

= Occupy ( book ) =

Occupy is a short study of the Occupy movement written by the American academic and political activist Noam Chomsky . Initially published in the United States by the Zuccotti Park Press as the first title in their Occupied Media Pamphlet Series in 2012 , it was subsequently republished in the United Kingdom by Penguin Books later that year .

An academic linguist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology , Chomsky first achieved fame for his work as a political activist during the 1960s and 1970s . A libertarian socialist , Chomsky was a prominent critic of capitalism , the role of western media and the foreign policy of the U.S. government , dealing with such issues in bestsellers like Manufacturing Consent ( 1988 ) , Hegemony or Survival ( 2003 ) and Failed States ( 2006 ) . With the birth of the Occupy Movement ? devoted to socio @-@ political change ? in 2011 , Chomsky became a vocal supporter for the protesters , writing articles and giving speeches on their behalf , several of which were collected together and published as Occupy .

The book opens with an introductory editor 's note by Greg Ruggiero , praising the Occupy movement and its potential for the greater democratization of society . This is followed by the text to Chomsky 's Howard Zinn Memorial Lecture , which he gave at Occupy Boston in Massachusetts . The third part of the book comprises Chomsky 's interview with the New York University student Edward Radzivilovskiy , while the fourth contains the text of the InterOccupy conference call with Chomsky by Mikal Kamil and Ian Escuela . Part five offers an interview with Chomsky undertaken at the University of Maryland , while the book is rounded off by Chomsky 's tribute to the late activist Howard Zinn and the National Lawyers Guild 's legal advice to Occupy protesters .

Throughout the book , Chomsky discusses what the Occupy movement is and what it is demanding , as well as advocating ways in which it could gain greater support and achieve governmental reforms , using historical examples as evidence . Press reviews were largely positive , with some noting that Chomsky had taken a more moderate , reformist position than they expected of him .

= = Background = =

Noam Chomsky ( 1928 ? ) was born in Philadelphia , Pennsylvania , to Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe . Becoming academically involved in the field of linguistics , Chomsky eventually secured a job as Professor of Department of Linguistics & Philosophy at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology . In the field of linguistics , he is credited as the creator or co @-@ creator of the Chomsky hierarchy , the universal grammar theory , and the Chomsky ? Schützenberger theorem . Politically , Chomsky had held radical leftist views since childhood , identifying himself with anarcho @-@ syndicalism and libertarian socialism . He was particularly known for his critiques of U.S. foreign policy and contemporary capitalism , and he has been described as a prominent cultural figure .

First emerging in New York City in 2011 , the Occupy movement was an international protest movement against social and economic inequality , its primary goal being to make the economic structure and power relations in society more favorable to the underclasses . Different local groups have different foci , but among the prime concerns is the claim that large corporations and the global financial system control the world in a way that disproportionately benefits a minority , undermines democracy and is unstable . It was widely seen as a reaction to the 2008 ? 2012 global recession , an economic crisis that had led to high unemployment across the western world , and was also inspired by the Arab Spring , in which popular protest movements overthrew the governments of several countries in the Arab world . Chomsky became a supporter for the Occupy movement , joining protesters at some of their camps and advocating their cause in the mainstream press .

The book 's original publisher , Zuccotti Park Press , was founded by Adelente Alliance , a Brooklyn @-@ based non profit cultural and advocacy organization devoted to the Spanish @-@ speaking community . Occupy was the first of a series of publications known as the Occupied Media Pamphlet Series . According to the Press , its purpose was to " produce accessible , affordable , pamphlet @-@ size works by well @-@ known and emerging voices who are inspired by a vision for

a new society . " Chomsky dedicated his book to " the 6 @, @ 705 people who have been arrested supporting Occupy " between September 24 , 2011 to March 6 , 2012 .

= = Synopsis = =

The book includes an editor 's note , a brief section providing legal advice for American Occupy activists , and five sections written by Chomsky himself. Occupy opens with an editor 's note written by Greg Ruggiero , in which he explains the basics to Chomsky 's views on the Occupy Movement , drawing quotes from his various public speeches in order to do so . Ruggiero also discusses Occupy 's success in the United States , stating that it has helped to change media discussions by introducing terms like " the 99 % " into popular discourse and also by bringing national attention to the plight of the impoverished . He remarks that the protest movement has not only helped to highlight the " heartlessness and inhumanity " of the socio @-@ political system , but that it has also helped to provide solidarity with those " being crushed " under that system . Suggesting reasons for the movement 's success , he optimistically describes the manner in which " People are waking up and coming out . "

