

America's 'Day of Rage'

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On January 25, 2011, Egyptians called for a “Day of Rage” to protest against their dictator, Hosni Mubarak. Less than a month later, Mubarak was ousted. As an American witness in the uprising, I ask the question: When will Americans have their “Day of Rage”? From war and torture to unemployment and climate change, can Americans find the strength and courage to change the American government and policy to reflect principles of democracy, human rights, and freedom? With the “Arab Spring” pro-democracy uprisings spreading to Europe, and Madison, Wisconsin, an “American Day of Rage” may be just below the surface. *[Article copies available for a fee from The Transformative Studies Institute. E-mail address: journal@transformativestudies.org Website: <http://www.transformativestudies.org> ©2011 by The Transformative Studies Institute. All rights reserved.]*

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It's late at night on February 1, 2011 as I sit down in the Tulip Hotel with Egyptians and other Americans after another long day of protests. Today was the *March of the Millions* - a culmination of rage against the Mubarak dictatorship. We're in Cairo just a couple blocks from Tahrir (Liberation) Square. We await speeches from Presidents Hosni Mubarak (Egypt) and Barak Obama (United States) on television. Over the last few days, since Egypt's *April 6 Youth Movement*¹ called for a “Day of

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Rage” to oust the dictator, we have witnessed with exceptional clarity how close the Mubarak-U.S. relationship was and is.

Besides the “Made in the USA” tear gas canisters used against protesters as a clear sign of U.S. military aid to Egypt (second only to Israel)², we have seen and heard loud and clear that U.S. support for Mubarak runs right to the bitter end. On January 27, two days into the Egyptian uprising against Mubarak, U.S. Vice President Joe Biden informed us he does “not refer to him [Mubarak] as a dictator.” (Biden, 2011) On January 30, following Mubarak’s call for reforms and dismissal of the Egyptian government (exempting himself, of course), Obama only urged Mubarak to follow through with the reforms – never mind the protesters’ insistence on getting rid of the Mubarak dictatorship. (Krieger, 2011) Newsweek explained that the White House was discussing “how to cajole Mubarak to respond to the demonstrations, while, at the same time, not saying anything publicly that could be taken as American approval of the forcible overthrow of Arab regimes.” (Barry, 2011) On the television, a commentator chimed in that night by asking “Do you really want democracy or a government that complies?” A U.S. response quickly came as U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton announced that U.S. aid to Egypt would continue. (The Straits Times, 2011) That’s \$1.5 billion of which \$1.3 billion is military aid. (Reuters, 2011) Other U.S. partners in the region including Israel and Saudi Arabia announced their explicit support for Mubarak – hoping the “Arab Spring”³ would not get out of their control. (One India News, 2011), (Haaretz, 2011)

With millions of people joining the uprising in Egypt by February 1, it was clear Mubarak would be finished. Protesters’ signs summed it up well: “GO” in Arabic, “Go to Hell Mubarak”, “Prosecute the Dictator”, “Mubarak You Will Lose”, and “Game Over.” At one point a civilian garbage crew came around encouraging people to pick up garbage to clean the streets. After picking up some garbage, we used a taken over police vehicle with the words “Leaves us that’s THE END” spray painted on it as our dumpster.

Yet, as we sat watching Mubarak and Obama that night, it showed us the arrogance and persistence of the powerful even in the face of millions struggling for basic freedoms. Mubarak announced he would not run for re-election, but would stay in power until elections in September. (Mark Landler, 2011) Obama approved and urged reforms. The Egyptians in the room sprang up, understanding that “it’s the same fucking thing,” as one man angrily announced, and poured back out onto the streets in response. Under Mubarak, opposition parties were almost completely

excluded, which means an election with an overwhelmingly one party parliament, as well as Mubarak staying until September, is “the same fucking thing.”

