

# THE OCCUPIED Providence Journal



Photo by Mel St. Laurent

## It's Time to Tax Brown

By Lindsay Goss

Brown university's administration is probably wishing it had taken Mayor Taveras' back-room deal when it had the chance. While accepting the agreement would have cost Brown at least \$4 million more per year in contributions to the city, it would have avoided provoking a very public debate about why that number isn't much higher. Brown, an elite institution with a \$2.5 billion endowment, is not currently legally obligated to pay any property taxes, even on its income-earning properties. And so, ever since the news broke in early January that Brown had rejected the city's request, the question has shifted from "why won't a benevolent institution like Brown give more money to the city?" to "why aren't we taking that money from them in the form of property taxes?"

According to a recent investigation by Stephen Beale for GoLocalProv.com, Brown

enjoys a unique status, even relative to the eight other universities, colleges, and hospitals from which Mayor Taveras is also seeking increased payments. Because Brown's 250-year-old charter declares, "the College estate ... shall be freed and exempted from all taxes," Brown skirts the exceptions that usually apply to property owned by non-profits. These exceptions include property larger than one acre, and property not used directly for educational purposes; for example, 121 Main Street, a section of which Brown rents out to Hemenway's Restaurant. As a result, Brown "voluntarily" pays a mere \$1.6 million in property taxes. If it didn't enjoy any pre-1776 exemptions, it would owe at least \$4.6 million under the current policy; if Brown were fully taxed on all its properties, the bill would be more than \$38 million annually. Taveras just wants 25% of this last figure—

little less than \$10 million a year.

In an attempt at damage control, Marisa Quinn, spokesperson for the Brown President's Office, cites the fact that Brown does pay taxes on more recently acquired, income-producing properties. However, according to the agreement Brown reached with the city in 2003, those properties do, eventually, cease to be taxable. Brown will make "voluntary contributions . . . according to an agreed-upon schedule: five years at 100 percent of the property's existing taxes at the time of purchase; five years at 66.67 percent and five years at 33.33 percent." After fifteen years of ownership, all of Brown's properties are ultimately removed from the city's tax rolls, potentially permanently.

In fact, it seems the university doth protest a little too much. A letter— released on

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

## Community Day Center Opens

The following speech was delivered to the people of Providence and the media on the steps of City Hall on January 24, 2012, by the Occupy Providence movement after successfully negotiating a community day center for the winter months.

We the people of Occupy Providence have successfully occupied Burnside Park since the 15th of October, 2011. After maintaining a 24-hour-a-day protest, 7 days a week, for more than 100 days, we proclaim that the park is truly the people's park. Today we celebrate another victory: Occupy Providence has reached an agreement with the City of Providence to open and fund a day center at Emmanuel House for Rhode Islanders who are currently without housing for the duration of winter, in exchange for Occupy Providence agreeing to temporarily suspend the overnight tent occupation in Burnside Park. Occupy Providence is energized and committed to continue organizing, defending the right to protest, and bringing awareness to economic injustices in our country. We are looking to 2012 as a year

of great change for the working class, and we intend to be pivotal to that change.

Our decision to accept the City's counter-proposal for opening the day center does not reflect upon the entirety of our goals in protesting a system where the top 1% controls 46% of the wealth, and the richest 10% controls more than 90% of the wealth. Homelessness is a profoundly important issue that our city, our society, and our country need to address. For too long, homelessness and poverty have been treated like a personal deficiency rather than a failure of our economic system. In today's economic climate, with many foreclosed upon who never thought they'd find themselves in the streets, we need to get honest about the true face of homelessness and poverty in America. It is all of us. It is the 99%. The day center is a first step in recognizing the needs of marginalized Rhode Islanders who find themselves homeless.

The City, the diocese and advocates all coming together on this agreement is an encouraging new beginning.

However, this is only the beginning. We will continue to go after this culture of corporate greed, "too big to fail" banks, government bail-outs, and economic inequality, which is especially egregious in regards to race, sex, gender, age, and class. We will take every opportunity to stand against human-made climate change, and the systematic destruction of our global ecosystems by the exponentially expanding industrial and military pollution now threatening our world. We find these issues to be self-evidently interconnected, and we are proud to announce the victory of opening a day center for persons who would otherwise be up against the elements, day in and day out, during the harsh New England winter.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

**WHY WE SHOULD SUPPORT PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION**  
Page 2

**BURNSIDE: OUR STATUE BUT NOT OUR HERO**  
Page 3

**DOCUMENTARIES CAN "OCCUPY" OUR MINDS**  
Page 3

**RI COMPANY, TEXTRON, MAKES CLUSTER BOMBS**  
Page 4

## OCCUPY PROVIDENCE: OFFICIAL STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Approved by the General Assembly on October 24, 2011

Occupy Providence is a gathering of people who seek to exercise their right to freedom of speech and peaceful assembly, inspired by people's occupations spreading rapidly across the globe. We occupy to demonstrate an alternative to the fundamental inequality and injustice of a system which places profit over people and oppression over liberation. We seek to give voice to the 99% — the majority of Americans, who have not been adequately represented in our flawed political process — by means of a truly democratic General Assembly. We believe in developing a society that is truly of, by and for the people. Our indefinite occupation is non-violent, non-destructive, non-discriminatory and harassment-free. Occupy Providence welcomes all people regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, gender expression, ethnicity, age, level of ability, legal status, religious views or position on the political spectrum. We work towards organizing a movement capable of overcoming an unjust system and forming a new society within the shell of the old.