The introduction is followed by a transcript of Chomsky 's Howard Zinn Memorial Lecture , originally given to Occupy Boston in Dewey Square on October 22 , 2011 . Contrasting the hope of the working classes in the Great Depression of the 1930s with the pessimism of their contemporaries in the current recession , Chomsky discusses the changes to the U.S. economy that have occurred since the 1970s ; de @-@ industrialization , de @-@ development and the rise of the financial sector at the expense of other parts of the economy . He notes how both Adam Smith and David Ricardo partly foresaw this situation . Highlighting the work of Tom Ferguson , he discusses how the political parties have come under the increasing control of the corporate sector . Proceeding to look at corruption among the 1 % , he makes reference to both Citigroup and Alan Greenspan , before discussing the role that worker sit @-@ ins and industry takeovers could play in democratizing the U.S. economy , as well as the threat posed by both nuclear war and environmental catastrophe , both problems exacerbated by the current capitalist system . Finally , he responds to questions posed by the audience , discussing the concept of corporate personhood , rejecting the idea that the U.S. elite could resort to fascism , and discussing the possibility of a general strike , arguing that that would be " a possible idea at a time when the population is ready for it . "

The third section of the book , entitled " After thirty years of class war " , comprises the text of an interview with Chomsky conducted at MIT on January 6 , 2012 by a New York University student , Edward Radzivilovskiy . Responding to Radzivilovskiy 's questions , Chomsky lays out what the Occupy movement represents , and what its demands are , arguing that it is primarily a popular protest against income stagnation for the majority and the increasing concentration of wealth among an elite minority . He contrasts it with the Tea Party movement , which he argues only represents the interests of a small Euro @-@ American minority , being backed by the corporate support that Occupy rejects . He then draws comparisons between Occupy and the Arab Spring , arguing that the latter had been far more successful in bringing down governments because it had the backing of organized labor movements , all of which had been decimated by corporate power in the U.S. , and calls for a renewed revival of the American labor movement . Rejecting the idea that Occupy is an anarchist movement , he notes that its primary demands require reform rather than revolution , advocating governmental support for economic growth over austerity measures .

Section four , " InterOccupy " , contains the transcript of a conference call with Chomsky chaired by Mikal Kamil and Ian Escuela on January 31 , 2012 , in which he answered pre @-@ selected questions from the Occupy community . Beginning with a discussion of the media coverage of Occupy , he moves on to discuss the police repression that the movement has faced , arguing that the best way to avoid such repression was to gain " active public support " for their cause . He considers one of the primary achievements of Occupy to have been to bring together communities to discuss and debate in a democratic forum , thereby rejecting the ideologies of selfishness proposed by the likes of Ayn Rand . Chomsky then discusses how to get the corporate sector out of politics and how to introduce greater democracy to the U.S. He rounds off this chapter with a

discussion of the nature of the Republican and Democratic parties , the work of Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci and the role of the U.S. housing bubble in the global depression .

Section five is titled " Occupying Foreign Policy " , an question @-@ and @-@ answer session that Chomsky gave at the University of Maryland on January 27 , 2012 . Chomsky discusses how the Occupy movement could hope to influence and control the foreign policy of the United States , directing it away from its support for autocratic regimes and military interventionism . Proceeding to discuss the successes that popular protest have had in influencing government decisions , he argues that the protests of the 1930s led to the formation of the New Deal , and that the protests against the Iraq War ? although unable to stop the conflict ? helped to moderate the use of weaponry used by U.S. troops . Praising America Beyond Capitalism ( 2004 ) , a book by the political economist Gar Alperovitz , he then discusses ways in which the Occupy movement can influence the public discourse into accepting and understanding their views and arguments . This is followed by " Remembering Howard Zinn " , Chomsky 's reminiscences of his late friend Howard Zinn ( 1922 ? 2010 ) , a historian and social activist who authored the influential book , A People 's History of the United States ( 1980 ) . Chomsky 's text is then followed by " Occupy Protest Support " , a set of legal advice for protesters facing arrest and prosecution authored by the National Lawyers Guild .

= = Main arguments = =

= = = What is the Occupy Movement ? = = =

In Occupy , Chomsky explores both the context to the Occupy movement , and highlights its primary aims . He describes it as a reaction by members of the working and middle classes to the " class war " that has been waged against them by the upper class who control the commercial sector since the 1970s . During those 30 years , Chomsky argues , the nation 's wealth has become increasingly concentrated among a tiny percentage of the population , primarily those in control of the financial sector . Chomsky argues that this process has been furthered by government policies implemented by both the Republican and Democrat administrations , with both parties being financed by that same financial and commercial sector . According to Chomsky , while the wealth has been increasingly focused in the socio @-@ economic elite who control the financial sector , the rest of the population have suffered higher workloads , unsustainable debt , a weakening benefits system and stagnating incomes and real wages , causing them to be " angry , frustrated , [ and ] bitter " . It is this inequality ? Chomsky argues ? that has led to the Occupy movement .