The same thing is exactly what former members of the Mubarak regime, the Egyptian military, and the U.S. and its allies would like. After having high level talks with Mubarak and the Egyptian military throughout the protests, on 5 February U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton announced that the U.S. would back Mubarak’s Vice President, Omar Suleiman. (Rozen, 2011) Under pressure from the committed Egyptian protesters, Egypt had to switch to handing power over to the U.S.-backed military and its Supreme Council of Armed Forces, as Mubarak did on 11 February. As could have been predicted, in the following months the Egyptian military would begin cracking down on protesters and persecute any organizers it could, while the police who killed around 850 protesters during the uprising would not be punished. (Press TV, 2011), (Saleh, 2011)

And so it came to be. Mubarak, following his embarrassing last stand that included thugs on camels and horses armed with poles, whips, and Molotov cocktails, was ousted with contempt, yet the regime and its United States backer continue to try to sustain their power. From abusing women with “virginity checks” to ignoring protesters’ “Second Day of Rage” demands that included a civilian council to take the place of the military supreme council, a new constitution, the release of political prisoners, and postponing elections until new political parties could be formed, the U.S. backed regime is clinging on and seems bent on blocking any move toward a functioning democracy. (Kouddous, 2011)

Unfortunately, this story of U.S. backed dictators and their regimes is routine: Marcos in the Philippines, Suharto in Indonesia, Ceausescu in Romania, Duvalier in Haiti, Hussein in Iraq, the Shah in Iran, Pinochet in Chile, Musharraf in Pakistan, and, horrifically, more. All of them are supported until they are overthrown by their population or become unreliable in serving U.S. interests, as was the case with Saddam Hussein following his invasion into Kuwait.

And it continues in the “Arab Spring”: Mubarak in Egypt, Ben Ali in Tunisia, Saleh in Yemen, Assad in Syria, King Hussein in Jordan, and King Khalifa in Bahrain. Also worth mentioning are the countries where protests were smashed instantly and couldn’t materialize into uprisings; Western Sahara, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia.

The Western Sahara protests preceded the “Arab Spring,” taking place in November, but were smashed by Moroccan forces who illegally

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occupy the land. Backing the Moroccan forces, this didn't arouse much attention in the U.S. or west in general. (Zunes, 2010) In Iraq, where only eight years ago the U.S. was launching a massive illegal invasion with one justification being "democracy promotion," hundreds of thousands of protesters across Iraq were suppressed internally and ignored by western media. Their demands were arguably the most pressing given the devastation of their country over a few decades of sanctions and war. They included the release of political prisoners, improved public works and social services, a change in the "Green Zone" government run by Maliki, and, with that, an end to U.S. military occupation. (Days of Rage: Protests and Repression in Iraq, 2011) Equating these demands, however, are unacceptable to us, and, therefore, must be ignored and suppressed.

Then there is the centerpiece of U.S. backed dictatorships in the Middle East: Saudi Arabia. The most radical and oppressive dictatorship in the region only had to show intimidating force in order to prevent any disloyal public gatherings. They have even been able to help suppress uprisings in Yemen and Bahrain. (Black, 2011) Accordingly, there are no grand statements about support for democracy in Saudi Arabia, either.

This could all be disregarded if it were taking place in a vacuum where our actions as citizens in the United States amount to nothing. But, alas, our actions or inaction could have dramatic effects on our nation's policies that have global consequences as highlighted herein.

Indeed, there is much we can learn from the dedicated activism in the Middle East and much activism we can do here in the United States to change the government's policies. As a result of the United States' overwhelming power in global affairs, we likewise carry a great amount of responsibility to live up to our official principles of democracy, freedom, equality, justice, and human rights. In doing so, we can begin to do our part in addressing the major issues in the world including freedom in the Middle East.

Raging Issues

Being in the uprising in Cairo with other Americans forced me to wonder when we –Americans – will have our "Day of Rage". No, there isn't a dictatorship to overthrow, but there are major domestic and international issues of major concern among the general population, which, if organized, could mobilize broad sectors of civil society in order to create a more just, democratic, and moral United States of America.

Domestically, the major issues include the economy and labor rights, civil liberties, health care, climate change, and immigration. Internationally, the major issues include war, nuclear weapons, “free trade agreements,” and climate change. All these issues reciprocate each other, and the actions being taken on all of them by the Bush and Obama administrations are spelling disaster for Americans and the entire world.