## OCCUPY PROVIDENCE DIRECT ACTIONS TO DATE

By Will Lambek

In the following list, all marches are from Burnside Park unless otherwise noted. Each report follows as far as possible the structure: When the action occurred. Title and type of action. Who any collaborators were. Where the action took place. Objective of the action.

**10/7** March and Rally against Corporate Education. With public education supporters (SLAP, GDPE, JwJ), outside Department of Education Building, to support students inside meeting with Education Commissioner Gist.



Photo by Noa Nessim

**10/12** March to Brown University Teach-in on Occupy. Teach-in was organized by professors and students in support of the movement.

**10/15** OCCUPY PROVIDENCE Kick-off March. Through downtown Providence, with stops at key locations in local struggles. Rally at Burnside Park and beginning of occupation.



Photo by Savannah Kite

**10/17** Bank of America Account Closures Marches (throughout the day). To downtown branch of BoA to support people closing BoA accounts.

**10/21-10/22** Occupy College Hill. Overnight encampment on Brown University Main Green on Friday night; march to Brown on Saturday morning; rally outside University Corporation meeting.

**10/24** Press Conference and March with Rally to Defend OP against City Injunction. To publicly read and present a letter to Mayor Taveras affirming OP's intention to remain indefinitely.

**10/26** Rally for a Stronger RIPTA. With RIPTA Riders in rally during RIPTA Board meeting to discuss service cuts. To demand transportation justice for the 99%.

**10/27** March for Worker's Rights. With Jobs with Justice and dozens of unions through downtown Providence, stopping at several sites along the way to hear from speakers about various local labor struggles.



Photo by Paul Hubbard

**10/30** Solidarity Sunday in Burnside Park. To reaffirm Occupy's commitment to remain indefinitely, with events including an interfaith service, community soapbox, rally, and community potluck dinner.

**10/31** Corporate Trick-or-Treat in downtown Providence. In Halloween costumes occupiers went trick-or-treating in downtown Providence, stopping at Textron, GTECH, Bank of America and other corporate headquarters.

(CONTINUED)

PLEASE HELP US PUBLISH FUTURE ISSUES!

Donate to the Occupied Providence Journal: [www.occupyprovidence.com/opj-donations](http://www.occupyprovidence.com/opj-donations)

[occupyprovidence.com](http://occupyprovidence.com) // [facebook.com/occupyprovidence](https://facebook.com/occupyprovidence) // [twitter.com/occupyprov](https://twitter.com/occupyprov) // [livestream.com/occupyprovidenceri](https://livestream.com/occupyprovidenceri)

# Why We Should Support Public Transportation

By Barry Schiller

Buses have considerable environmental advantages over cars, cost less for people to use, and promote economic development by helping people get to work, school, and shopping. They also promote public health through encouraging moderate physical activity by walking or biking to bus stops. These points are well known. In a rational world, our leaders, in preparing Rhode Island for our future, would have already acted to preserve and expand Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA) bus service. But there is also an even bigger reason to help RIPTA. Justifying public transit is part of the larger debate about the legitimacy of all government services.

Thirty years of tax cuts for the 1%, deregulation of banks and corporations, and cuts to public service have created a seriously unbalanced situation. The concentration of wealth in the hands of a few and the policies that perpetuate it are shameful, and contrary to what should be our shared values and treating others as we would wish to be treated. Meanwhile, the government is starved of the revenue needed to secure a basic standard of living for all our people, just as the ranks of those needing assistance have grown to epic proportions.

Thus we are at a delicate moment in our nation's history when this lack of balance has created an atmosphere of uncertainty, fear, distrust, and anger. The dominant narrative has been that the government is broke, the people are broke, and we can no longer afford the social safety net. The dominant prescription has been to subsidize our failed financial industry and other mega-corporations while sacrifices are demanded of the people—the very policies that have brought us to this point. Fortunately, now the Occupy movement has arisen to challenge this dangerous narrative.

Contrary to myth, the US economy is bigger than ever, and its gross domestic product is over \$14 trillion. The country is rich, but the money is largely in the hands of a small privileged group. Does it really make sense to coddle them and cut services for the rest of us? Since our economy is so driven by consumer spending, doesn't it make sense to give help where it is needed?

This is an area where those who care about the 99% should not back down. RIPTA is a battleground where we must stop appeasing the bullies and start pushing back and arguing for public services. And

winning this battle will give us momentum for the next cause, and there are many waiting.

Unless the US Congress and the RI General Assembly act soon to provide adequate and sustainable funding for public transit, RIPTA will face massive service cuts next summer when a \$10 million deficit looms. RIPTA's funding stream is largely based on a fixed-cents-per-gallon gas tax that has not only not kept up with inflation, it has actually declined in dollars as folks drive less or use more efficient vehicles. Indeed, over the last six years or so, the revenue per given cent of gas tax has declined from about \$4.8 million/year to about \$4.2 million, just as RIPTA's diesel fuel costs have approximately doubled. If this is not addressed, RIPTA projects the next few years will see the loss of all holiday service, most evening and weekend services, and longer waits on many remaining lines. ADA "RIDE" van services for the disabled will no longer be available to complement the discontinued services.

We have until the end of the legislative session in June to stop this from happening and we must start now. A first step is to go to your nearest computer and type "save ripta petition" into your favorite search engine or visit [www.change.org/petitions/save-ripta](http://www.change.org/petitions/save-ripta) to sign the petition. To do more, get involved with the new RIPTA Riders group (for information, call the RI Sierra Club office, 521-4734) or contact your local state Senator or state Representative and let them know you care. We do have real support from riders, community groups, and even some political leaders. Together we can save RIPTA!

