

A Report from the Frontlines: The Long Road to #OccupyWallStreet and the Origins of the 99% Movement

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By David DeGraw

How Anonymous, AmedStatus, the NYC General Assembly, US Day of Rage, Adbusters and Thousands of Individual Actions Led to the Occupation of Liberty Park and the Birth of a Movement

As the occupation of Wall Street moves into its third week, there are many questions about the organizers behind the ongoing protests and the origins of the 99% Movement. As one of the many people who actively supported the effort, and helped launch the 99% Movement, I will give my perspective on the events leading up to the occupation of Liberty Park.

As I understand it, the #OccupyWallStreet 99% Movement is a decentralized non-violent rebellion against economic tyranny. It is a *leaderless* movement that has been dependent upon tens of thousands of individuals taking it upon themselves to take action and fight back against their own personal financial hardships, and in defense of their family and friends who are desperately struggling to make ends meet.

The road that led to the successful occupation has been a long, hard and winding one. When you go to Liberty Park, into the heart of the occupation, you will see a very diverse group of people with opinions across the entire political spectrum. It is the very essence of a ground-up grassroots decentralized movement. Everyone there has their own individual story on what brought them to take such a strong and inspiring stand in support of this action. I urge members of the press and people interested in the movement to begin a dialogue with any one of the people taking part. There are many fascinating stories to be heard and a deeper understanding of what's happening is impossible without hearing from a plurality of voices.

To give some background information, the following is a timeline of my 19-month long personal experience within the movement:

The Birth of the 99% Movement

On February 15th, 2010, AmedStatus.com published the first-part of an extensive six-part series that I wrote detailing the financial destruction of the US economy. The report is entitled, "[The Economic Elite Vs. The People of the United States](#)"^[3]. The first sentence reads:

"It's time for 99% of Americans to mobilize and aggressively move on common sense political reforms."

The introduction goes on to say:

"It has now become evident to a critical mass that the Republican and Democratic parties, along with all three branches of our government, have been bought off by a well-organized Economic Elite who are tactically destroying our way of life. The harsh truth is that 99% of the US population no longer has political representation. The US economy, government and tax system are now blatantly rigged against us.

Current statistical societal indicators clearly demonstrate that a strategic attack has been launched and an analysis of current governmental policies prove that conditions for 99% of Americans will continue to deteriorate. The Economic Elite have engineered a financial coup and have brought war to our doorstep... and make no mistake, they have launched a war to eliminate the US middle class."

The report quickly went viral and many popular websites picked it up and published it. AlterNet.org featured an adapted excerpt from the report with the headline, "[The Economic Elite Have Engineered an Extraordinary Coup, Threatening the Very Existence of the Middle Class](#)"^[4]. It became one of the most popular reports that they have ever published. In aggregate, across many websites that have published sections of the report, it has received an estimated five million page views.

Soon after the report was released, AmedStatus formed the 99% Movement based on a [general platform](#)^[5] put forth in part-six of the report, entitled "[How to Fight Back and Win: Common Ground Issues That Must Be Won](#)"^[6].

As the movement began to build over the course of the next ten months, after a series of [TV interviews in which I supported the 99% Movement and called for acts of non-violent civil disobedience](#),^[7] the AmedStatus.com website was attacked and repeatedly knocked offline. The source of the attacks remains unknown. After publishing investigative reports detailing the fraudulent activities of Wall Street; the destructive impact the financial elite have had upon the American people; revealing direct connections between economic hardships in the US and the uprisings that, at the time, were just beginning to take shape throughout Northern Africa, the Middle East and Europe, it was obvious that we were upsetting many powerful forces.

As AmedStatus was pushing for a decentralized global rebellion against Wall Street and actively supporting the Egyptian uprising against the [IMF and Federal Reserve](#)^[8], the attacks on the site escalated. In what appeared to be a fatal blow, the entire ISP network that the AmedStatus.com site was hosted on was knocked offline, hundreds of sites were also affected and the AmedStatus.com web hosting provider said that they would no longer be able to host the site unless it was moved to a service that was significantly more than we were paying or could afford. With a very limited budget, and in complete desperation, AmedStatus put out a call for help.