The actions taken on domestic issues in recent years under Presidents Bush and Obama are not only threatening the livelihood of poor working class families, but also the middle class. Economic policies are the centerpiece of the current attack on the poor and middle class. These policies have continuously emphasized increased financialization of the economy, a hollowing out of domestic production, and erosion of social services from social security and Medicare to public education. With an insurance policy of “Too Big to Fail”, the taxpayer bailouts for banks that began under Bush escalated under Obama amounting to trillions of dollars. This has been followed by calls for “austerity”, namely, defunding social services such as social security and Medicare that are critical in supporting poor and middle class families, while trillions of dollars are funneled to the richest one percent of the population. (Stiglitz, 2011) On top of this, the policies of deregulation of banks that caused the financial crisis continue to this day.

The financial institutions, with Goldman Sachs leading the way, were the biggest supporters of the Obama presidential campaign. (Center for Responsive Politics, 2009) Using what Harvard political scientist, Thomas Ferguson, calls “The Investment Theory of Politics”⁴, that is, the big funders of political campaigns will have their interests represented in policy, it comes as no surprise that policy has reflected their interests regardless of its effects among the general population. Thus, while banks could be bailed out with taxpayer money, taking record bonuses and profits, no bailouts are given to the general population such as a moratorium on house foreclosures, creation of jobs, and support for basic social services such as social security and Medicare. Neil Barofsky, who was the special inspector general for the Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP), stepped down denouncing how all of the “Main Street goals” were a “colossal failure” because it turned into a program that was “little more than a giveaway to Wall Street executives.” (Barofsky, 2011) With the 2009 Supreme Court decision (Citizens United vs. Federal Election Commission) giving corporations the ability to directly fund political campaigns out of their treasury⁵, there is no reason to believe “The Investment Theory of Politics” will change unless an active organized citizenry creates change.

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In 2010, Obama appointed a National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform, which consisted of representatives from major corporations including, for example, military contractor Honeywell, which, unsurprisingly, decided to make steep cuts to social security, Medicare, and Medicaid, while supporting their own massive tax cuts. (National Committee to Preserve Social Security & Medicare, 2010) The same year, Obama extended tax cuts implemented under Bush by cutting estate taxes valued \$5 million or more. (Donmoyer & Cinko, 2010) The Obama administration is likely to decide to extend corporate tax cuts as well. Evidence of this was given when Obama appointed General Electric's CEO, Jeffrey Immelt, which paid no taxes in 2010 but made over \$14 billion internationally in profits amidst cutting domestic manufacturing jobs to find cheaper labor overseas, to head the President's Council on Jobs and Competitiveness. (Kocieniewski, 2011)

As I said, all these issues are inter-related. The issue of climate change could be addressed as part of a comprehensive economic stimulus package meant to help workers and the real economy instead of banks and the speculative economy. In 2009, when Obama took office, Van Jones was appointed "Green Jobs Czar" to do just that. In his book *The Green Collar Economy: How One Solution Can Fix Our Two Biggest Problems* he describes his plan to create millions of low-skill and high-skill jobs in the areas of renewable energy, energy efficiency, green building, water, transportation, agriculture and horticulture, woodworking, manufacturing, materials management and waste stream diversion, retail, non-toxic printing, and non-toxic cleaning. As Jones says, "If we are going to beat global warming . . . [it] will require thousands of contracts and millions of jobs – producing billions of dollars of economic stimulus." Jones quickly lost his position in the Obama Administration and no comprehensive climate change legislation that includes substantial reductions in greenhouse gas emissions have gone anywhere in Congress. (Jones, 2009)

Obama had the opportunity to create some of these jobs when he used taxpayer money to bailout General Electric to save the corporation. Instead, Obama continued to follow the policies General Electric had implemented: close down domestic factories and move overseas. American University School of Communication's Investigative Reporting Workshop in conjunction with ABC's Diane Sawyer analyzed Obama's stimulus package regarding renewable energy and jobs. They reported that the total amount of money in energy contracts amounted to "\$2.1 billion and the total that went to companies based overseas to more

than 79 percent.” (Choma, 2010) On December 29, 2009, as General Electric manufacturing jobs were sent overseas, while the same factories could be used for building public transportation and clean energy, the Workshop notes “a consortium of American and Chinese companies announced a deal to build a \$1.5 billion wind farm in Texas, using imported Chinese turbines” and would receive “\$450 million in stimulus grants for the project. The deal would create dozens of jobs in the U.S. and thousands in China.” Hence, we have the hollowing out of American domestic production.

