

National News

Wall Street protests continue and grow across the country

By Karen Matthews, Associated Press NEW YORK – Protesters speaking out against corporate greed and other issues showed no signs of giving up their campaign on Monday, with organizers urging participants to dress up as corporate zombies and to take part in a rally against police brutality.

The arrests of 700 people on Brooklyn Bridge over the weekend fueled the anger of the protesters camping in a Manhattan park and sparked support elsewhere in the country as the campaign entered its third week.

Occupy Wall Street started with fewer than a dozen college students spending days and nights in Zuccotti Park, a plaza near the city's financial center. But a day after Saturday's mass arrests, hundreds of protesters were resolute and like-minded groups in other cities had joined in.

Group spokesman Patrick Bruner urged protesters on Monday to dress up as corporate zombies and eat Monopoly money to let financial workers "see us reflecting the metaphor of their actions."

As the encampment slowly began waking up Monday morning, several dozen police officers stood in formation across the street.

One camper set up a table with tubes of makeup and stacks of fake money and was applying white makeup to the face of a young woman.

John Hildebrand, 24, an unemployed teacher from Norman, Oklahoma, sat up in his sleeping bag around 10 a.m. He said he arrived Saturday after getting a cheap plane ticket to New York.

"My issue is corporate influence in politics," he said. "I would like to eliminate corporate financing from politics."

He said was returning home on Tuesday and planned to organize a similar protest there.

One supporter, William Stack, sent an email to city officials urging that all charges be dropped against those arrested.

"It is not a crime to demand that our money be spent on meeting people's needs, not for massive corporate bailouts," he wrote. "The real criminals are in the boardrooms and executive offices on Wall Street, not the people marching for jobs, health care, and a moratorium on foreclosures."

Police said the department will continue its regular patrols of the area. And "as always, if it is a lawful demonstration, we help facilitate and if they break the law we arrest them," NYPD spokesman Paul Browne said.

Wiljago Cook, 33, of Oakland, California, who joined the protest on the first day, said "exposing police brutality wasn't even really on my agenda but my eyes have been opened."

She and her boyfriend and two neighbors all quit their jobs to come and planned "to stay as long as it seems useful," said Cook, who had worked for a nonprofit theater group.

She was wearing zombie makeup that included a red streak down her forehead. "It's a cheeky and fun way to make the same point that we've been making," Cook said of her painted face.

A map of the country displayed on the plaza identified 21 places where other protests were organized.

Wall-Street style demonstrations with names like Occupy Los Angeles, Occupy Chicago, and Occupy Boston were staged in front of Federal Reserve buildings in those cities. A group in Columbus, Ohio, also marched on the capital city's street. And signs of support were rearing up outside the U.S. In Canada, a Wall Street rally is planned for later this month in Toronto.

"It was chaos here" two weeks ago, said Jackie Fellner, a marketing manager from Westchester County, north of the city.

Campers take turns organizing a "general assembly" on the plaza where they divide tasks among themselves. They have "a protocol for most things," said 19-year-old Kira Moyer-Sims of Portland, Oregon, including a makeshift hospital and getting legal help for people who are arrested. They rally around a website called OccupyWallSt.org, and they even started printing a newspaper — the Occupied Wall Street Journal.

The campers also have been fueled by encouraging words from well-known figures, the latest actor Alec Baldwin, who posted videos on his Twitter page that had already been widely circulated. One appeared to show police using pepper spray on a group of women, another young man being tackled to the ground by an officer.

"This is unsettling," Baldwin wrote. "I think the NYPD has a PR problem."

Fellner said she has an issue with "big money dictating which politicians get elected and what programs get funded."

But "we're not here to take down Wall Street," she insisted. "It's not poor against rich."

Still, the protesters chose Wall Street as their physical rallying point, speaking against corporate greed, social inequality, global climate change and other concerns.

Beside the mass arrest Saturday, police arrested about 100 people Sept. 24 when protesters marched to other parts of the city and got into a tense standoff with officers.

Some said protesters on the Brooklyn Bridge were lured onto the roadway by police, or they didn't hear the calls from authorities to head to the pedestrian walkway. Police said no one was tricked into being arrested, and that those in the back of the group who couldn't hear were allowed to leave.

The NYPD released video footage Sunday to back up its stance. In one of the videos, an official uses a bullhorn to warn the crowd. Marchers can be seen chanting, "Take the bridge."

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