Anonymous Rides to the Rescue...

As AmedStatus.com came under attack, Anonymous was playing a key role in supporting the uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia. When no one else with the needed technical expertise would help us and it became apparent that we would have to shut down our operation, several Anonymous members stepped up and offered to support and defend AmedStatus.com from further attacks. They assisted in setting up a new hosting account and helped develop a new Independent social network for the 99% Movement. From that point on, AmedStatus.com has not once been knocked offline due to an attack.

Once we regained our First Amendment rights and knew that we had backing from Anonymous members, we then defiantly released another extensive report in February, 2011 entitled, "[Analysis of the Global Insurrection Against Neo-Liberal Economic Domination and the Coming American Rebellion – We Are Egypt](#)"^[9].

The introduction states:

"If you think what's happening in Egypt won't happen within the United States, you've been watching too much TV. The statistics speak for themselves.

In previous [Revolution Roundups](#)^[10], before we were knocked offline, we featured mass protests by the people of Ireland, Italy, Britain, Austria, Greece, France and Portugal, as the Global Insurrection contagion spread throughout Europe. And now, as we have seen over the past month, North African and Middle Eastern nations have joined the movement as the people of Egypt, Tunisia, Jordan, Morocco, Gabon, Mauritania, Yemen, Bahrain, Libya, Palestine, Iraq, Sudan and Algeria have taken to the streets en masse.

The connection between this latest round of uprisings and the prior protests throughout Europe is one the mainstream media is not making. We are witnessing a decentralized global rebellion against Neo-Liberal economic imperialism. While each national uprising has its own internal characteristics, each one, at its core, is about the rising costs of living and lack of financial opportunity and security. Throughout the world the situation is the same: increasing levels of unemployment and poverty, as price inflation on food and basic necessities is soaring.

Whether national populations realize it or not, these uprisings are against systemic global economic policies that are strategically designed to exploit the working class, reduce living standards, increase personal debt and create severe inequalities of wealth. These global uprising, which have only just begun, are the first wave of the inevitable reaction to the implementation of a centralized worldwide Neo-Feudal economic order.

The global banking cartel, centered at the IMF, World Bank and Federal Reserve, have paid off politicians and dictators the world over — from Washington to Greece to Egypt. In country after country, they have looted national economies at the expense of local populations, consolidating wealth in unprecedented fashion..."

Within this report, there was a section calling for an **occupation of Wall Street**, in what is referred to as "[The Empire State Rebellion](#)"^[11]."

A sub-group within Anonymous then joined with the AmpedStatus 99% Movement and we began a collaborative effort known as A99.

A broad [A99 platform](#)^[12] was presented on the AmpedStatus social network. The platform represented a diverse mix of political viewpoints that members felt would properly represent the 99% of the population that has lost political representation. [[View original platform here](#)]^[12].

On Mar 12, 2011, Anonymous A99 announced their first operation by posting a video to the AmpedStatus YouTube page. The effort was called "Operation Empire State Rebellion" (#OpESR). The video "[OpESR Communication #1](#)"^[13] stated the following:

"We are a decentralized non-violent resistance movement, which seeks to restore the rule of law and fight back against the organized criminal class.

One-tenth of one percent of the population has consolidated wealth in unprecedented fashion and launched an all-out economic war against 99.9% of the population.

We are not affiliated with either wing of the two-party oligarchy. We seek an end to the corrupted two-party system by ending the campaign finance and lobbying racket.

Above all, we aim to break up the global banking cartel centered at the Federal Reserve, International Monetary Fund, Bank of International Settlements and World Bank.

We demand that the primary dealers within the Federal Reserve banking system be broken up and held accountable for rigging markets and destroying the global economy, effective immediately.

As a first sign of good faith, we demand Ben Bernanke step down as Federal Reserve chairman.

