

Interview with Professor Frances Fox Piven

Yogeshwar: Thank you very much Professor Frances Fox Pivens for granting me this opportunity to interview you despite your busy schedule. As a scholar, and a great activist in your own rights, you have been associated with several protest movements in the US including Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement and have consistently fought for democracy and against social and economic inequality.

What, in your opinion, has been, the major driving force behind Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement?

Prof. Piven: Escalating levels of inequality combined with the increasingly obvious chicanery of the financial sector.

Yogeshwar: From my readings about the OWS movement, it appears that the protesters believe that our democracy has suffered because of the influence of money in our political system.

How, in your view, has money affected our democratic institutions and how do you see it continuing to impact them in the future?

Prof. Piven: Yes, the huge flow of money into our system of elections and representation is the big problem. And it will continue to be a problem unless OWS or a sister movement grows and becomes more disruptive.

Yogeshwar: For a democracy to succeed and be vibrant, it is essential that the media and the press be independent, and play a meaningful role in carefully monitoring government actions and policies, criticizing or applauding them as the need may be, and informing citizens with fair and balanced news along with editorial opinions so that the citizens can participate better in the democratic process. However, most mainstream media outlets have become propaganda machines for special interests instead of engaging fair, truthful coverage and reporting. Why do you think this has happened?

Prof. Piven: Your statement tells the story. The media is itself controlled by major corporations. And such independent thinkers as there are in the media have been subject to decades of harassment.

Yogeshwar: What effect does the Supreme Court Ruling on January 21, 2010 in the case: CITIZENS UNITED v. FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION have on the traditional media?

Prof. Piven: It promises to make an already corrupted democracy much worse.

Yogeshwar: Although the mainstream media has deteriorated in recent years, technological advances in the fields of Internet, Information Technology, Social Media, and smart hand-held devices have empowered ordinary citizens to carry out the functions of fair, eyewitness reporting with associated audiovisual recordings from the scenes of incidents. What is your opinion on the role that technology plays and will continue to play in protest movements such as OWS?

Prof. Piven: It plays a role, in reaching already engaged people, and that is important for movement work. But blogs are no substitute for Fox News, and besides, Fox also has blogs.

Yogeshwar: As the traditional news coverage and reporting deteriorates further, do you feel that fairness in reporting and journalism can be restored through independent, technologically empowered eyewitness reporters using social media as well as independent bloggers? Or do you fear that such technology in the hands of average citizens will only create chaos in the crowded news and opinion spectrum?

Prof. Piven: Fairness, no, but if events continue to expose the Oligopoly, these reporters can help.

Yogeshwar: Once again, thank you very much Professor Fox Piven for this interview.

Prof. Piven: Thank you!