fear of deportation. Imagine living your entire life in fear, not being able to open a bank account, get a driver's license, go to a food bank, or a hospital emergency room. They too, are the 99%.

The Occupy movement is about unity, solidarity, and the 99%. Let's act like it. The

next time someone speaks about citizen's rights, speak of people's rights. When someone calls immigrants illegals, say that a person, a human being, cannot be illegal. When you hear someone say 'they should go where they came from', remind that person that - other than Indigenous people - none of us are 'from here'.

And if ever immigration enforcement or police come to arrest people simply because they have no immigration papers, tell them: We are the 99%. Our movement includes everyone, whether they have immigration status or not.



Occupy TO - Happenings

Saturday, October 22: Around 2,000 protesters marched from Occupy Toronto to Nathan Phillips square to protest local austerity figure Rob Ford's attack on city services. Members of the First Nations community, OCAP, Tenants for social housing, and others spoke at the rally.

Later, Toronto's Zombie march included some zombie protesters, who chanted: "What do we want BRAAINS.. When do we want them? NOW!"

Sunday: Rumours surfaced in camp of police horses training

in Trinity Bellwoods park. The police liaison assured occupiers that horses were related to another protest and no eviction is planned.

A curfew on drumming, passed at an earlier General Assembly, went into effect after 11 PM, in order to promote good relations with neighbors.

The Freeschool tent began regular courses on practical skills, privilege, and political theory.

St. James Cathedral issued the following press release:

"We have asked that the protesters respect the members

of the community who live and work in the area. The overwhelming response from the members of the community to the Cathedral's position on this issue has been positive. They share, as do we, the protesters' message of justice and equality."

Monday: 150 people from Occupy Toronto went to Novotel hotel to support workers organizing with Unite Here.

At 2pm, a march went to City Hall to protest Ford's privatization of garbage collection.

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