



Occupy Wall Street – May 1 General Strike

Information Cutoff: 5:00 p.m. on April 27, 2012

Key Points

- Occupy Wall Street (OWS) protesters are calling for a “General Strike” on Tuesday, May 1, urging workers not to go to work and students to boycott classes in protest of what organizers characterize as society’s economic inequality. No unions are expected to participate in the strike, and some have talked to reporters about the fact that they weren’t consulted in OWS’s decision to announce a General Strike. Nonetheless, some elements of organized labor are expected to participate in their own customary May Day rally (which has occurred since 2004), marching from Union Square to Foley Square to Bowling Green, with speeches at either end beginning at about 4:00pm and ending by 7:00pm. The union organizers involved in that march have sought a permit for it. Details are being worked out.
- Elements of OWS who objected to participation in a march with a permit have called for demonstrators to engage in disruptive activities including:
 - A “Wildcat March” in which protestors distinct from the labor-dominated march would march without a permit, potentially disrupting pedestrian and vehicular traffic beginning at 1:00pm at Sara D. Roosevelt Park (2nd Avenue and E. Houston Street). Organizers of this action have advocated the use of so-called “Black-Bloc” tactics to confront the police, sometimes violently, like those experienced during the G-20 summit in Pittsburgh in 2009, in which barricades, rocks, and trash bins were used in clashes with law enforcement;
 - A “Bike Bloc,” in which relatively small groups of cyclists would be instructed to try to tie up automotive traffic. The cyclists would leave Union Square at 9:00am and attempt to randomly disrupt traffic;
 - Attempts to block Manhattan-bound automotive traffic at bridges and tunnels, as well as protestors attempting to block ferry passengers;
 - A “NYC Hoodie March Against Police Violence,” which will occur at the same time and place as the “Wildcat March;”



- A “High School Walk Out,” in which high school students will leave class at noon and congregate at Fort Greene park in Brooklyn for a May Day BBQ;
 - Picket lines staged in front of various businesses across the five boroughs.
- Other activities include:
 - Bryant Park, 8:00am to 2:00pm – “teach-ins,” workshops, and a “staging area for direct actions and civil disobedience;” a guitar workshop at noon, a march with Occupy “Guitar Army” to Union Square;
 - Madison Square Park, 10:00am to 3:00pm – lectures, workshops, professors asked to bring classes to the park;
 - Union Square, 12:00pm to 7:00pm – performances, artwork, “skill sharing,” departure point for 5:30pm parade with permit.

Background

The “General Strike” was initially proposed by the Los Angeles node of OWS in November 2011, endorsed by Occupy Oakland at the end of January 2012, and subsequently endorsed by the OWS New York General Assembly on February 14.

There are fissures within OWS, but a “respect for diversity of tactics,” which includes everything from peaceful protests to the kind of vandalism directed at Starbucks in April, when demonstrators tried to smash the windows at the Starbucks location at Astor Place, has been embraced by the movement.

Below is a list of events that are scheduled to be held on May 1. Although the list is comprehensive, various OWS postings have called for autonomous actions, splinter demonstrations, and flash mobs.

The May Day Wildcat March: 1:00pm @ 2nd Avenue and East Houston Street

On April 20, a call went out on the Pastebin web site for a “Wildcat March” beginning at 1:00pm at Sara D. Roosevelt Park on the corner of 2nd Avenue and East Houston Street. According to the announcement, the May Day Wildcat March has been called in response to “bosses, activists, and union leaders” who have denied employees the right to strike or have requested that any strike participants abide by protest parameters established by the city of New York.



Accordingly, the announcement calls on “all fellow wildcat strikers to join us for a massive unpermitted march at 1:00pm at Sara D. Roosevelt Park (corner of 2nd and Houston). Along with striking rebels all over the world, we will show the bosses and cops of the world that we are many and only getting stronger.”¹ In an email announcement regarding the Wildcat March, an organizer sought to set expectations by suggesting that participants “think about the Pittsburgh G-20 and how there was ONE solidly planned black bloc at the beginning of the day that then set the tone for two other even more militant marches throughout the rest of the day.” During the 2009 Pittsburgh G-20 meetings, a group of protestors using Black Bloc tactics clashed with law enforcement during an unpermitted rally using barricades, rocks, and trash bins.² Due to its unpermitted nature, it is possible that participants in the Wildcat March will engage in Black Bloc tactics and seek to directly engage law enforcement to heighten the level of militancy and set the tempo of the overall General Strike. The demonstration itself is not officially sanctioned by OWS and sources indicate that organizers “from occupy, labor, and immigrant rights organizations have expressed distance from...activities like the Wildcat Strike march,” which is a likely indication of expected militancy during the march. The

possibility of direct confrontations with law enforcement is underscored by the march's slogan: "No permit. No sidewalks. No police barricades."

