Occupy Shut Down West Coast Ports

WEST COAST - On December 12th, more than 1,000 Occupy Wall Street protesters blocked cargo trucks at busy US west coast ports, forcing some shipping terminals in Oakland, California, Portland, Oregon, and Washington state to halt operations. While the protests on Monday attracted fewer people than the 10,000 who turned out for the November 2nd general strike to shut down Oakland’s port, organizers declared victory and promised more demonstrations to come.

“...the trucks are still here but there’s nobody here to unload their stuff,” said protest organizer and hip hop MC Boots Riley. “We shut down the Port of Oakland for the day-time shift and we’re coming back in the evening: Mission accomplished.”

Picket lines and physical blockades were erected in Los Angeles, Oakland, Seattle, Tacoma, San Diego, and Portland, to name just a few. In Olympia, WA, a police station had its locks glued shut and was spray painted with slogans in solidarity with the strike.

The goal of the direct action was to...
NORTH CAROLINA

Durham Joins Cities Around North America in New Year’s Eve Demo

DUHURM - At 9pm on December 31st, Durham joined a long list of dozens (and perhaps hundreds?) of towns and cities around the world to protest prisons and jails on New Year’s Eve. Done to raise prisoners’ spirits and dedicate the year toward fighting the State, folks screamed at the walls, banged on drums, chanted “Our Passion for Freedom is Stronger than their Prisons”, screamed “Happy New Year”, and banged on street signs.

Police showed up soon, but were more or less hands off. Prisoners reacted by banging in windows and flashing lighters in unison with the music from their cells. At the end of the demo, the crowd lied down in the street to spell a giant, human “HAPPY NEW YR” with their bodies, so as to be visible from the top floors of the 7 story building.

Similar demonstrations happened around the US and in countries as far away as Australia, Germany, and Finland. In Pittsburgh, protesters smashed out several of the windows of the jail before quickly leaving; in Oakland, fireworks were set off, a flag burned, and a police station attacked on a march leaving the jail.

Central Prison Warden Steps Down After Scathing Report

RALEIGH – On November 1st, Central Prison warden Gerald Branker stepped down in response to an earlier review that found that inmates with serious mental disorders were often isolated for weeks, sometimes nude, in cells puddled with human waste.

The scathing June 2011 report on conditions inside the prison’s mental unit was first made public on Monday by The Associated Press, Gov. Bev Perdue later called the report’s contents “unacceptable.”

DOC administrators had previously denied anyone was fired, by firing Democracy.

The protest at Foothills Prison is one of several small hunger strikes that have occurred in the last 6 months in North Carolina facilities, including others at Polk, Bertie, and Lanesboro Correctional Institutions.

Residents March on Town Hall in Response to Police Report

CHAPEL HILL - On Monday, January 9th, the first Chapel Hill Town Council meeting of the year was greeted with a fresh wave of anger and controversy over the violent police eviction of last year’s Yates Building occupation. The large, empty building, owned by a wealthy absentee landlord, was occupied for about 24 hours with the intent of turning it into an anarchist community center.

The protest was spurred by a Town review of the armed eviction, which denied the Police's action and refused to acknowledge the massive public outrage towards the police conduct. Since the eviction at least 4 protests against the police and the Mayor have taken place.

When the group reached Town Hall, people surrounded the building, read, “We are all flammable materials, our hearts are bags of powder, we are all able to burn.”

Others filled the room itself, waiting their turn to rail against the police advisory committee “a farce.”

Occupy Durham Marches to Remember Oscar Grant, Oppose Police Violence

DURHAM – On Sunday, January 1, 2012, Occupy Durham hosted solidarity march and speakout in remembrance of Oscar Grant and all victims of police brutality. A small group marched through downtown, denouncing police brutality and harassment and state repression.

The event coincided with others around the country and marked the third anniversary of Oscar Grant’s murder at the hands of Oakland, California transit police officer Johannes Mehserles, who was convicted of involuntary manslaughter, then served seven months in prison. His murder resulted in a massive outpouring of rage towards the police in Oakland, including two riots.

The plaza where Occupy Oakland set up an encampment for two months was renamed Oscar Grant Plaza and has been a frequently contested site between protesters and the political leaders of Oakland.

This resistance has reverberated in other cities, including Durham. Other cities throughout the country had similar events this day to commemorate the struggle as well. As the event’s press release states, “The Oakland police department’s treatment of Oscar Grant, who was certainly part of the so-called 99%, is not an aberration in the United States of America. More and more people are on or headed toward the scrap heap of our society, but Oscar Grant was not sent to the scrap heap—he was sent to the morgue.”

Prisoners Hunger Strike at Foothills Prison

MORGANTON – Several prisoners began a small hunger strike on December 1st in response to several grievances. They released the following letter and demands:

“We feel these are modest demands and will not quit until they are met. They include but are not limited to:

1. We demand the removal of the mesh covering segregation windows, which restricts long-distance vision and causes sensory deprivation. 2. We demand to be free to recreate on exercise hour without full restraints. Exercising in full restraints is physically impossible and inhuman.

3. We demand to have our desk, metal sleeping bench, and book shelves put back in our rooms.

4. We demand adequate food and full portions on our food trays, which includes nutritional meals.

5. We demand more psychologists for prisoners.

6. We demand for all prisoners on control status (C-Con, M-Con, and H-Con) that are not indigent to be able to purchase any type of pharmaceutical item from the canteen as stated in policy, including for example vitamins, tylenol, muscle relaxer cream, foot fungus powders, etc.

7. We demand adequate and equal cleaning supplies on clean-up days as regular population, including brushes and toilet bowl cleaner.

8. We demand shower mats outside of showers to prevent slipping and injuries.

These are just the demands agreed upon by the comrades. We would greatly appreciate any assistance you can offer on short notice. We will all stand strong against enemy forces and be victorious in this small battle surrounding the entire prison-industrial complex.”

People on the outside called in to the administration to express their support, and the prisoners ended the strike after several days, when several of their demands were met. The protest at Foothills Prison is one of several small hunger strikes that have occurred in the last 6 months in North Carolina facilities, including others at Polk, Bertie, and Lanesboro Correctional Institutions.

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When the group reached Town Hall, people surrounded the windows of the meeting room and plastered them with taped-up banners and signs denouncing the armed police raid. Protesters yelled speeches against the police and capitalism, and called the police advisory committee “a farce.”

Others filled the room itself, waiting their turn to rail against the council members and mayor. A protest of the police advisory committee’s meeting on January 11th was also announced. Ironically, despite being appointed by the Town Council, at its meeting this committee itself called for an independent review of the eviction, claiming that the review released by the town was biased.