In addition to this, Obama has expanded Bush’s policy of offshore oil drilling to include the Gulf of Mexico and Alaska, which has culminated in the worst environmental disaster in U.S. history with British Petroleum’s oil spill. Just weeks prior to BP’s oil disaster, Obama assured the public that “oil rigs today generally don’t cause spills. They are technologically very advanced.” (Obama, 2010)

In conjunction with important economic concerns, a large sector of the labor force, immigrants, are continuously denied fundamental rights. The fourteenth Amendment was originally created to protect the rights of freed black slaves, stating that no State shall “deprive any person of life, liberty, or property without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.” (1868) The words “any person” does not apply to Latin American or Arab immigrants. Since Obama has taken office, deportations have dramatically increased, he has spent \$600 million on more border patrol agents and unmanned aerial drones on the U.S.-Mexico border, and the only piece of immigration reform to be introduced has been the DREAM Act, which would provide conditional permanent residency if an immigrant serves two years in the military or graduates from a U.S. high school and goes on to higher education. Yet, even this was defeated in the Senate. (Preston, 2010), (Condon, 2010)

During Obama’s presidency, it has been revealed that Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is operating secret prisons in which to detain immigrants, particularly of Latin American and Middle Eastern decent. James Pendergraph, former executive director of ICE’s Office of State and Local Coordination, explained “If you don’t have enough evidence to charge someone criminally but you think he’s illegal, we can make him disappear.” (Stevens, 2009) Of course, he is not referring to, say, the tens of thousands of illegal Irish immigrants, but immigrants that “look illegal” – such as Latin Americans or Arabs. (Rodriguez, 2007) ICE can make people “disappear” at 186 unmarked and unlisted detention centers where thousands of immigrants have been kept without

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“showers, beds, drinking water, soap, toothbrushes, sanitary napkins, mail, attorneys or legal information” while using “enhanced interrogation techniques”, also known as torture, including sleep deprivation and extreme cold, without the intent of eliciting information.⁶ Torture has been used by the Bush and Obama administrations in the ongoing wars, but this policy against immigrants goes even further since immigrants are accused of a civil violation - being undocumented - not a criminal violation of the law such as terrorism.

As if this was not enough, individual states such as Arizona are passing legislation that would require police to racially profile anyone who “looks illegal” and check for documents. No documents, no freedom. (Archibold, 2010)

The denial of basic rights to immigrants also reflects the broader crackdown on civil liberties. Putting aside human rights abuses at prisons as part of the ongoing wars for a moment, under Obama the notorious Patriot Act was renewed. This legislation breaches basic rights protected in the U.S. Constitution such as the fourth amendment, which is supposed to protect against unwarranted search and seizures and wiretapping. The FBI can now search people’s internet activity without court oversight, and the government, through the National Security Agency (NSA), can use telecommunications companies and internet providers to collect data on U.S. citizens’ electronic communications and phone calls. (The New York Times, 2010) These are all extensions of legislation that was supposedly disliked under the Bush Administration. Furthermore, Obama has protected the U.S. government against any past, current, or future lawsuits on surveillance by extending the interpretation of “state secrets” and “national security” to include state immunity from courts. (Greenwald, 2009)

Meanwhile, the issue surrounding our failing private health care system is supposed to be over. When Obama took office it was one of the top concerns among the public and Obama was supposed to have tackled the issue. Yet, although an improvement, the most elementary analysis of Obama’s health care reform can uncover its true colors. In December 2009, as the health care bill was getting pushed through Congress, Obama made the claim that he “didn’t campaign on the public option” in order to explain why he had dropped a public option out of the health care bill, thereby leaving the privatized system intact. (Koppelman, 2009) Further explanation is needed, though, in order to explain the monopoly given to the pharmaceutical industry by not allowing cheaper drug imports from abroad or at least the ability for the government to bargain drug prices, which are exceptionally high in the

United States. Obama will also need to explain how over 20 million people will still be uninsured and how the overall cost of the health care system is projected to increase, which includes taxpayer subsidies to private insurance companies, as the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office pointed out. (Congressional Budget Office, 2010) Furthermore, with the “Gang of Six” austerity package, Obama has proposed drastic cuts to Medicare and Medicaid (as well as Social Security). (Kaiser Health News, 2011) With these observations, it is also impossible to miss that a national single payer health care system, which developed in House Resolution 676, was never an option or a basis of debate when drafting health care legislation.