Barry Schiller is a former RIPTA Board member and a member of RIPTA Riders.



Photo by Paul Hubbard



Photo by Artemis Moonhawk

The House of Compassion is a community residence in Cumberland, RI for those living with HIV/AIDS or with other diseases or disabilities. It opened in 1994 and has cared for over 900 residents. Occupy Providence members have formed Occupy the House of Compassion, whose mission is to save the house, which is at the risk of being auctioned off for an overdue water/sewer bill. OP is attempting to raise \$16,000.00 in order to save the house and to replace the oil burner destroyed in a fire on December 15, 2011.

**Donations accepted at:** [www.houseofcompassionri.org](http://www.houseofcompassionri.org)

## COMMUNITY DAY CENTER OPENS (CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE)

We hope this move can inspire the people of Rhode Island to realize that the voice of protest is a powerful one and that together we can achieve the changes we wish to see in our society. This day center is just one tangible piece of proof that a group of concerned citizens can and will change the world. Occupy Providence will continue to stand in solidarity with the Occupy Wall Street movement and the hundreds of other ongoing occupations around the country and the world. We send our deepest thanks to those who've supported us along the way, and we invite you to join us in continuing the struggle in 2012.

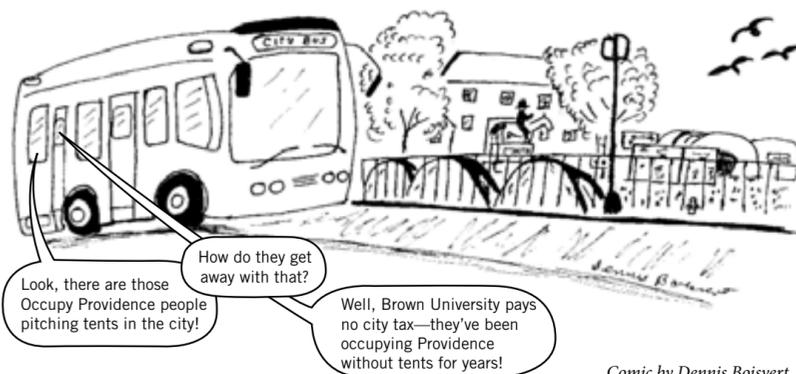
**We are the 99%. Another world is possible.**

## IT'S TIME TO TAX BROWN (CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE)

January 13, 2012, by the Brown president's office—a) chastises the city for its "high employee and retiree costs"; b) points readers to Brown's "current contributions" (which include employing people, hiring construction companies, and having students who do volunteer work); c) suggests the city follow Brown's lead by laying off workers and freezing pay; d) offers to pay \$2 million more a year for five years; e) says "we really don't have as much property as people think"; f) points out that Providence gets money from other institutions and from the state; and g) argues that Brown contributes to Providence by providing stable employment (see "c" above).

But most companies employ people, contract with other local companies, have employees that do community service, and also, in fact, pay property taxes. The real PR problem for Brown lies less in dispelling myths about what it "actually" contributes to the community than in convincing the average person that it is not a contradiction in terms for Brown, tax-exempt because it is a "nonprofit," to have administrators (and Goldman Sachs board members) on its payroll that make hundreds of thousands of dollars, while providing a service so expensive that the vast majority of Providence residents can't begin to afford it.

Brown is a corporation, and like any other corpo-



Comic by Dennis Boisvert

rate entity that has to compete for its market share, Brown shorts the city because exploiting tax loopholes makes good business sense. This is why it shouldn't be up to Brown whether or not it pays for the city services it uses. Brown should be taxed, just like the rest of us.

So what do we do? We can support the city council members who are pursuing changes in legislation that would require property tax payments, and we can put pressure on Brown to make bigger "voluntary contributions" in the meantime. We need more pickets like the one on January 12, 2012, when over one hundred Providence residents, including city

workers and students, picketed outside 121 Main Street. In addition, we have to recognize that the students, faculty and staff of Brown University are not automatically the bad guys. In fact, most staff and faculty members would benefit just as any other resident would, from Brown ponying up its share; and students have long been a radical force in society, helping to pressure institutions from the inside. Everyone who believes in economic justice should join this fight—and we should welcome them.

## This is what democracy looks like—in print!

Occupy Providence is part of a national and international movement that is bringing democracy back to public spaces and forums of the 99%. This publication will give voice to the democratic ideals and activities of Occupy Providence while challenging the established ideas and dogmas that serve the 1%. As the movement spreads out from our original 24/7 protest at Burnside Park, the OPJ will report on its protests, rallies and marches; transmit the messages on its signs and banners; and vigorously debate its democratic ideas and issues.

The Occupied Providence Journal will refute the misperceptions and mischaracterizations of the movement found in corporate mainstream media and record the actual words, beliefs, and actions of the 99%.

The OPJ is a paper for and about the 99%. We of the 99% are socially and ideologically diverse but the Occupy movement continues to bring us together, fostering cooperation and understanding. We strive to be non-discriminatory and non-violent as we collectively engage with the problems of our city and state, our nation, and our global community. The OPJ will explore solutions to the problems of the 99% by encouraging informed discussion and debate.