NYC Hoodie March against Police Violence: 1:00pm @ 2nd Avenue and East Houston Street

Announced after the Wildcat March, the "NYC Hoodie March against Police Violence" **will take place at the same time and location as the Wildcat March**—1:00pm at Sara D. Roosevelt Park on the corner of 2nd Avenue and East Houston Street. Advertisements for the march include the following instructions:

- Wear your hoodie on May 1st. Come to Sara D. Roosevelt Park at 2nd Avenue and East Houston at 1pm.
- Bring banners, music, noise makers, and hoodies!
- Join us in New York City to demonstrate for justice.
- Together, let's make a hooded public presence on May Day, against racial profiling, prejudice, and police violence.

Given that the NYC Hoodie March was announced after the Wildcat March and the emphasis of the Wildcat organizers on previous Black Bloc actions, it is possible that the march organizers have coordinated the times and locations of their marches in order to increase the number of hooded demonstrators—a hallmark of Black Bloc tactics—thereby expanding the operational space in which Black Bloc tactics can be used.

Bridge, Tunnel, and Ferry Blockade(s): Times and Locations TBD

On April 18, an announcement was made on <http://strikeisaverb.net> that an "anonymous source" has called for a blockade of New York City bridges, tunnels, and ferries. According to the announcement, "on May 1, 2012, autonomous direct action groups within Occupy Wall Street, as a part of the global mobilizations for general strike and economic non-compliance, will block one or more Manhattan-bound bridges or tunnels to protest the shameful opulence of the 1%." The announcement goes on to warn that "this May 1, we will create the biggest shut down the city of New York has ever seen."



The coordination of blockade volunteers is currently being managed on the <http://strikeeverywhere.net> web site. The "current tasks" section of the web site lists the following bridges, tunnels, and ferries as "open tasks":

- Manhattan Bridge
- Brooklyn Battery Tunnel
- Queens Midtown Tunnel
- Holland Tunnel
- Lincoln Tunnel
- Willis Avenue Bridge
- Third Avenue Bridge
- Madison Avenue Bridge
- 145th Street Bridge
- Macombs Dam Bridge
- George Washington Bridge
- 59th Street Bridge

- Williamsburg Bridge
- Brooklyn Bridge

“Morning Commute” Bridge Marches into Manhattan: Times May Vary

On the morning of May 1, demonstrators in the boroughs of Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx are planning to march into the borough of Manhattan using the various bridges that connect them. It is possible that some of the “Morning Commute” marches will also be used to blockade individual bridges as is mentioned above. Below is a developing list of morning commute bridge marches into Manhattan. The list will be updated as more events are scheduled.

Williamsburg Bridge Morning Commute March

- 8:00am – Maria Hernandez Park
 - Free Coffee + Breakfast
 - Connect! Make allies for the day!
- MARCH from Knickerbocker to Flushing to Broadway to Continental Army Plaza
- 10:30am – Continental Army Plaza
 - Connect with Occupy Williamsburg!
 - Music and Food!
- MARCH over the Williamsburg Bridge and into Wall Street
- Bring instruments, signs, banners, and friends – let’s show some Brooklyn solidarity and start the day off right. See you there!

*** March organizers have indicated that the Williamsburg bridge march is “intentionally timed to get to the city for the Wildcat March.”*

Bike Bloc: 9:00am @ Union Square

A “Bike Bloc” is also being organized on the <http://strikeeverywhere.net> web site that is slated to begin at 9:00am in Union Square. According to the event’s Facebook page, a “Bike Bloc” is a large group of individuals and cycling affinity groups similar to a Critical Mass ride. No route has been announced for the ride.

Although the exact number of participants in the event is impossible to confirm, 52 out of 732 Facebook invitees have indicated that they will be attending the Bike Bloc.

Bryant Park Activities: 8:00am–2:00pm

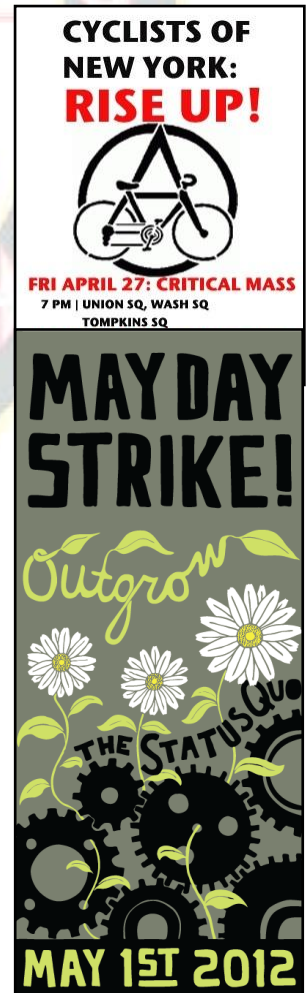
There are a variety of activities that are scheduled to take place at Bryant Park as part of a “pop-up occupation” from 8:00am–2:00pm. The following activities have been announced:

- 8:00am-2:00pm: “Fun and friendly gathering with teach-ins, workshops, food, health and legal services. Staging area for direct actions and civil disobedience”
- 12:00pm: “Guitar workshop and rehearsal for the Occupy Guitarmy with Tom Morello (Rage Against the Machine)”
- 2:00pm: “March with Occupy Guitarmy to Union Square”

Madison Square Park Activities: 10:00am–3:00pm

There are a variety of activities scheduled to take place at Madison Square Park. The following activities have been announced.