Until our demands are met and a rule of law is restored, we will engage in a relentless campaign of non-violent, peaceful, civil disobedience."

Economic news site ZeroHedge quickly picked up the video and featured it on their site with the headline, "[Hacker Group Anonymous Brings Peaceful Revolution To America: Will Engage In Civil Disobedience Until Bernanke Steps Down](#)"^[14]."

The video then went viral and got over 225,000 views.

Anonymous Calls for a US Day of Rage

On March 23rd, Anonymous issued a press release calling for a "US Day of Rage." The phrase, "A day of rage," has been a rallying cry used in uprisings spreading throughout the Middle East. A new [USDavofRage.org](#)^[15] website was launched and their first press release, again quickly picked up by [ZeroHedge](#)^[16], called for a day of mass action and pledged their support of A99's original general platform. [[Full release here](#)]^[17].

Throughout April and May, members of A99 were organizing and debating possible future actions. They decided that Flag Day, June 14th, would be an appropriate time to launch actions. They also set up several new Facebook pages, such as "[#OpESR – Operation Empire State Rebellion Amped](#)"^[18]."

On June 1st, this Anonymous [call to action](#)^[19] was published to AmpedStatus:

Acts of Resistance: What Are You Going To Do To Rebel Against Economic Tyranny?

The big banks have sold us out.
Democrats and Republicans have sold us out.
No one is defending our interests.
Our future is going up in flames.

It's time for us to stand up and defend ourselves.

Trillions of dollars in fraudulent activity by the big banks on Wall Street caused our current economic crisis. Paid off politicians from both parties, along with secret deals made by the Federal Reserve, gave trillions of taxpayer dollars and subsidies to the very people who caused our crisis. After taking our tax dollars, they had the audacity to give themselves all-time record-breaking bonuses and consolidate wealth in unprecedented fashion within the economic top 0.01% of the population.

While a record number of Americans are currently living in poverty and on food stamps; while millions of American families have been foreclosed upon; while health care, food and gas costs are skyrocketing; while over 200 million Americans are living paycheck to paycheck struggling to make ends meet, the super-wealthy have never had it better. We now have the most severe inequality of wealth in American history. The depravity of the Robber Barons has been outdone.

As their current policies prove, economic central planners have become so arrogant and tyrannical in their shortsighted greed. They think we are an ignorant and apathetic population that they can continue to exploit without fear of rebellion.

We are finally declaring that we have had enough. We will not remain passive while global banking interests destroy our future. We know the systemic causes of our current crisis and we are going to strike at the root.

On this Flag Day, June 14th, Operation Empire State Rebellion (#OpESR) will launch. #OpESR is a decentralized non-violent resistance movement to end the system of political bribery (campaign finance and lobbying) and break up the big banks centered at the Federal Reserve.

To coincide with the launch of this movement, people have begun organizing acts of resistance throughout the US. We are calling upon you to take an action of your own. Whether it's taking part in a local public protest, withdrawing your money from one of the big six banks, starting a community group or passing out fliers. Anything you can do to rebel against the system of economic tyranny in a non-violent manner is welcome.

As a first step, please join the actions against the banks in one of the [cities shown here](#)^[20], or use the '[schedule an action](#)'^[21] tool to [create your own](#)^[21]."

The online attention surrounding this call to action quickly grew. For a roundup of coverage see:

> [Economic Rebellion Update – This Is What Decentralized Resistance Looks Like](#)^[19]

> [Prepare For Revolution: The Empire State Rebellion Begins on June 14th](#)^[22]

On June 11th, Anonymous A99 released "[OpESR Communication #2: Ctrl+Alt+Bernanke](#)" [23]."

"In this new video release, 'as a first step,' Anonymous has called for public protests beginning on June 14th, continuing 'until Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke steps down.' To make their case, they have presented a list of recent scandalous Federal Reserve actions."

Once again, the video was posted to the AmpedStatus YouTube account and ZeroHedge quickly picked it up and [featured it](#) [24]. The video instantly went viral attracting over 360,000 views on the AmpedStatus YouTube account alone. It became popular enough to break through and get some coverage from the mainstream corporate media. MSNBC, Time, Bloomberg and Forbes were among [many news outlets to cover it](#) [25].