—The Occupied Providence Journal Working Group

**EDITORS:** Joan d'Arc; Pat Fontes; Paul Hubbard; Chris Murphy; Randall Rose  
**LAYOUT:** Jade Sturms **OTHER WORKING GROUP:** Dennis Boisvert; Chris Gagnon; Rob Goff; David Slavin

Visit the Occupied Providence Journal online:  
**ONLINE:** [occupiedprovidencejournal.wordpress.com](http://occupiedprovidencejournal.wordpress.com)

To help support future issues of the Occupied Providence Journal, please visit: [www.occupyprovidence.com/opj-donations](http://www.occupyprovidence.com/opj-donations)

**11/1** Action and Press Conference for Immigrant Rights: "No to (in)Secure Communities." To support the We are all Arizona coalition's rally against mass deportations; march to the State House to present Governor Chafee with a co-sponsored letter demanding an end to RI's participation in "Secure Communities" deportation program.

**11/1** Picket of Mayoral Fundraiser. To pressure the Mayor to end efforts to evict the occupation from Burnside Park; with an alternative dinner for the 99% outside the event.

**11/2** Picket Arne Duncan. With CDPE, DARE, RI People's Assembly and others to picket two events featuring U.S. Education Secretary Duncan for his stances in favor of privatizing education.

**11/5** National Day of Action against the Big Banks. With DARE and SEIU 615, march to Atwells Ave. Bank of America and rally outside while people closed their accounts.

**11/17** Occupy City Hall Rally and GA. In lobby of Providence City Hall, entering City Council chambers to support pro-Occupy resolution introduced in front of the council.

**11/19** Jobs Not War. With Brown Anti-War Action and RIMC, march to headquarters of Textron, Inc.; rally to protest the war economy and war profiteers such as Textron.



Photo by Savannah Kite

**11/20** Rally Against Foreclosures. With DARE and the Tenant and Homeowner Association, outside an empty foreclosed home, to highlight the foreclosure crisis and to support Just Cause legislation.

**11/29** World AIDS Day Action. With ACT UP RI, march to RI Department of Health and to Senator Reed and Whitehouse offices to protest budget cuts to AIDS Services.

**12/1** Occupy City Hall, pt. 2. March to Providence City Hall and GA in lobby. With mic-check in Council chamber to pressure them to take action in support of Occupy.



Photo by Susan O'Connell

**12/3** Occupy the Night: Women's/Trans/Genderqueer and Queer Caucus sponsored evening including community soapbox, potluck dinner, march through downtown Providence, and dance party.

**12/7** Stop "Achievement First" rally. With CDPE, outside public hearing at Robert Kennedy Elementary on the mayoral push to have charter-school chain Achievement First open a franchise in Providence.

**12/8** Stop "Achievement First" rally, part 2. Same action outside second hearing at Alvarez High School.



Photo by Paul Hubbard

**12/9** Protest against the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). At event honoring Sheldon Whitehouse, picket against his vote in favor of the civil-liberties-stripping bill.



Photo by Mel St. Laurent

**12/10** State House, Our House. With RIHAP, RICH, and DARE, march to State House, rally on steps. To protest foreclosure and homelessness and to demand passage of three bills to fund affordable housing, stop post-foreclosure evictions, and create a Homeless Bill of Rights. Discussions on housing, community dinner, and sleep-out on the State House lawn.

**12/14** Migrant Rights Vigil at State House. To rally outside meeting between We are all Arizona and Gov. Chafee.

**12/15** Support Caregivers for Developmentally Disabled. Rally with SEIU and other unions at State House.

**1/16** Stop "Achievement First" Part 3. Rally at State House with CDPE.

**01/19** Occupy City Hall Rally and GA. In lobby of Providence City Hall, entering City Council chambers to support resolution to tax Brown University.

**01/26** Counter-protest the Right to Life Rally at RI State House. Met up with allies in the RI Anti-Sexism League to support choice and women's reproductive health care.

**1/28** Victory Rally/March. Celebrate winning of homeless day center. Followed by park cleanup as we leave.

**2/6** March to AG Kilmartin's office. Present petition against lenient settlement with big banks committing foreclosure fraud and harassing homeowners.

The above actions were all officially passed in votes of the Occupy Providence General Assembly, an open democratic meeting of the 99% where OP's main decisions are made. Autonomous actions not voted on by OP include Fidelity Investments, Convention Center actions; Student Debt march through Citizen's Bank; support for Save our Pensions! rally; Joey Quits press conference; mall protest for Buy Nothing Day, etc.

# Burnside: Our Statue But Not Our Hero

By Patricia Raub. /// Historical Photos courtesy of Rhode Island Collection at Providence Public Library. For a full list of sources, please visit [occupiedprovidencejournal.wordpress.com/burnside](http://occupiedprovidencejournal.wordpress.com/burnside)



In 1887, Providence dedicated an equestrian bronze statue in the city's center to Ambrose E. Burnside, who had died a few years earlier. The monument was the work of Launt Thompson, a well-known New York sculptor. It depicted Burnside with his signature side-whiskers, in military uniform and holding binoculars, presumably to monitor a battle unfolding below. The statue was mounted upon a twenty-eight-foot-high granite base.

The statue and base cost \$40,000. About \$16,000 of the cost was borne by the City and State. The rest was raised by private subscription, with donations ranging from twenty-five cents to \$1,000. Rhode Island veterans of war—many of whom had served under Burnside—marched in the ceremonial procession to the dedication site where several dignitaries gave speeches. While we have only the words of the One-Percent from this event, one assumes

that the 99% were proud of their native son, too. They helped raise the funds to build the monument, and they “voted with their feet” by participating in the dedication ceremony.