Chomsky states that the Occupy movement 's demands are those of the majority of the U.S. population : to solve the problem of social inequality in the country . More specifically , he argues that their precise demands include greater regulation of financial transaction taxes , and reversing the rules of corporate governance that have led to the current situation . Nonetheless , he also argues that many Occupy members would be hesitant to directly state what their objectives are , because " they are essentially crafting a point of view from many disparate sources . "

= = = How to spread Occupy and democratize society = = =

Chomsky argues that the multi @-@ party , representative , liberal democracy that governs the United States is insufficiently democratic , instead advocating a form of participatory , direct democracy through which the ordinary citizens have a direct say in public policy . As such , he advocates that communities take a different approach to the upcoming primary elections ; instead of simply listening to speeches given by the politicians hoping to be elected , they should get together in democratic councils and discuss what issues they want addressing . That done , Chomsky argues , they should approach the politicians , informing them that they have no interest in their speeches , but that if they want to get elected , they must come and listen to the demands of the people ; alternately , he argues , these communities should select their own representatives whom they could

then vote for .

Chomsky also argues for economic democratization , with the workers themselves controlling the means of production through worker cooperatives . As an example of how this might be achieved , he highlights the situation in 1977 when U.S. Steel decided to close down its facility in Youngstown , Ohio , leaving the steel workers unemployed ; the local community attempted to purchase the factory from the company , and then run it as a " worker @-@ run , worker @-@ managed facility . " They failed in their attempt , but Chomsky argues that had there been a sufficient amount of public support behind their cause ? for instance like the Occupy protesters ? then they might have succeeded . He noted a similar situation that occurred in a suburb of Boston in the early 21st century , when a multinational decided to close down a manufacturing facility because it was not producing sufficient profit . When the worker 's trade union attempted to purchase the factory , the multinational refused , for reasons that Chomsky speculated were due to class consciousness .

Chomsky also provides other suggestions for reforming the U.S. political system . He advocates health care reform and " reining in our crazed military system . " He also argues that in the time of economic recession , the government should focus on job creation and growth ? just as they did in the 1930s with the New Deal ? rather than on imposing unpopular austerity measures on the population . He also describes it as important to rebuild an organized labor movement in the United States , in order to more effectively combat the domination of the ruling classes .

= = Reception = =

= = = Press reviews = = =

The Foreign Policy in Focus 's co @-@ director John Feffer reviewed Occupy for the group 's website , asserting that " What makes Chomsky 's perspective so interesting , aside from the wealth of his political experience , is the range of his interests " , evident through the way that he brings in examples from across the world . Ultimately , Feffer described the volume as a " valuable set of remarks and interviews " .

Writing in the New Statesman , George Eaton stated that he was surprised by the moderate stance that Chomsky took in Occupy , remarking that the " self @-@ described anarchist sounds very much like a social democrat " , offering the " cautious , provisional response one might expect from a Labour shadow cabinet minister " rather than the words of a radical revolutionary . Arguing that he was exhibiting " passionate sanity " at a time when much of the Left was gripped by conspiracy theories , he also criticized Chomsky for being " maddeningly banal " at points during the book , but ultimately thought that there was " much to commend Chomsky 's radical pessimism . " In a brief review in The Independent , Arifa Akbar highlighted that although Chomsky 's claims regarding class war carried with them " the ring of an old Marxist manifesto " , the notion that we ourselves need to change in order to allow the state to change was " very contemporary " .

British Trotskyite publication , the Socialist Review , praised Chomsky 's discussion of the impact of neoliberalism in the US , however they asserted that " when it comes to crucial questions - how do we fight and what are we fighting for - Chomsky 's response is lacking . " They assert that his claims that communities can challenge the Republican and Democrat domination of the electoral system are " somewhat bizarre " given that he has already established how " corrupt and biased " that system is . Criticising him for not looking at the concept of a potential revolution , they also express disagreement with his view that the " solution for the 99 % " can be found within " the framework of capitalism " .

In The Coffin Factory literary magazine , Occupy was reviewed by Laura Isaacman , with Ruggiero 's editor 's note being described as a " powerful " introduction . Isaacman asserts that in this booklet , Chomsky " sets the record straight " in his own " tongue @-@ in @-@ cheek tone " , following decades of being marginalized by the establishment . Robert Thickett reviewed the book in August 2013 for the Mortgage Strategy website . He opined that Occupy felt " nostalgic " , largely because the Occupy movement itself " has largely run out of steam . " Nevertheless , he thought much of

what Chomsky had to say was " practical " and that it was " difficult to refute much of what he says about the way Western society is set up . "