

EDITORIAL

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Why we occupied the Long Beach Council meeting

By Tammara Phillips

I never intended to take up the mantle of a peaceful revolutionary, but honestly, what choice do I have? I've written and called my elected representatives about important issues. I've voted. I've spoken at local City Council meetings. I've given impassioned speeches. I've even blogged a time or two. The result? I, like many of my fellow citizens, have been patronized and ignored by my government.

In a sadly amusing example, a few years ago I wrote a letter to Sen. Dianne Feinstein about human trafficking (modern slavery). She promptly responded with a form letter about steps being taken to reduce traffic congestion on California freeways. My experience with local government as I participate in the Occupy Long Beach (OLB) movement hasn't been all that much different.

Disrupting the Long Beach City Council meeting, as we did on Nov. 8, wasn't OLB's initial strategy. We started out in early October following the rules and going through the established channels. Week after week, members of Occupy Long Beach appeared before the Long Beach City Council requesting cooperation in efforts to legally occupy a nearby park. Although council members have given verbal support for the movement and have directed us to work with city management, nearly every request we've made in meetings with city representatives has been denied, with no alternatives offered.

It became clear fairly quickly that the city wasn't very interested in working with us.

By neglecting to put us on the docket, the council could safely insulate itself from hearing what the community had to say about the restrictions on assembling in public spaces and the local Occupy movement. Finally, we felt our only option was to commit an act of civil disobedience in order to be heard.

What shall we do when our government doesn't care to listen? When it doesn't even pretend to represent our interests? When it is incapable of responding appropriately to the will and aspirations of its people? These are the questions the broader Occupy movement seems to be trying to answer. Local incidents like the one at our City Council meeting reflect the essence of the movement, as they are proxy skirmishes in a larger war.

Many of us have come to realize that we've lost the power to influence our government through the old paradigm — the one that instructs us to vote and to trust that the constitutional intent of people to self-rule is still in play. I wonder if we're ready to admit to ourselves that in America we no longer have a government by the people, for the people. It could even be argued that with an approval rating in the 9 percent to 13 percent range, Congress has lost the consent of the governed. The Declaration of Independence proclaims such consent is necessary in order for a democratic government to be legitimate.

While I'm not suggesting that regime change starts at home, I will say Americans are waking up, and judging by events around the globe, perhaps humanity itself is waking. More and more people can be heard demanding a seat at the table where decisions affecting them are made. In solidarity with one another, we are finding the courage to speak out and stand up nonviolently, even if it means breaking the rules. The test of the Occupy movement may well be in whether it can engage enough ordinary Americans to amass the power potentiated by a populist movement.

Surely that is our best hope if we are ever to confront the behemoth that is the corporate state. It won't be easy to dislodge the so-called "masters of the universe," who have co-opted our electoral and legislative processes, from their perch above. To succeed, it will take a lot of us, united in purpose and spirit. We may not have the numbers required for such a feat just yet, but in light of recent events here and around the world, it would appear that a window on that possibility is opening.

As for me, I've found my voice and it will take more than a rubber bullet to shut me up now.

Tammara Phillips of Long Beach is the liaison for Occupy Long Beach Civic Engagement Committee, and acts as police liaison when she is at the occupation site at Lincoln Park. She has acted as spokesperson for the group in their two meetings with city management and police.



You Are Invited to the Redondo Beach Center for Spiritual Living for our 26th Annual

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Interfaith World Peace Day Service

Come and join in consciousness with millions of people throughout the world by attending a global mind link for peace, love, and harmony on Dec. 31st, 2011.

This momentous event is set to coincide with world-wide participation at noon Greenwich Mean Time. Our one hour program, which includes a beautiful Taize service and world healing meditation, **will begin at 4:00 AM** and our doors will open at 3:30 AM.

All faith traditions including American Indian, Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, and Sufi, will be represented in prayer, music, and song. We will have refreshments and informal conversation immediately afterwards.

Come and share this glorious experience with other individuals of similar consciousness.

When: December 31st, 4:00 AM to 5:00 AM
Where: Redondo Beach Center for Spiritual Living
907 Knob Hill Ave., Redondo Beach, 90277



**South Coast Interfaith Council (SCIC)
8th Interfaith Unity Awards Dinner
Sunday, November 13, 2011 – St. James Catholic School, Torrance CA**

SILENT AUCTION: Ends at 6:15 pm

WELCOME: **Rev. Sandy Olewine**, SCIC President

Milia Islam-Majeed, SCIC Executive Director

OPENING PRAYER & BLESSING OF THE FOOD: **Father Michael Meyers**, St. James Catholic Church

DINNER: Catered by: **Maricich Catering**

KEYNOTE ADDRESS:

“Kinship”
Father Gregory Boyle
Homeboy Industries, Founder

AWARD PRESENTATION:

Interfaith Unity Awards
Margaux Kohut and the CCEJ
Beverly Conover, Redondo Beach Center for Spiritual Living
Shakeel Syed and the Islamic Shura Council of Southern California
Dr. Rini Ghosh, Vedanta Society

CLOSING THOUGHTS: **Milia Islam-Majeed**, SCIC Executive Director

CLOSING PRAYER: **Cantor Ilan Davidson**, Temple Beth El;
SCIC President Elect

*** Additional Faith Sponsor ***
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**Please don't forget to pick up and pay for your Silent Auction purchases!
Please make checks payable to “SCIC”.**

A special note of gratitude to **St. James Catholic School** for hosting this event; to **Patty Lance** for the layout and design of the Souvenir Program; to all our **Advertisers, Sponsors and Silent Auction Donors; SCIC Board of Directors and Volunteers** for help with the silent auction, registration and dinner logistics; to **Noreen Mohiuddin and Salma Saeed** for the dinner favors and to **YOU** for attending and supporting the work of the South Coast Interfaith Council!