The monument stood for nearly twenty years in Exchange Place, facing City Hall, with horses, wagons, and carriages moving in all directions around it.

When the new railroad station and federal building were built at the turn of the century and the open area was transformed into a park, the statue was moved further north and set upon a reconfigured base designed by local architect William R. Walker.

Over the years, not everyone treated the monument with the respect that some felt it deserved. During the annual Arts Festival in 1969, the statue was “dabbed and splashed and brushed with almost all the colors there are,” giving it a “psychedelic” look. Many complained that the paint-

ing spree was a “desecration and an insult to General Burnside’s memory.” While the horse and rider were embellished with water-based paint, the base was decorated with enamel paint that required sand-blasting to remove. The Superintendent of Parks, however, seemed unfazed, commenting that “much worse things have been cleaned up. I don’t think there will be any problem, and I’ll follow through on it.”

Over forty years later Occupy Providence has again focused attention on the Burnside Statue, holding its General Assemblies at its base, covering the monument with signs and banners, tying a mask over the statue’s face, and affixing a flag to the horse’s tail. Most of the signs and banners have since been removed so that masking tape will not damage the surface of the structure. Nevertheless, the statue has become the visual symbol of Occupy Providence, with tents clustered around it in all directions.

Whose statue is this? It is clearly *our* statue! When it comes to Burnside himself, however, most Occupiers know little about him besides the fact that he initiated sideburns and he was a Civil War general, apparently not a very good one. So...who *was* Burnside?

Burnside was, variously, the founder of a rifle works company, an officer for the Illinois Central Railroad, president of the Providence Locomotive Works, a three-term governor of Rhode Island, and, at the end of his life, a U.S. Senator. However, Burnside was primarily a career soldier who worked his way up to the rank of Major General during the Civil War.

It is for his actions during that war that General Burnside is remembered. At the time of the

monument’s dedication in 1887, Burnside was a hero to Rhode Islanders. Yet, few outside the state regarded him favorably. Lincoln’s lukewarm assessment of Burnside was that he was a “most meritorious and honorable officer”—whom the President had relieved of his command of the Army of the Potomac after his disastrous defeat at Fredericksburg.

More recently, Civil War historians have consistently ranked Burnside among the ten worst generals of the war, labeling him “a military dunderhead” with a “disturbing record of failure.” Burnside is scarcely a hero.

As a professional soldier before the war, he was responsible for the murder of Apache in New Mexico. During the war, he led his men unprepared into battle, and through his strategic incompetence contributed to the deaths of more than 900 soldiers at Fredericksburg. Later, he denied the right to free speech to anti-war advocate Ohio Congressman Clement Vallandigham, by arresting him. Later, he tried to close down an anti-administration newspaper in Chicago.

In civilian life, Burnside was an industrialist and likely to have been no friend of labor. As a Governor and then U.S. Senator, Burnside was part of a select group of prominent native-born white men who looked out for their own interests rather than the interests of the average Rhode Islanders, a growing number of whom were working-class immigrants.

Whose hero is Burnside? *Not our* hero. For that matter, not *anyone’s* hero.

## Corporations Versus the Free Market

By Chris Gagnon

We’re all familiar with the tired argument against progressive and liberal policies; they’re labeled “socialist” and “anti-capitalist” by the conservative right. Even the Occupy movement, while not aligned exclusively to the left or right, has been accused of being a radical, anti-capitalist movement. So, if the biggest problem conservatives have with liberals is that they are anti-capitalist, then conservative thought must be a haven for Capitalism in its truest sense, right?

It appears that way on the surface, but once you get past all the phony laissez faire rhetoric, a different reality becomes evident. The conservative economist would tell you that corporations like Wal-Mart, Bank of America, and Exxon Mobil are the epitome of Capitalism. And whether they believe what they say or not, they’re wrong.

When Adam Smith wrote *The Wealth of Nations*, he made sure to make an example of the 18th-century equivalent of Wal-Mart: the East India Company. Smith was skeptical of a company like the East India Company that could, and did, bend state policy to benefit the few at the expense of the many. In his writing, Smith called for corporate reform that would prevent what he called “irresponsible, reprehensible, and immoral behavior” on the part of the corporation; behavior such as today’s Wal-Mart forcing their suppliers to outsource jobs in order to keep up with its demand for perpetually lowering prices, or General Electric paying absolutely nothing in federal taxes on the billions of dollars they made in profits.

Adam Smith wrote of corporations, “Directors of such companies, however, being the managers rather of other people’s money than of their own, it cannot well be expected, that they should watch over it with the same anxious vigilance with which the partners of a private copartnery watch over their own . . . negligence and profusion, therefore, must always prevail.” (Smith, *Wealth of Nations*). The economic free-fall in 2008 is a perfect example of what Smith meant by that sentence. Massive deregulation of financial institutions led to the creation of corporations being “too big to fail,” and, thus, the economic bailouts so widely hated by Americans. The argument is that the bailouts were necessary to prevent the so-called “Great Recession” from becoming any worse. That may be valid; however, the real point is that under true Capitalism a few companies wouldn’t have been allowed to come to dominate the market and make the bailouts necessary when and if they failed.

