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The Independent is a New York-based free newspaper published 16 times a year on Wednesdays for our print and online readership of more than 200,000. It is produced by a network of volunteers who report, write, edit, draw, design, take photos, distribute, fundraise and provide website management. Since 2000, more than 650 journalists, artists and media activists have participated in this project. Winner of more than 50 New York Community Media Alliance awards, *The Independent* is funded by subscriptions, reader donations, grants, merchandise sales, benefits and advertising. We accept submissions that look at news and culture through a critical lens, exploring how systems of power — economic, political and social — affect the lives of people locally and globally. *The Independent* reserves the right to edit articles for length, content and clarity.

The Independent is affiliated with the New York City Independent Media Center, which is part of the global Indymedia movement, an international network dedicated to fostering grassroots media production, and with *IndyKids*, a children's newspaper. NYC IMC is an open publishing website (nyc.indymedia.org).

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AMELIA HOLOWATY KRALES

ALISON KALNIK, 20, from White Plains, N.Y. is a student at SUNY Purchase. She routinely comes down to the park to support the protesters.



JULIE TURKEWITZ

NOVA RODRIGUEZ, 18, is a junior in high school. He lives in Astoria, Queens with his mother, who has been laid off several times, forcing him to pick up two jobs. He's slept in the park since Sept. 17. "I know my mom is proud of me because I'm fighting for her," he says. What three words would he use to describe this movement? "A great start."



AMELIA HOLOWATY KRALES

ELAN COHEN, 23, of Edgemont, N.Y. is a student at SUNY Purchase. He is an EMT volunteer at Liberty Park.



JULIE TURKEWITZ

PAUL GRANT, 20, of East Orange, N.J. came to Liberty Park because he is frustrated with the cycle of crime and incarceration that is paralyzing his community. A week before this picture was taken, he met **DI SIERRA** (right), 19, of Brooklyn. "I feel happy because I found someone in my life that I can talk to," he says. "In my community I'd like to see a lot of the killing stop, a lot of violence needs to stop. If everybody can get together like this, there's no 'we can't' — it's just 'we can.'"



AMELIA HOLOWATY KRALES

As far as I can understand it myself, here's why I burst into tears at the Occupy Wall Street camp.

PEARL JIMENEZ, 17, of Queens, has slept at Liberty Park since Sept. 17. "I am from Queens, but now I'm from here," Jimenez says.



JULIE TURKEWITZ

KANASKA CARTER, 26, is a musician from Newfoundland, Canada. She has relocated to Liberty Park to be a part of what she sees as the beginning of a global transformation. One thing that has surprised Carter over the past month is the amount of police brutality. However, she says, "We cannot hate the cops. They're part of the 99 percent, too. A lot of them are saying, 'I'd rather just be home with my kids right now.' There's going to be some that try to provoke us, but I think if we want to get anywhere, we have to show them love."



AMELIA HOLOWATY KRALES

DAVID SIROONIAN, 32, of New York City is a teacher at the High School of Economics and Finance, which is located across the street from Liberty Park. Siroonian visits the park whenever he can, including during his free periods from teaching.

'WE CONTAIN MULTITUDES'

I was moved, first of all, by what everyone notices first: the variety of people involved, the range of ages, races, classes, colors, cultures. In other words, the 99 percent. I saw conversations taking place between people and groups of people whom I've never seen talking with such openness and sympathy in all the years (which is to say, my entire life) I've spent in New York: grannies talking to goths, a biker with piercings and tattoos talking to a woman in a Hermes scarf. I was struck by how well-organized everything was, and, despite the charge of "vagueness" one keeps reading in the mainstream media, by the clarity — clarity of purpose, clarity of intention, clarity of method, clarity of understanding of the most basic social and economic realities. I kept thinking about how, since this movement started, I've been waking up in the morning without the dread (or at least without the total dread) with which I've woken every morning for so long, the vertiginous sense that we're all falling off a cliff and no one (or almost no one) is saying anything about it. In Zuccotti Park I felt a kind of lightening of a weight, a lessening of the awful isolation and powerlessness of knowing we're being lied to and robbed on a daily basis and that everyone knows it and keeps quiet and endures it; the terror of thinking that my own grandchildren will suffer for whatever has been paralyzing us until just now. I kept feeling these intense surges of emotion — until I saw a placard with a quote from Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself": "I am large, I contain multitudes." And that was when I just lost it and stood there and wept.

—Francine Prose

Francine Prose is the author of many bestselling works of fiction. Her latest novel, My American Life, was published in April 2011. This piece originally appeared on occupywriters.org.

Photos & Captions by Liz Borda, Amelia Holowaty Krales, Ashley Marinaccio and Julie Turkewitz



ASHLEY MARINACCIO

Alberto, of Coney Island, Brooklyn says, "I'm part of the 99 percent because I guess it just wasn't meant to be."



ASHLEY MARINACCIO

Roz McKeivitt, 67, of Long Beach, New York, says, "I have work, kids and grandchildren and I care. I want a future for everyone and what's fair is fair. We want the American dream back."



LIZ BORDA

Chris Ruiz, 19, had been sleeping in Liberty Park for six days when this photo was taken. "I'm here for two reasons. First, global equality, and second, the independence of Puerto Rico — because of America and Spain we lost our native heritage."



ASHLEY MARINACCIO

Gretchen VanDyck, 23, of New York City says, "I oppose the negative effects of neoliberal capitalism on everyday life."



ASHLEY MARINACCIO

Kristen Schall, 27, of New York City says, "I have over \$100,000 in student debt, I'm underemployed and trying to live like a 'groun-up.'"



AMELIA HOLOWATY KRALES

Nan Terrie, 18, of Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., came to Liberty Park on Sept. 17 and helps with the on-site kitchen.



ASHLEY MARINACCIO

Diego Espitia, 18, of South Jamaica, Queens, says "I used to have a home, girlfriend and job and lost it all. I'm sick of these wars and people getting laid off."