Unless a fundamental change in health care and other domestic policy takes place, we can be almost certain that current destructive trends will continue to make large sectors of the American population suffer.

And the international scene is no better, if not worse. Of major concern in world affairs, and of extreme importance for the domestic population because of the excessive amount of resources and funds used, are the wars in the Middle East. Under Obama, military spending has surpassed both Bush and Reagan, even requesting a record-breaking \$708 billion for 2011, the largest combined military budget since World War II – and it could increase still more. (Reuters, 2010)

Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, Libya, and Palestine ... the policy of war has not only extended into the Obama presidency, but expands as well.

Despite statements about pulling out of Iraq, the United States still has almost 50,000 troops and about 65,000 private military contractors, all of which will likely stay past the new withdrawal deadline of December 2011. (Huffington Post, 2011) The war in Afghanistan has sharply escalated under Obama as well as air attacks in Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, and Libya. The United Nations reported that in the last few years, nine thousand civilians have been killed in Afghanistan with rates continuing to rise each year as the U.S. expands the war. (Press TV, 2011) In mid-2011, Refugees International reported “The increasing use of airstrikes by the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), as well as night raids by U.S. Special Forces is destroying homes, crops and basic infrastructure, traumatizing civilians and displacing tens of thousands of people.” (Yoshikawa & Pennington, 2011) The war in Afghanistan is currently the longest war in U.S. history, spanning almost one decade. In Pakistan, where the U.S. has sharply increased its drone war since 2008, civilian casualty estimates are between 1,100 and 1,800. (Porter, 2010) In

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Yemen, total deaths from drone strikes have not been adequately studied, but 40 civilians can be killed in one strike alone as happened in the Province of Abyan in 2009. (World Report Chapter: Yemen, 2011) The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) announced that an estimated 150,000 civilians have been displaced from the escalating violence in Yemen. (UNHCR: The UN Refugee Agency, 2009) In Libya and Somalia, bombing and deaths also continue to escalate. In one air strike in Tripoli, NATO apologized for killing nine people including two children. (Hopkins, 2011) In Somalia, as the continuing drought turned into a famine, the U.S. had been expanding its drone attacks within the country adding to its destabilization. (Khan, 2011) In Palestine, the U.S. backed more Israeli bombing and the blockade of Gaza, settlement expansion in the West Bank, and threatened sanctions if Palestinians attempt to declare statehood at the United Nations in September 2011. (The Palestine Chronicle, 2011) All of this amounts to continued human suffering and destabilization of the Middle East and the world.

Torture continues as well. At an officially secret prison, Tor Jail, at Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan, detainees face sleep deprivation, extreme cold, forced nudity, physical abuse, isolation for more than 30 days, and restricting access of the International Committee of the Red Cross. (Open Society Foundations, 2010) The whistle-blowing website, WikiLeaks, released a set of documents on Iraq entitled “The Iraq War Logs” which revealed a U.S. policy called Frago 242 that enabled U.S. military to hand over prisoners to Iraqi forces, former Republican Guard forces under Saddam, for torture. (Leigh & O’Kane, 2010) Torture included, among other things, shackling prisoners by their wrists or ankles “and subject to whipping, punching, kicking, or electric shocks.” There has also been medical evidence showing “bruises and burns as well as visible injuries to the head, arm, torso, legs and neck” and “some type of unknown surgical procedure on [the] abdomen.” (Batty & Doward, 2010) Furthermore, the U.S. continues to use extraordinary rendition to send prisoners off for torture in countries such as Uzbekistan, a U.S. ally in the region. Former British Ambassador to Uzbekistan, Craig Murray, explains how the CIA supported, trained, and brought in prisoners to Uzbekistan for torture. As Murray describes, “when I’m talking of torture, I’m not talking of marginal definitions of torture. I’m talking about people being raped with broken bottles. I’m talking of people having their children tortured in front of them. I’m talking of people being boiled alive.” (Murray, 2009)