On June 13th, it was announced that as part this day of action a group of people will **occupy Liberty Park**, a strategic public space closest to Wall Street and the New York Federal Reserve building. This Anonymous [statement was released](#) [26]:

Activists to Occupy Financial District's Liberty Park Until Demands Are Met – Operation Empire State Rebellion Begins

"On June 14th at 1pm EST, a group of activists will begin occupation of Liberty Park (recently renamed Zuccotti Park) in lower Manhattan's Financial District, a few blocks from Wall Street (14971 Broadway, 10007). A Google Map [featuring the event](#) [20] states the following:

'This Flag Day, Tuesday June 14th, we will launch a non-violent movement with this list of demands:

- * End the campaign finance and lobbying racket
- * Break up the Fed & Too Big to Fail banks
- * Enforce RICO laws against organized criminal class
- * Order Ben Bernanke to step down'

[Gary Roland](#) [27], an organizer of the action, says they will occupy the park 'indefinitely, to express non-violent dissent to the further consolidation of wealth into the hands of international corporations by the corrupted two-party oligarchy. This is a non-violent action that seeks to express dissent and raise awareness of the failures of our current political discourse, until our demands are satisfied.'"

With only 16 people showing up at Liberty Park, and only [four prepared to occupy it](#) [28], this part of the day's actions were considered by some to be a disappointing failure. Though this intense form of civil disobedience didn't gain enough support at that time, the many other actions happening throughout the day were very successful.

Anonymous A99 issued an extensive report detailing the days actions: "[OpESR Status Update: Empire State Rebellion Day 1](#)" [25]. In the report, the section on occupying Liberty Park reads:

"The most ambitious ground operation launched on Day 1 was in New York City's Financial District, just a few blocks from Wall Street, at Liberty Park. The protest only attracted 16 people in total, with only 4 people ready to occupy the park indefinitely. While this operation was a fail due to lack of participants, we want to thank the event organizer Gary Roland and the three other people who were prepared to occupy the park: David DeGraw, Oren Clark and Kevin Dann.

Getting people to stand up in this way requires a very strong commitment that most people have not yet realized will be necessary and in their best interests. As we continue Awareness Operations and build momentum, we will reactivate this part of our Ground Operation at a future date. We have set up a social network group dedicated to planning this operation. If you are ready to peacefully occupy a public place, please join the [planning group here](#) [29]."

On the very same day as the launch of the Empire State Rebellion and the failed Liberty Park action, there was a group of activists assembling down the road from Liberty Park. They were preparing to set up camp in what became known as [Bloomberville](#) [30] to protest against New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg's budget cuts. Gary Roland, after leaving Liberty Park with a feeling frustration, decided to join the Bloomberg protests.

Enter the New York City General Assembly

During the Bloomberg protests a group of activists, including Gary Roland, formed a People's General Assembly, which eventually evolved into the [New York City General Assembly](#) [31] (NYCGA), to help facilitate an organized non-violent movement. After the two-week long Bloomberg occupation near the city capital building, the NYCGA kept meeting and building toward the next major protest event. **The NYCGA would go on to play the most pivotal role on the ground, building a large turnout through old-fashioned grassroots community-based organizing.**

As the NYCGA was being formed, Anonymous A99 debated the exact date in which they would return to Liberty Park for another attempt at achieving the occupation of Wall Street. They were committed to a strategy of three-month cycles. Their first communication was issued on March 12th, the second video calling for protests was released 90-days later on June 11th. They debated and it appeared that the next attempted occupation of Liberty Park would occur on September 10th.

Adbusters Makes the Call...