The term “too big to fail” is one of the most horrific affronts to Capitalism in recent years. This concept admits that certain corporations have achieved a sustainable competitive advantage and that it’s okay! Not only are we acknowledging that these businesses have transcended perfect competition, but we are also making it clear that this type of thing should be allowed in order to preserve our capitalist system. That’s the economic equivalent of trying to clean a dirty window with a used tissue.

Another development Adam Smith would have been horrified to see is the concept of corporate personhood. This idea has been around since the 19th century, when the first few court cases in America concluded

that the words “people” and “person” in various amendments to the Constitution ought to apply to corporations as well as people. This argument has been used in court to make it more difficult for state, local, or federal governments to protect the public from corporations. Allowing corporations to be considered people has brought us to a modern era where an executive of Monsanto can step down from their position at Monsanto and walk right into a position in the Food & Drug Administration or the US Department of Agriculture, the very government agencies that are meant to regulate them. And as if that isn’t bad enough, he or she will probably still be on Monsanto’s payroll, albeit a less official one.

Significant parts of Smith’s legacy are overlooked or forgotten if it is believed that they no longer apply to our modern world, when, in reality, they apply now more than ever. Oftentimes, his biggest accomplishment is said to be the defining of things like the “invisible hand” of the free market or the creation of the belief that greed is good. But it is important to remember that while many consider Smith to be one of history’s first economists, he was, in fact, not an economist, but a philosopher. And as a philosopher, he always put the good of society over the good of the individual.

## How Documentaries Can “Occupy” Our Minds

By Robert Goff

As a follower of the Academy Awards ceremony each year, I’ve noticed that Hollywood bestows more acclaim on documentaries about marching penguins or distant events in history than on those on contemporary political issues. However, some political documentaries have actually won awards in recent years, and the Academy has reluctantly given their makers a televised platform to amplify their message. For instance, Michael Moore delivered—before interruption—a memorable speech condemning George W. Bush when *Bowling for Columbine* won in 2002. In 2007, Al Gore spoke out about global warming after his *Inconvenient Truth* (directed by Davis Guggenheim) won an Oscar.

At the 2011 ceremony, Charles Ferguson, the director of *Inside Job*, bravely took the opportunity to reach a global audience when he accepted the award for Best Documentary with these words: “Forgive me, I must start by pointing out that three years after our horrific financial crisis caused by financial fraud, not a single financial executive has gone to jail, and that’s wrong!” I like to think that Ferguson’s message was heard by a billion people around the world and fueled some of the present anger at the One Percent.

On *Inside Job*’s 2010 release in Providence, I was reminded of the power of documentaries when an audience at a Sunday matinee at the Avon Cinema burst into spontaneous applause at the end. The film is about the origins of our current financial crisis, a subject we all need to understand but one I never dreamed had any entertainment appeal. Yet *Inside Job* clearly succeeded in providing not only enlightenment, but also inspiration for a large Providence audience. Our engagement with the subject of economic meltdown was not due to the narration by a Hollywood star, Matt Damon, nor the better-than-average cinematography but, I think, more about our collective realization that deceitful human agency was behind the mind-boggling financial losses on a global scale. There was also the satisfaction that came from following the film’s lucid explanations of previously bewildering economic complexity.

By the end of the film, the concept of the global economy was no longer only an abstraction and I actually had some inkling about the meaning of the term “derivatives.” Moreover, I could now associate the concept of “unimaginable greed” with a few more faces than Bernie Madoff’s. With the help of the film’s excellent website (<http://www.sonyclassics.com/insidejob/>) and its countless links to supporting documentation on the crisis, I became surprisingly confident that I could argue with right-wing colleagues in the economics department of my own college.

The film *Inside Job* continues to instruct and incite as it circulates around Occupy camps across the nation and—most probably—the world. Here in Providence, the cameras of members of the Occupy movement such as Paul Hubbard, Phil LeStein and Robert Malin have documented the evolution of the encampment at Burnside Park, recorded our frequent political actions, and live-streamed video to audiences outside of Rhode Island. Maybe the revolution will not be televised, but documentary films made here in Providence, and elsewhere, can help to inspire it.

Ever since Michael Moore’s 1989 film *Roger and Me* examined the consequences of deindustrialization and dared to question the decisions of then-CEO of GM, Roger Smith, American audiences have shown an eager appreciation of documentaries informing them about economic forces shaping their lives. In hindsight, the cinematic image of Moore’s blue-collar “everyman” in a baseball cap railing against corporate decision-making and showing sympathy for the unemployed sowed the seeds for the Occupy movement to flourish some twenty years later. It is no accident that Moore was an early supporter of Occupy Wall Street and helped to finance *The Occupied Wall Street Journal*, which was the inspiration for this publication.

Over two decades, Moore’s films have occupied the minds of ever-larger audiences with their entertaining lessons on the workings of capitalism, observations on the lunacies of a right-wing culture and open defiance of the militaristic tone of American foreign policy. The native of Flint, Michigan, has also made us laugh in dark times. The massive box-office success of *Fahrenheit 9/11* demonstrated that Americans wanted an alternative voice to Bush-era presidential news conferences or the views of conservative pundits appearing on corporately owned news media.

I can still remember the undercurrent of audience anticipation for a first showing of *Fahrenheit 9/11* at the Providence Place Mall in 2004. It was clear then that politically engaged documentary films, especially on a large screen in a movie theater, could be as exciting as fictional films and also lot more informative than following the mainstream news from day to day. Good documentaries reveal the big picture of what is going on in the world and, sometimes, help to connect us to each other—just like the Occupy movement.

Robert Goff teaches in the School of Continuing Education at Providence College.



