

# Opinion: Is anyone listening to the Occupy movement?

By Garry Bowen

Last Thursday we had our first official Occupy Tahoe (according to some, it will soon be Occupy SLT, to herald the idea that someone had co-opted the first).

What is Occupy? Is that the same as Occupied Berlin or, Occupied Lebanon?



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No, it appears it is a more spontaneous gut-reaction to the unanswered shenanigans of our corrupted, dysfunctional system, brought about by an increasingly out-of-touch leadership, at many, many levels. It is the pent-up answer to “Where is the outrage?”

Watching C-SPAN over the weekend, the comments shifted back and forth between two erstwhile Wall Street organizers, Adam Jewler (D.C.) and Amin Husain (Wall Street), who appeared pretty cogent and peaceful in their attribution to its being merely a voice of the people, one that they don’t ordinarily have or use. As C-SPAN routinely opens a talk-line in three categories, Liberal, Conservative, and Independent, two out of three were pretty much in concert with the First Amendment’s rights being exercised, while the third was resplendent with “socialists”, “pinkos”, and “watch your back from now on” as

if they were to be the guardians of the truth.

Even the *New York Times* weighed in Nov. 21, wondering whether it justified current journalism standards, by questioning whether "it would continue to keep its" hold on the collective media imagination?" The *NYT* also said, "It was and is a grass-roots combustion that happened to have a lot of cameras pointed at it."

As concluded, "reporters live for spectacle", as if Hollywood explosions, car chases, and ambulance-chasing (for lawyers) were their only stock-in-trade, and any other thoughts were some sort of aberration. Given the ignorance afforded the societal loss of trillions of dollars in constituent value, followed by the immediate return of eight figure bonuses, as if nothing untoward had occurred (i.e., business as usual), along with media hand-wringing as to when our legislators will ever wake-up again to our realities, and not just theirs, I thought I'd digress.

In response to our programmed shorter and shorter attention spans, I will relate to the departed Joseph Kruth, an international lawyer, living in Zephyr Heights, who envisioned a future for Tahoe with his creation of the Tahoe Center for a Sustainable Future back in the early 1990s.

One of the last conversations we had (he died of cancer) was about his concern for the ever-declining purchasing power of the dollar and the ever-increasing income gap. At one time, it was in the 14 to 15 times an average worker range, as opposed to today's 300 times. It was becoming obvious that a sustainable society would not be possible if the needs of the populace were undermined by policies that continued to favor those whose wealth was increasing their power.

Undermining the needs of the populace is in fact a sustainable principle, and we are on the verge of shutting down any pretense of fairness if this situation is allowed to continue.

Sadly, there are now those in society who could care less, as long as they are not bothered to think about it.

It would seem that some in the journalism business, according to Patrick Bruner, an Occupy Wall Street organizer, don't recognize that "we're righting a system and this media is part of that system – and when this media doesn't cover us in a fair fight, the desire isn't to shame them, it's to create an alternative."

Communications, at its core, means "to share, or hold in common", which is, at essence, what Occupy is really about, as our own Tahoe experience shows. Although only between 30 and 40 people were there, it was impressive to hear fully 60 percent or so of the vehicles traveling by that honked in solidarity, not to be confused here with the absence of metropolitan horn-honking of yesteryear. This was followed by those on *Lake Tahoe News* who thanked those in support for showing up in Stateline.

I have always considered the most important part of Al Gore's "Inconvenient Truth" to be the Upton Sinclair quote within, "It is difficult to get a man to understand something when his salary depends upon his not understanding it." This has now infected our entire culture, as the source of power that others wield in abeyance; this is not sustainable as it is a form of dumbing down.

Much better the mantra of 7-year-old Christian, who "occupied" while his dad held a banner; as someone would drive up to the curb, roll-down the window, and offer their respects, Christian would run up to the curb also, and yell out, in his own inimitable way: "We need a better future!"

So be it. Is anyone really listening?

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