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Subject: Occupy Wall Street: Changing the Topic - and more....
Date: Wed, 2 Nov 2011 15:38:47 -0700
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Friends and Colleagues:

Occupy Wall Street: Changing the Topic: The Occupy movement is changing the national conversation. I did a quick Lexis/Nexis search and found that the number of U.S. newspaper stories about "inequality," "greed" and "the richest one percent" has skyrocketed in the past month, a clear response to the Occupy protests. My article based on this data, "Occupy Wall Street: Changing the Topic," appeared in Huffington Post yesterday: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/peter-dreier/occupy-wall-street-media_b_1069250.html Americans are talking about these issues in their kitchens, workplaces, houses of worship, and neighborhoods. As the movement gains momentum, unions, community groups, clergy, elected officials, and others are voicing support. Occupy Wall Street is helping change the national mood, but whether it also changes public policy (and the people who make it) will depend on what actions the wider public takes in the next months.

Occupy! A Visual History: Around the country, college students are sponsoring teach-ins about the issues raised by Occupy Wall Street. For today's teach-in at Occidental College, I put together a photo collage of the some important "occupy" protests in the U.S. during the 20th century, starting with the women's suffrage movement, to put the current protests in historical context. I posted the photos today on Huffington Post, entitled, "Occupy!: A Visual History," linked here: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/peter-dreier/occupy_b_1072153.html

The Frying Pan: Hot Ideas for a Cold Economy: I invite you to take a look at a brand new blog called "T Frying Pan: Hot Ideas for a Cold Economy" It's devoted to figuring out ways to create a new, fairer economy and will do so through provocative posts on politics, labor, the environment and the arts. It is sponsored by the Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE). Take a look here: <http://fryingpannews.org/>

Which Bank Is the Worst?: Wonder why Occupy Wall Street is so angry with Bank of America and its brethren? Gary Rivlin names and shames the worst big banks. <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2011/10/25/why-occupy-wall-street-hates-the-big-banks.print.html>

How Politicians Can Kick the Wall Street Habit: Here's a modest proposal from Washington Post columnist Harold Meyerson: http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/how-politicians-can-kick-the-wall-street-habit/2011/10/11/gIQAVbhddL_story.html

Stiglitz on Occupy Wall Street: Joseph Stiglitz, Nobel Economics Prize winner and former president of the World Bank, gave a speech to the Occupy Wall Streeters in New York. Here's part of what he said: "You are right to be indignant. The fact is that the system is not working right. It is not right that we have so many people without jobs when we have so many needs that we have to fulfill. It's not right that we are throwing people out of their houses when we have so many homeless people. Our financial markets have an important role to play. They're supposed to allocate capital, manage risks. We are bearing the costs of their misdeeds. There's a system where we've socialized losses and privatized gains. That's not capitalism; that's not a market economy. That's a distorted economy, and if we continue with that, we won't succeed in growing, and we won't succeed in creating a just society." Watch the video here:

<http://thinkprogress.org/media/2011/10/04/335360/not-anti-capitalist-to-protest-wall-street/>

Crying Wolf: Big business and its political allies in Congress and state legislators continue to cry wolf, warning that higher taxes on business, stronger environmental regulations, and stronger protections for consumers and workers will "kill jobs" and destroy the economy. They've consistently lied in the past and they're lying now.

- Read Rick Engler's article in the *Record of Bergen County*, "We We're Better Off with Right-to-Know Laws," linked here: http://www.northjersey.com/news/opinions/righttoknow_102311.html
- Read Donald Cohen's Huffington Post article, "Junk Food Companies Contradict Themselves on Marketing to Kids" http://www.huffingtonpost.com/donald-cohen/marketing-junk-food-to-kids_b_999376.html

Voter Suppression: A Republican Strategy: Across the country, Republicans are doing whatever they can to keep poor people and people of color from voting. They just did a trial run in Colorado and they are testing various voter suppression strategies to try to steal the 2012 elections. Here are two articles, by Cry Wolf Project's Donald Cohen (in Huffington Post) and by Ari Berman (in Rolling Stone), about his nefarious strategy:

- Donald Cohen, "The Real Agenda Behind GOP Voter Suppression Efforts:" http://www.huffingtonpost.com/donald-cohen/denver-sick-leave_b_1014314.html
- Ari Berman, "The GOP War on Voting" <http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/the-gop-war-on-voting-20110830?print=true>

Maids of Honor: If you haven't seen the summer blockbuster film, "The Help," I encourage you to see it. In this piece for Truthout, I compare this film to a movie made 21 years ago, "The Long Walk Home." <http://www.truthout.com/help-ignores-history-activism-among-deep-souths-domestic-workers/1319044604>. Both are about the lives of African American maids in the South during the civil rights movement, but "The Long Walk Home" is a much more uplifting movie that honors the courage of rank-and-file participants in the Montgomery bus boycott of 1955. The Occupy movement has triggered growing interest in previous movements for justice. It is important to get the story straight to inspire a new generation.

Faculty Support for Occupy Movement: At my institution, Occidental College, 75 faculty members, more than half of the entire faculty, signed a letter of support for our students involved in the Occupy Wall Street movement. The letter, and the names of all 75 faculty members who signed it, was published in the

campus newspaper. I would encourage faculty at other institutions do circulate similar letters to express solidarity with Occupy activists on and off campus. Here is a copy of the Occidental letter:

Letter of support for Occupy Wall Street movement

As Occidental College faculty members, we want to express our solidarity with students who have been involved, off-campus and on-campus, with the Occupy movement. Throughout U.S. history, all successful movements for economic and social justice -- the abolition movement, the women's movement, the labor movement, the civil rights movement, the anti-war movement, the feminist movement, the movement against apartheid in South Africa, the environmental movement, and the LGBT movement, to name a few -- have started with a handful of people and then grown into powerful forces for a better society. They were scorned and mocked at first, but eventually their movements changed public opinion and their ideas became common sense.

Particularly in the post-World War Two era, college students and young people have played important roles in every movement for justice. White students joined with their African-American counterparts to challenge racial segregation. Male students joined women in fighting for gender equality. Straight students joined LGBT students in working to overthrow discriminatory views about sexual orientation. U.S.-born students joined immigrant students to challenge society to become more inclusive. And in movements for economic justice, students from privileged families joined with students from more modest backgrounds to help create a more humane, fair, and democratic society for all.

In the past month, the Occupy movement has helped change the national debate over economic inequality, including the reality that the super-rich and big business have too much influence in our economic and political systems. We are proud of the Oxy students who, in different ways -- from writing letters to Congress, to participating in rallies, to volunteering with unions and community organizing groups, to engaging in civil disobedience -- have joined forces with Americans around the country to draw attention to these issues and move America in a better direction.

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"The hottest places in hell are reserved for those who in times of great moral crises maintain their neutrality" - Dante