Comic by Dennis Boisvert

## Short Musings

### DEATH OF DEMOCRACY

By David Slavin

As I sit here writing, we the people have lost one more freedom. Occupy Oakland has been shut down by authorities citing public safety issues, and a New York court has judged that public safety supersedes the first amendment rights of the protesters. How have we gotten to this point; the point where a right, so fundamental as to be mentioned first in the Bill of Rights, is set aside to satisfy some ephemeral concept such as public safety? Maybe I missed that day in civics class, but where is this public safety restriction mentioned in the Bill of Rights, and what other rights are subject to this restriction? Perhaps trial by jury or due process? How about freedom of religion, or maybe we should suspend the right to vote, because people might elect the wrong guy?

Sadly, this is not the first time in recent history that public safety has been a reason for abridging the enumerated rights of the people. Every day, people are unreasonably and intrusively searched at airports around the country. Police officers use this excuse to justify sobriety and seatbelt roadblocks. Crumbling cities around the country, like Detroit or Youngstown, contemplate forcing people from their homes in the name of public safety. As I sit here today writing, my soul cries. It cries for the death of this fundamental right. It cries for the inevitable loss of the others. It cries because I know the eventual endgame. That all of our rights will be subject to the whim of capricious bureaucrats, who will throw around terms like public safety, national security, and terrorism to consolidate their power. And so begins the death of our democracy. A death by inches.



Photo by Chloe C



Photo by Rob Goff



Photo by Chloe C (flickr.com/photos/chloe-and-ivan/)



Photo by Rob Goff

# Dangers on the Road to Foreclosure

By Joan d'Arc

Rhode Island has the highest home foreclosure rate in New England. If your home has been foreclosed, or you are considering "walking away," for instance, to rent or move in with family, there are some legal facts of which you should be aware. Perhaps, even, you're in the middle of one of those long, drawn out "short sales" or you're thinking of joining the new wave of voluntary or "strategic defaulters" who have decided to stop investing in your underwater home.

But how fast can you run from "deficiency judgments" and "banking recourse" laws? In Rhode Island, maybe not fast enough.

Homeowner beware: approximately forty states have laws on the books that are blatantly bank-friendly. Rhode Island is a "recourse state," meaning the bank has recourse to file a lawsuit in court to grab your personal assets, such as other properties, land, or bank accounts, and may even garnish wages. These asset grabs and wage garnishments by banks may have not yet begun, but there is reason to believe they will begin as soon as the banks catch up with the foreclosure free-fall.

The business of banking in many common-law countries is not defined by statute, but by common law. World Law Direct explains: "Several states continue to adhere to the common-law rule that when a foreclosure sale does not yield at least the amount of the mortgage obligation, the mortgagee is entitled to a deficiency judgment measured by the difference between the foreclosure price and the mortgage obligation." Common law allows lenders to sue borrowers directly, as well as file multiple actions on the same mortgage default.

In the *DEPCO v. Macomber* case, which occurred during the infamous Savings and Loan scandal in the early 1990s, the Supreme Court of Rhode Island reiterated that the homeowner must pay a deficiency judgment to the bank based on the amount owed on the mortgage minus the "sale" price of the home. In the approximately eleven non-recourse states, the bank can only take the property, and cannot sue in court for any defi-

ciency claimed to be owed to the bank. The states that can be classified as non-recourse for residential mortgages are: Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, and Washington (and recently joining the list, Nevada). Thus, one task ahead of Occupy Providence is to explore how Rhode Island can go about becoming a non-recourse, anti-deficiency state.

If you go with the short sale, current home sales in Rhode Island are taking way over a year if they sell at all; usually way past the period of time the homeowner can survive financially. During this time, the bank will expect payments on time, and will likely reject any reasonable short sale offer. Why? Because banks are holding the cards and have lots of options; among them, selling the mortgage to a possibly related entity, or suing the homeowner for deficiency judgment in the state courts.

And there is yet another beast set upon the weary homeowner following foreclosure. Regardless of whether the mortgage is recourse or non-recourse, the deficiency judgment is taxable by the IRS. You will receive a 1099 from the bank on which will be reported your "income" from the sale of the house. That's right. The IRS considers the bank's write-off on their books as income on your books. Nothing else quite makes as clear the notion that money is not real.

For the moment, a Congressional bill put forth in 2007 put a stop to this phantom tax until 2010, and then extended it to December 31, 2012. It is currently unknown whether this date will be extended. Other options might be Chapter 7 bankruptcy, Chapter 13 reorganization, or the simple fact of insolvency: that is, if you don't own any property, bank accounts, trusts, etc., there's nothing to take from you.

There is no real incentive for banks to spend the billions of dollars they got to help people. The money goes around but does not stop in your hands. We ask anyone interested or knowledgeable in these subjects to please join us in this fight. After all, you are the 99 percent!



Photo by Gunther Nuissl

After Occupy Providence removed its tents in accordance with its agreement with the city, the city government had workers tear down the Info Booth (Above, left) the next day, Monday, January 30, 2012, which was not part of negotiations.

# Living in the Story of the Wizard of Oz

By Lisa Roseman Beade. Adapted from a speech given at Occupy Providence, November 2011

The American Dream for workers lasted only thirty years, from the 1940's to the 1970's. That was a time when America made things. Unions were strong, workers were valued, and livable wages prevailed. Like the rest of us, corporations and the wealthy paid their fair share of taxes to support a strong nation. Paying taxes was patriotic. Owning a home and not struggling to raise a family was considered wealth. At least some of us lived in Kansas, and it was called the middle class. American workers moved into it proudly.

