



OCCUPY RICHMOND
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A HISTORY OF OUR MOVEMENT

Occupy Richmond began at an informal potluck held in early October consisting of Richmonders and a few members of other Occupations including Occupy Wall-Street. What began as a simple dinner party turned into a 9-hour discussion and the first ever General Assembly (GA) meeting of Occupy Richmond. The first organizational meeting took place a few days later on October 6th in Monroe Park.

Occupy Richmond quickly established its organizational structure, a system of modified consensus, and the methods of General Assembly. These methods include the use of hand signals during meetings and the “people’s microphone,” the amplification method of choice of Occupy movements around the world in areas where P.A. systems are not legally allowed. By the 8th working groups were forming and a date was picked to begin the occupation. The GA chose Kanawha Plaza to be the site of the occupation due to its location in the business and financial heart of Richmond. It was to begin October 15th.

Soon after the occupation began public interest surged. Kanawha Plaza was bombarded by car horns as passersby expressed their support. Between 250-300 people showed up for General Assemblies. Occupy Richmond’s infrastructure expanded as the population of occupiers grew. During our time in Kanawha Plaza Occupy Richmond provided food to the homeless of Kanawha, and we kept the area safe and sanitary.

It was not to last. Though Occupy Richmond had attempted dialog with city officials, and had assurances that dialog would continue, in the early morning of October 31st the Richmond Police Department raided the peaceful occupation. They destroyed and confiscated personal property. They denied Occupiers the opportunity to collect belongings. Occupy Richmond had received assurances that the Richmond Police would leave the Plaza’s homeless population alone; unfortunately they were evicted as well.

The actions by the Richmond Police Department only solidified our resolve to continue our struggle for social justice and against corporate greed. On November 9th we marched from a documentary screening at Gallery 5 to Monroe Park where we intended to start our re-occupation. There were between 250-300 marchers by our count. We were met with massive police resistance, dozens of police cars, officers in riot gear, police vans, and a plane circling overhead. We peacefully marched around Monroe Park and though no attempt to enter the park was made two marchers were arrested.

We then marched down Broad Street to Festival Park where we found ourselves surrounded by city police, state police, and unmarked black vans. After a spirited meeting the GA voted to occupy Canal Walk.

Two days later the editor of the Richmond Free Press, Raymond Boone, offered his front lawn to the Occupy Richmond Movement. We sent a letter to Mayor Dwight Jones asking him to let us let express our right to free speech. He has refused, so we have moved to the front lawn of Mr. Boone, who happens to be Mr. Jones’ next door neighbor.

ABOUT US

Occupy Richmond is a movement in solidarity with [Occupy Wall Street](#) and [other occupations](#) across the United States and around the world.

Decisions affecting Occupy Richmond are made not by individuals—we are leaderless—but by a General Assembly (GA) where 90% consensus passes a motion. This horizontal structure of decision-making helps prevent any individual or majority from controlling Occupy Richmond.

To those who ask “What do you stand for?” or “What is everyone mad about?” or “What are the solutions?” we answer:

We are a collection of thousands of Richmonders with thousands of individual grievances, issues, and problems. We acknowledge that these all derive from a mutual source: a profound socioeconomic disparity unlike any seen in recorded history. We acknowledge that we live in a broken system, a system which allows particular interests to fund candidacies for office, offices that make decisions affecting the lives of the 99%. The 99% is unhappy with those decisions and nobody seems to be listening.

We seek to find a solution through community discourse, by exercising our civil rights to Assembly, Speech, and Expression in a public space that all Richmonders share ownership of. By developing a body that makes decisions through modified consensus and collective thought, we begin to embody a system that is inclusive rather than exclusive, an actual participatory democracy interested in the views and opinions of everyone involved.

OUR STRUCTURE

The governing body of Occupy Richmond is the General Assembly (GA). The GA is inclusive, all may speak, all may participate, and all may vote when the time comes. The GA uses a system of modified consensus (90%) to come to all of its decisions.

The GA is led by a team of facilitators. It is their job to organize the speaking stack, keep time, take minutes, and make sure that everyone has a chance to speak. The GA communicates with the facilitators using hand signals which keep GAs from becoming a cacophony of voices and interruptions (mostly).

Most of the work of Occupy Richmond is done through working groups. These working groups complete the tasks within their mandate as defined by the GA. A working group is given a certain amount of authority to decide exactly how a task is to be completed. Working groups are inclusive and Occupiers can be in as many working groups as they feel they can be of help to.

Occupy Richmond currently has 11 working groups. Work groups run differently from one another but they tend to be leaderless and non-hierarchical. The Medical group is responsible for providing basic First Aid and acting as first responders should the need arise. The Media Group is responsible for the website, media relations, all print media, etc. The Outreach Group is responsible for bringing more people from all walks of life into the fold. A complete list of the groups is on our Website.

OUR COMMITMENT TO EQUALITY

Occupy Richmond is unequivocally dedicated to the fundamental equality of all people and does not tolerate any hate-speech or abusive behavior within our community on *any grounds whatsoever*.

OUR COMMITMENT TO NON-VIOLENCE

Occupy Richmond will never resort to violence against any people or property even if violence is directed against us.

TIMELINE

- September 17th: First Occupy Protest is held in Zuccotti Park
- October 8th: First Occupy Richmond General Assembly is held
- October 15th: Occupation begins at Kanawha Plaza.
- October 31st: Police raid Kanawha Plaza and shut down occupation. Six arrests are made.
- November 9th: Screening of "All Night All Day" at Gallery 5. March on Monroe Park met with massive police resistance. Two arrests are made. Occupy Richmond marches around Monroe Park, down Broad Street, and to Festival Park. At Festival Park, under police surveillance the Occupy Richmond GA moves to occupy Canal Walk.
- November 12th: Occupy Richmond issues demand to Mayor Dwight Jones to legalize the occupation.
- November 15th: Occupy Wall-Street is raided.
- November 15th: Occupy Richmond moves to the front lawn of the Editor of the Richmond Free Press Raymond Boone.

OUR LETTERHEAD

- We have included our official Occupy Richmond Letterhead. Any communication that is not on this letterhead has not been vetted by Occupy Richmond or its media group.

LINKS TO PREVIOUS COVERAGE

<http://www.wtvr.com/news/wtvr-occupy-richmond-folks-camp-out-nextdoor-to-mayors-house-20111115,0,1549571.story>: A story about our most recent occupation.

<http://newamericamedia.org/2011/11/city-of-richmond-voices-support-for-occupy-movement.php>: Piece about our support within Richmond from New America Media.

<http://www.nbc12.com/story/16038468/occupy-richmond-heading-for-city-hall-richmond>: Piece from NBC 12 about our activity in City Hall.

<http://www.styleweekly.com/richmond/standoffish/Content?oid=1633560> : Style Weekly on Occupy Richmond's Political Influence

CONTACTS

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OUR WEBSITE

Main Site/Blog: <http://occupyrva.org/>

Ustream: www.ustream.tv/channel/occupyrichmond

Facebook: www.facebook.com/occupyrichmond

Media Facebook: facebook.com/occupyrichmond.media

Twitter: www.twitter.com/occupyrichmond