As the debate among Anonymous A99 was happening and a date for occupation was being finalized, Adbusters magazine issued an open [call for an occupation of Wall Street](#) [32] on September 17th. Anonymous, A99 OpESR, US Day of Rage and the NYCGA quickly endorsed the action. With the NYCGA focused on community-based organizing, Adbusters, Anonymous, AmpedStatus, A99, US Day of Rage, WagingNonViolence and many other sites actively pushed out the message online urging people to take part in the action. [WeAreThe99Percent.com](#) [33] and [OccupyWallSt.org](#) [34] were then independently launched to directly support the action. Indymedia's [Global Revolution](#) [35] media team provided a [livestream video feed](#) [35] to cover the event, which then inspired many more people to come and join the occupation once it had begun. It was this serendipitous confluence of decentralized independent groups and thousands of individuals taking it upon themselves to take action that helped make the successful occupation of Liberty Park possible.

Note: There are definitely other significant groups that played a key role. In such a decentralized movement, it's hard to keep track of all the efforts being put forth. We will feature other perspectives in the days ahead.

Moving Forward...

Ultimately, all of the groups mentioned throughout this report were just the seeds that helped launch what is now known as the #OccupyWallStreet 99% Movement. As the occupation of Liberty Park continues to grow and enters it's third week, with no signs of protesters even considering leaving, the people most actively taking part are committed to remaining a decentralized leaderless movement based on the direct democratic process of deciding on future demands and actions through a consensus of those participating. In the spirit of the movement, people acting on their own have begun like-minded actions and occupations [throughout the country](#) [36].

The only unifying call to action seems to be:

"Anything you can do to rebel against the system of economic tyranny in a non-violent manner is welcome."

As Anonymous A99 wrote in response to [questions about their movement](#) [37]:

"We are a DECENTRALIZED non-violent movement. If you are looking to contact one of our leaders, go to the nearest mirror and peer deeply into it. It may take some time, but, eventually, one of our leaders will appear with answers to all of your questions."

What more can you say?

As I'm typing this, the NYC General Assembly meeting just came to an end, I hear the sound of drums, looks like it's time for another march. An NYPD officer who supports our efforts just gave me a nod and said, "Hey man, you better get back to the frontlines. The troops are on the move." It's another day of battle at Liberty Park.

The occupation of Wall Street rages on...

- David DeGraw is the editor of [AmpedStatus.com](#) [38]. An archive of his reports is [available here](#) [39]. You can contact him via email: David@AmpedStatus.com

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[1]: <http://twitter.com/home/?status=A+Report+from+the+Frontlines%3A+The+Long+Road+to+%23OccupyWallStreet+and+the+Origins+of+the+99%25+Movement+http%3A%2F%2F>

[2]: <http://reddit.com/submit?url=http://ampedstatus.org/a-report-from-the-frontlines-the-long-road-to-occupywallstreet-and-the-origins-of-the-99-movement/&title=A+Report+from+the+Frontlines%3A+The+Long+Road+to+%23OccupyWallStreet+and+the+Origins+of+the+99%25+Movement>

[3] The Economic Elite Vs. The People of the United States: <http://ampedstatus.org/full-report-the-economic-elite-vs-the-people-of-the-united-states-of-america/>

[4] The Economic Elite Have Engineered an Extraordinary Coup, Threatening the Very Existence of the Middle Class:

<http://www.alternet.org/economy/145667/the-economic-elite-have-engineered-an-extraordinary-coup-threatening-the-very-existence-of-the-middle-class>

[5] general platform: <http://salsa.democracyinaction.org/o/339/t/10594/signUp.isp?key=4898>

[6] How to Fight Back and Win: Common Ground Issues That Must Be Won: <http://ampedstatus.org/full-report-the-economic-elite-vs-the-people-of-the-united-states-of-america/#win>

[7] TV interviews in which I supported the 99% Movement and called for acts of non-violent civil disobedience.: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oJGrz_mhq&feature=player_embedded

[8] IMF and Federal Reserve: <http://ampedstatus.org/analysis-of-the-global-insurrection-against-neo-liberal-economic-domination-and-the-coming-american-rebellion-we-are-egypt-revolution-roundup-3/#centrally>

[9] Analysis of the Global Insurrection Against Neo-Liberal Economic Domination and the Coming American Rebellion - We Are Egypt:

<http://ampedstatus.org/analysis-of-the-global-insurrection-against-neo-liberal-economic-domination-and-the-coming-american-rebellion-we-are-egypt-revolution-roundup-3/>

[10] Revolution Roundups: <http://ampedstatus.org/revolution-roundup-2-as-mass-rebellion-spreads-throughout-europe-americans-dance-with-the-stars/>

[11] The Empire State Rebellion: <http://ampedstatus.org/analysis-of-the-global-insurrection-against-neo-liberal-economic-domination-and-the-coming-american-rebellion-we-are-egypt-revolution-roundup-3/#empire>

[12] A99 platform: <http://ampedstatus.org/network/original-99platform/>

[13] OpESR Communication #1: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7D6neBzTnOQ>

[14] Hacker Group Anonymous Brings Peaceful Revolution To America: Will Engage In Civil Disobedience Until Bernanke Steps Down:

<http://www.zerohedge.com/article/hacker-group-anonymous-brings-peaceful-revolution-america-will-engage-civil-disobedience-until-bernanke-steps-down>

[15] USDavofRage.org: <http://usdavofrage.org/>

[16] ZeroHedge: <http://www.zerohedge.com/article/hacker-collective-anonymous-issues-open-letter-citizens-united-states>

[17] Full release here: <http://www.scribd.com/doc/51432365/an-open-letter-to-us-citizens>

[18] #OpESR - Operation Empire State Rebellion Amped: <https://www.facebook.com/OpESR>

[19] call to action: <http://ampedstatus.org/acts-of-resistance-what-are-you-going-to-do-on-june-14th-to-rebel-against-economic-tyranny/>

[20] cities shown here: <http://maps.google.com/maps/ms?hl=en&ie=UTF8&msa=0&msid=215659122039078971677.0004a3a944baf3a247b7&ll=41.508577,-98.261719&spn=49.644969,70.136719&z=3&source=embed>

[21] schedule an action: <http://www.fss34.com/schedule-an-action.html>

[22] Prepare For Revolution: The Empire State Rebellion Begins on June 14th: <http://ampedstatus.org/june-14th-economic-rebellion-update-%E2%80%93-this-is-what-decentralized-resistance-looks-like/>

[23] OpESR Communication #2: Ctrl+Alt+Bernanke: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XySGw-g2tyk&feature=related>

[24] featured it: <http://www.zerohedge.com/article/ctrlaltbernanke-operation-empire-state-rebellion-resumes-attack-fed-chairman>

[25] many news outlets to cover it: <http://ampedstatus.org/opesr-status-update-empire-state-rebellion-day-1/>

[26] statement was released: <http://ampedstatus.org/activists-to-occupy-financial-districts-liberty-park-until-demands-are-met-operation-empire-state-rebellion-begins/>

[27] Gary Roland: <http://ampedstatus.org/network/members/nycamp/>

[28] four prepared to occupy it: <http://ampedstatus.org/network/members/ddegraw/activity/35801/>

[29] planning group here: <http://ampedstatus.org/network/groups/the-american-resistance/>

[30] Bloomberqville: <http://bloomberqville.org/>

[31] New York City General Assembly: <http://nycga.cc/who-we-are/>

[32] call for an occupation of Wall Street: <http://ampedstatus.org/network/members/admin/activity/39873>

[33] WeAreThe99Percent.com: <http://wearethe99percent.tumblr.com/>

[34] OccupyWallSt.org: <http://OccupyWallSt.org>

[35] Global Revolution: <http://www.livestream.com/globalrevolution>

[36] throughout the country: <http://ampedstatus.org/occupywallstreet-99-movement-spreads-across-america-introducing-occupytogether-org/>

[37] questions about their movement: <http://ampedstatus.org/network/members/admin/activity/22873>

[38] AmpedStatus.com: <http://ampedstatus.org>

[39] available here: <http://daviddegraw.org/2011/07/complete-list-of-david-degraws-reports-2/>