The wizards of deregulation began achieving the upper hand in the 1960's. In 1980, the tornado picked up force with Reagan's election, and dropped us into Oz. Real wages, which had been rising steadily, began to decline even as profits soared. Given free rein, the wizards of banking took the soaring profits we had produced and began lending it back to us as credit. The wizards of commerce lured us to borrow with the glitter of cheap goods and cheap food, bought with unlimited credit from our declining wages, thereby making themselves more profits. They teased us with the promise of easy payments and vast wealth.

By the late 1980's, as manufacturing's decline led to shrinking investment opportunities, real estate became the new get-rich scheme. Soaring housing prices and mortgages without equity fueled inflated expectations of return. Anyone could buy, especially when mortgage brokers being offered enormous kickbacks began falsifying lenders' information. By 2007, a great majority of mortgages were what the banking industry itself called "liar loans." When, finally,

the bankers' greed burst its seams and the debts were called in, they were caught like deer in the headlights. But the crooks were the ones that got bailed out!

We continue to be robbed blind; there are no bailouts for those of us who trusted the process and played by the rules. With the vacuum power of tornadoes, these wizards are sucking out every single drop of capital we contribute to sustain our society and keep it working. And they are sucking up not only our economic, but our civic capital, as well. Not only do we now have the economic profile of a third world nation, but, by creating an atmosphere of terror, these criminals have either bought or coerced our politicians and judiciary into sabotaging our government and suspending our Constitution.

David Intrator, a New York business consultant, recently pointed out that global corporations have no allegiance to nation states, but "only have allegiance to their shareholders and so there is a built-in contradiction to [any allegiance to the United States of America]." They are not only un-American but anti-Capitalist. To see it that way would explain the worldwide nature of the problem as an international putsch. This is Corporatism, led by global corporations and financial institutions with no national allegiance. They have used their tornado-force power to mesmerize us, crushing our hopes and dreams and leaving a path of devastation among working people worldwide. In this country just 400 families control 43% of the GNP.

Yet, I'm ecstatic, because brave people of the Occupy movement are hunkering down in public places to protest the theft of our dream

Lisa Roseman Beade is the author of *The Wealth of Nations: A People's History of RI*, a project commissioned by the RI Historical Society, which tells the story of immigration to RI and the struggle & rise of the middle class.



Photo by Phil LeStein



Photo by Paul Hubbard



Photo by Rob Goff



Photo by Joan d'Arc

Activist Patrick Connolly in Burnside Park, AKA The People's Park

# RI Company, Textron, Makes Cluster Bombs

By Layne Frechette

The following is a copy of a speech that I gave on November 19, 2011, on the steps of Textron's headquarters in downtown Providence in protest of Textron's manufacturing and distribution of certain weapons and of its practice of outsourcing.

We are here today to protest the actions of the Textron Corporation. Originally, Textron was a yarn-making company; now, however, it is in the business of making deadly and inhumane weapons that are sold to both the U.S. military and to oppressive governments around the world. Textron is a maker of cluster bombs, weapons which kill innocent civilians; in particular, children who pick them up accidentally long after the fighting ends. Cluster bombs are banned in many other countries: in fact, Textron is under sanction by countries including Belgium, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, and Norway for its dealings in cluster bombs. Textron claims that its new "sensor-fuzed weapon," which is designed to do wide-area damage, is not a cluster bomb; however, the U.S. military refers to it as CBU 97 or CBU 105 - CBU stands for cluster bomb unit. In the past, Textron has sold its attack helicopters to oppressive regimes, such as Turkey in its war against the Kurdish minority and to Central American dictatorships in the 1970s. Textron's only justification for these actions was profit. Moreover, again in the name of profit, Textron has shipped many of its American jobs overseas to countries like China. Despite all this, Textron has been allowed to back its own charter school in town, the Textron/Chamber of Commerce High School, which is named in Textron's honor. How is such a tyrannical war-profiteer being honored by our community? We want jobs, not war!



Photo by Chris Mongeau (chrismongeauphoto.com)

Activist Joyce Katzburg holds a sign at Burnside Park.



Photo by Jef Nickerson

and our democracy. We, the people: Dorothy, Scarecrow, Tin Man and Cowardly Lion, have found our collective heart, brain, nerve and courage. We've come out of the poppy fields and have drawn back the curtain. We know who you are, Wall Street! Despite the brutality of your mercenary police departments, in New York, Chicago, and Oakland, we're going to remain peaceful and we're not going away. We have finally awakened to our own power and discovered that we are the wealth of this nation and our shift has hit your plan!

So now, I'm calling on you, the 99%, to unite against our oppressors: stop scapegoating your fellow workers; strengthen the unions; don't castigate those with benefits, demand those benefits for all; support teachers and government workers; and boycott corporate goods and services! Circulate money into your communities (for every \$1 spent locally, 45 cents stays in the community). Small banks and credit unions lend to small businesses, so use them. Ask local businesses to carry local food and goods. Remember: cheap goods are produced by cheap labor, so buy less and buy local!

Our resources may be few, but we are the 99%: United, our pennies are riches. I never thought I would call myself conservative, but here's my dream: I want to go back to Kansas, to a time when I know who produces my food and my goods. I want to treat them respectfully and pay them the living wage and benefits that I would want for myself. I am proud to be a part of the Occupy movement. Please join us!