

Why I Am Going to Attend Occupy Vancouver

by Julie MacArthur - Thursday, October 06, 2011

<https://politicsrespun.org/2011/10/why-i-am-going-to-attend-occupy-vancouver/>



I am white, middle class, educated and, by all accounts, an extremely fortunate woman.

I live in Canada where my parents' (sometimes life-threatening) health issues are covered by a provincial medical plan.

My water and air are clean, and food is plentiful.

My husband and I are employed.

I am not desperate, but I am angry; I am not sick, but I am *sickened*.

I know I will never be able to own a house in my home city without winning the lottery, or paying on a mortgage until I am 70.

I know that in our society I am 'overeducated' and, as a contract university instructor/researcher, will always be underpaid when compared to other professionals.

I know that we are [killing innocent people](#) with our invasions and occupations.

I know that, as a woman in this country I will [disproportionately pay](#) in lost income and career advancement for having children.

I know that despite the—often herculean—efforts of committed citizens organizing across the province, the

federal and provincial governments are more interested in building pipelines and transmission lines and highways to export every resource we can dig, dam and cut out of this place of ours.

I know that citizen action sometimes wins, but not often enough to save our watersheds, or fish or our climate.

I am often told that I am lucky to be a Canadian, and certainly when I read the [testimonials](#) emerging from the OccupyWallstreet movement, I feel that way. But I am not alone. We here have our own stories, and the growing exceptionalist sentiment in this country is dangerous. Dangerous because we are not unique, we colonized this country on native land. We are infected by the same democratic malaise affecting people around the world. A short historic window existed where (admittedly flawed) collective institutions and public policies helped to equalize some power and some income in Canada: creation of environmental programs, Status of Women, equalization and social security, a national system of health care and progressive taxation. These institutions are eroding today, victims of a greedy class—a 1% if you will— winning a broader culture war wherein greed is good, brown is green and might makes right.

I'm tired of feeling powerless. I know that every time I walk downtown I pass men, women and sometimes children sleeping on every other corner of our streets while billions of dollars is poured in to stadiums, into war machines and corrupt business people posing as political leaders.

The Americans occupying Wall Street are not alone today, not because of some need for international solidarity (though there is that) but because their problems are literally our problems. Income inequality in Canada [grew faster](#) than it did in the US since the mid 1990s. Inflation adjusted (real) wages in this country are falling, and this while the richest 1% of Canadians take historically unprecedented growing chunks of the national pie: [32% of all income growth between 1997 and 2007](#), in fact. The abortion debate is being [re-opened](#). The Keystone and Enbridge pipelines are ever closer to construction and with them comes an [exponential increase in environmental destruction](#). I don't have one reason to be in the streets this October, I have a hundred.

I am going to Occupy Vancouver (despite the [issues with the word 'occupy'](#)) because we multitude, we majority, need to (re)create spaces where genuine democracy can flourish: on the streets, in our places of work, our homes and force change. We need to create places where the concerns of the disappeared women are not [minimized and silenced](#), nor are those of our schoolteachers, wilderness advocates, farmers, health care workers, veterans and other diverse citizens. These are not the voices that echo in elite-controlled buildings in Victoria, in Ottawa, on Bay Street and Howe Street. This movement may be disjointed, it may be difficult, but [it is a start](#) of something very sorely needed in this country.

I am part of the 99%. We, together, *are* the 99%. Occupy Vancouver, and not just on October 15.