In addition to the ongoing wars in the Middle East is the increasing threat of nuclear weapons. Although there is much emphasis on Iran attempting to acquire nuclear weapons, despite evidence to the contrary – similar to the allegations against Iraq prior to the 2003 invasion as investigative journalist Seymour Hersh has pointed out⁷ – Pakistan, India, and Israel all have nuclear weapons and have not signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty. These three powers are fairly radical and aggressive, and are of far greater concern regarding nuclear weapons than Iran, which does not have nuclear weapon capability. The threats made against Iran, and the ongoing war in Afghanistan and Pakistan, which inevitably draws in India, could spell nuclear disaster if steps aren't taken to end the aggression. As a specialist on nuclear weapons and physicist, Zia Mian, explains, "India is one of only three countries still making material for new nuclear weapons. The others are Pakistan and Israel." The combination of "nuclear weapons falling into the hands of Islamists" in Pakistan, and India's Hindu Nationalist anti-Islam fervor could bring the two countries still closer to nuclear war. (Mian, 2009) Meanwhile, the United States continues to build the "Missile Defense" first strike nuclear weapon system directly threatening eastern powers.

The other major threat to the world is climate change. Despite having the largest and most important international negotiations on climate change in history at Copenhagen in 2009, there has been no comprehensive international treaty about this issue. The negotiations failed in that it didn't materialize into a legally binding agreement to reduce carbon emissions and promote renewable and sustainable resources first and foremost because the United States designed its own negotiations called the "Copenhagen Accords" in secret and separate from the main negotiations. Obama explained how the Accords "will not be legally binding" and wouldn't limit greenhouse gas emissions which were preconditions toward any serious attempt to address climate change as embodied in the Kyoto Protocols. (Vidal, Stratton, & Goldenberg, 2009) The chair of the G-77, Lumumba Stanislaus Di-Aping, representing more than 130 nations, said, "It represents the worst development in climate change negotiations in history...gross violations have been committed today against the poor, against tradition of transparency and participation on equal footing by all nations and parties to the convention, and against common sense..." (Di-Aping, 2009)

Last, but, unfortunately, not least, are the international economic policies orchestrated as "free trade" that are pushed upon the developing world, with negative repercussions against the U.S. population as well. At the end of 2010 and into 2011, Obama has pushed the largest free

trade agreement since the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), but this time with South Korea, in order to get it passed through Congress before 2012. (Jackson, 2010) The proposal is happening during a recession with high unemployment, and, although Obama insists it will create some 70,000 jobs in the United States, previous history of free trade agreements show otherwise. In 2001, *Jobs With Justice* compiled reports for each state and found that approximately 766,000 jobs were eliminated by NAFTA, and, along with that, lower wages, loss of benefits, and rollbacks on workplace protections for U.S. workers nation-wide. (NAFTA Job Loss Reports, 2001) “Free trade agreements” also mean privatization of basic social services for recipient countries. For example, Peru, which entered a “free trade agreement” with the United States in 2006, is forced to allow investors to privatize their social security system.⁸ There is a rush to get the deal with South Korea made before a European Union deal reduces U.S. market share in the country. (Palmer, 2011) The bilateral deal and other “free trade agreements” are not about freedom, trade, or having an agreement, but maintaining open economic areas that tailor toward U.S. investment interests and their dominant global economic position.

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In the months following the dramatic beginnings and achievements of the “Arab Spring”, other regions of the world, particularly Europe, began showing signs of their own “spring” or “day of rage”.

