

RESOLUTION:

PROFESSIONAL STAFF CONGRESS/CUNY SUPPORTS OCCUPY WALL STREET

Whereas:

The Professional Staff Congress/CUNY, the union representing 25,000 faculty and staff at the City University of New York, strongly opposes the imposition of further economic austerity on our university and the working-class and middle-class populations it serves, and continues to campaign for equitable distribution of wealth and progressive taxation.

Occupy Wall Street has brilliantly focused national and world attention on these issues by naming Wall Street as the source of the economic injustice and by challenging limits on the use of public space through an occupation.

Occupy Wall Street—organized at a moment at which income inequality in the U.S. is greater than at any time since the eve of the Depression, in the state with the greatest income inequality in the country and the city with the greatest income inequality in the state—has dared to question the primacy of the finance industry in American political and economic life. In doing so, OWS has shown how the political imagination can be expanded and social vision renewed.

And in little more than a month, OWS has changed public discourse and may be beginning to change public policy. Largely because of OWS, political officials, the corporate median and the class whose interests they represent have been forced to address the radical inequality in this country, creating an opening for unions, community groups and others to press with new urgency for long-standing economic justice demands.

By claiming public space for a public purpose, OWS has increased the freedom for all of us to take political action. Remaining confrontational but non-violent, OWS has exposed the criminalization of peaceful protest in this city and created a space for all of us to exercise our right to speak up and act up.

And by reimagining the public square, OWS has also highlighted the importance of education. Education is everywhere at Zuccotti Park, with protesters educating each other, creating a free lending-library, developing working-groups to examine political questions, and initiating a free “nomadic university” to bring college to the people of New York, in the boroughs and streets where they live.

While it is too soon to know what political movements will grow from OWS, it is already clear that OWS has changed the political landscape, not least because of its ability to find common cause between progressive activists and organized labor and to recognize contributions of students as essential to political change. CUNY students were among the original OWS group and have continued to take important roles in its development, always pressing for more public funding for CUNY.

And whereas:

The PSC was among the first labor unions to show support for OWS, with our members volunteering their time, and the union offering support through organizing members at demonstrations, providing space for meetings and other assistance.

Be it resolved:

That the PSC commends Occupy Wall Street for its nerve and imagination, for its refusal to accept the unacceptable and its willingness to explore new forms of political organization and protest. The PSC will continue to work with OWS—organizing members, as appropriate, in support; helping wherever appropriate to develop its “nomadic university”; and offering material and financial support as determined by the PSC executive council.