- 10:00am-3:00pm - “Free University with lectures, workshops, skill-shares, and discussions. University professors will bring their classes to the commons”



Union Square Activities: 12:00pm–7:00pm

There are a variety of activities scheduled to take place at Union Square. The following activities have been announced.

- 12:00pm: “Events include skill-sharing, more free services, performances, and artwork”
- 4:00pm: “Unity Rally with performances by Tom Morello, Dan Deacon, Immortal Technique, Das Racist, Bobby Sanabria, and other special guests”
- 5:30pm: “Permitted march to Wall Street with a coalition of labor, immigrant, OWS, student, and faith organizations”
- 7:00pm: “March to staging area for evening actions”

High School Walk Out, BBQ, Teach-In: 12:00pm @ Various Brooklyn/ NYC Schools

According to <http://strikeeverywhere.net>, a student walk-out from schools in Brooklyn/ NYC has been scheduled for 12:00pm. Following the walk-out, students are scheduled to meet from 12:00pm-3:00pm at Fort Green park for a May Day BBQ, “with food, music, teach-ins, and workshops for students on many different topics.”

99 Pickets: April 25–May 1, Times and Locations Vary

From April 25-May 1, picket lines will be formed at various businesses in the five boroughs. The department is contacting those businesses known to be targets of pickets.

For internet updates on the 99 Pickets, see <http://99picketlines.tumblr.com/>

Event Assessment

- The General Strike is the first of several major global demonstrations that the OWS movement has played a role in planning, including demonstrations scheduled for May 12, May 15, and May 17-21.³ As such, it should be expected that organizers have emphasized the importance of turnout and will be seeking maximum media coverage.
- Political fissures that are present within the OWS movement may impact the strategies of demonstrators during individual protest actions; in particular, the Wildcat March is not an officially sanctioned OWS march and may attract militant elements from inside and outside the OWS movement that may seek to directly confront law enforcement officials using barricades, riot shields, and possibly weapons such as pipes and rocks.
- Although OWS organizers have publicized a large number of the marches, demonstrations, and activities that will take place throughout the day, it should be expected that “pop-up” demonstrations, splinter demonstrations, and flash mobs may occur at any time, especially during “evening actions” that are planned for 7:00pm and later.
- In their planning, the OWS NYCGA has endorsed solidarity based on a “respect for a diversity of tactics,” which suggests that autonomous actions of demonstrators using Black Bloc tactics may occur at any time.⁴
- Currently, the weather forecast for May 1, 2012 is partly cloudy with a high temperature of 63°F.

Locations in New York City

- Sara D. Roosevelt Park
 - Corner of 2nd Avenue and East Houston, New York, NY
- Bryant Park/New York Public Library
 - West 40-42nd Street between Fifth and Sixth Avenue, New York, NY
- Madison Square Park
 - East 23-26th Street between Madison and Fifth Avenue, New York, NY

- Union Square
 - East 14-17th Street between Union Square East and Union Square West, New York, NY
- Fort Greene Park
 - Between Myrtle Avenue and Dekalb Avenue, and St. Edwards Street and Washington Park, Brooklyn, NY
- Maria Hernandez Park
 - Between Irving Avenue, Knickerbocker Avenue, Starr Street, and Suydam Street, Brooklyn, NY
- Continental Army Plaza and Williamsburg Bridge
 - Corner of South 4th Street and South 5th Place, New York, NY

If You See Something, Say Something – 1-888-NYC-SAFE (1-888-692-7233)

¹ Accessed on April 23, 2012 at <http://occupywallst.org/article/may-day-wildcat-march-called-1pm/>.

² Michael Lovering and Michael Rubinkam, "G-20 March Turns Chaotic in Pittsburgh," *Cape Cod Times* (September 24, 2009).

Accessed on April 23, 2012 at <http://www.capecodonline.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20090924/NEWS11/909249963>; See also <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F6qpYliAjXY>.

³ Accessed on April 24, 2012 at <http://takethesquare.net/2012/03/04/call-for-a-global-spring-in-may-2012/>

⁴ "A Very Subversive Invitation," #OWS *Direct Action* (March 15, 2012). Accessed on April 24, 2012 at <http://da.nycga.net/2012/03/15/a-very-subversive-invitation/>.