Most evident are the protests in Spain and Greece. Tens of thousands of people in these two countries took to the streets and occupied areas in major cities in response to dramatic bailouts for banks and cutbacks in social services for the general population – what is typically called “austerity” – as well as the high rates of unemployment. The Spanish government attempted to ban protests, but protesters, now named “los indignados” (the indignant), ignored the ban and set up camp in Madrid. (Rucinski & Ortiz, 2011)

In the United States, the first sign of an “American Day of Rage” came just weeks after Egyptians ousted Hosni Mubarak. In mid-February, labor protests in Madison, Wisconsin drew tens of thousands of people, culminating in the occupation of the State Capitol, in order to protect unions and labor rights against anti-union legislation that was being passed in the state. When protesters in Madison asked for donations of food, people from around the world, including Egypt, began ordering pizzas for them to show their support. Kamal Abbas, the coordinator for

Egypt's Center for Trade Unions and Workers Services, gave a declaration of support to Madison protesters from Egypt saying "we want you to know that we stand on your side. Stand firm and don't waiver. Don't give up on your rights. Victory always belongs to the people who stand firm and demand their just rights." Also at the Madison protests was a photo from a protester in Egypt who held a sign saying "EGYPT Supports Wisconsin Workers: One World, One Pain". (Kroll, 2011)

Although of great importance, the scope of the protesters demands in Madison was limited to the immediate concern of anti-union legislation that was being pushed through Wisconsin's state government. It also was aimed at protecting particular existing labor rights instead of struggling for expanding rights, which is a major difference between the Madison and Egyptian protests. Yet, not long after the Madison, Wisconsin protests, calls for a national coalition to organize protests in Washington D.C. to address national concerns began taking shape. A call to action was made for

"people of conscience and courage – all who seek peace, economic justice, human rights, and a healthy environment – to join together in Washington, D.C. beginning on October 6, 2011, in nonviolent resistance similar to the Arab Spring and the Midwest awakening ... We are the ones who can create a new and just world. Our issues are connected. We are connected. Join us in Washington, D.C. on October 6, 2011 to Stop the Machine." (October 2011)

As they explain, October 2011 marks a decade since the war in Afghanistan began and the 2012 federal austerity budget will begin. Immediately, people around the country began signing the pledge of nonviolence to commit to being in Freedom Plaza on that day, including Bill Moyer, Cornel West, Chris Hedges, Cynthia McKinney, and many others. Groups such as Progressive Democrats of America, Veterans for Peace, Single Payer Action, Green Party U.S.A., Food Not Bombs, and many more began endorsing the event. If 50,000 people take the pledge and commit to October 6, 2011, the coalition says, the protest will begin. It could very well turn into "America's Day of Rage."

If not October 6, when will Americans take control of their country? These issues that are deteriorating the livelihoods of many people inside and outside the United States, it seems to me, will eventually push toward some sort of "rage", but in what shape? That will be up to us.

The major issues affecting our country, as highlighted herein are unquestionably very serious and important to address. The big question for Americans, who have a history of strong social movements and struggles for freedom and rights, is: Can we rise to the occasion today?

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Notes

¹ The *April 6 Youth Movement* is the name of the group of tech savvy youth activists who organized the January 25 protests that grew into the uprising. April 6 refers to the April 6, 2008 textile worker strike in El Mahalla El Kobra that was brutally crushed by Hosni Mubarak.

² During the Egyptian Uprising, strategic analyst Anthony Cordesman from the Center for Strategic and International Studies wrote an article entitled *The Egyptian Military and the Arab-Israeli Military Balance* in which he discusses the importance of U.S. military aid to Egypt.

³ This is the name given to the pro-democracy uprisings across the Arab world.

⁴ For a introductory discussion about Ferguson's "Investment Theory of Politics", The Independent Institute's *Independent Review: A Journal of Political Economy* offers a detailed discussion.

⁵ In January 2010, the Supreme Court ruled in *Citizens United vs. Federal Election Commission* that, on the basis that corporations have free speech rights and money given to support political candidates is a form of speech, they cannot be limited in how much they donate to political campaigns, and, therefore, can fund campaigns directly out of their treasury.

⁶ See citation Stephens, 2009.

⁷ See Seymour Hersh's article entitled "Iran and the Bomb" published in *The New Yorker*.

⁸ A detailed report on this entitled "Peru-U.S. *Free Trade Agreement*" *Would Help Lock In Failed Social Security Privatization in Peru* was published in 2007 by Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch.