

# افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نیاشد تن من مباد بدین بوم ویر زنده یک تن مباد  
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

[www.afgazad.com](http://www.afgazad.com)

[afgazad@gmail.com](mailto:afgazad@gmail.com)

European Languages

زبان های اروپایی

Al Jazeera

## As the American dream unravels

Ahmed Moor

11/16/2011

Something is unravelling in America. The dream, the purpose and the drive are worn and tired. The people are under siege.

Occupy Wall Street is organic; it's homegrown and native. The voluntary, viral and near-spontaneous movement began as a reaction to a political system governed by a **venal** class of politicians and financiers. The story of their ascent to power is the story of the pauperised American worker and the indigent American family. It is the story of a stealthy coup and a government at war against its people. It is the story of the one per cent versus the 99 per cent.

It has been two months since the first OWS protests began in New York. The young un-and-underemployed people who seeded the movement saw their efforts replicated in cities around the country and around the world. And while it quickly became clear that a globalising economy means a world with globalised grievances, the movement has simultaneously remained local.

In Boston - an American city with a storied revolutionary past - an Occupy nucleus quickly took root and developed. Protesters here channelled the city's potent symbolism by building their encampment across the street from the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston. Shortly thereafter thousands of labour union members, regular citizens and students from local universities joined the Occupy Boston movement to march for the restoration of their economic and political rights.

Weeks later, on November 9, several hundred students, faculty and staff and members of the community employed the lessons learned in New York and Boston to occupy Harvard.

We collected in the heart of the university, marched along its breadth and out into the surrounding community to protest university policies. Most visibly, there is evidence that Harvard holds investments in funds that derive profits from speculative [land acquisition in Tanzania](#).

The University has not embarked on its African expedition alone. Other American institutions of higher education have also aggressively pursued high returns on their endowments, often by undermining the code of ethics they seek to uphold elsewhere. HIV research cannot come at even the partial expense of the weak and vulnerable people for whom it is ostensibly being undertaken.

### **Harvard and the one per cent**

Nor is it clear that a code of ethics is being effectively communicated to young and impressionable students. An outsized number of undergraduates here - roughly 20 per cent of every class - enter the financial services industry upon leaving the university.

Or as Public Policy Professor Tim McCarthy put it to me, "At Harvard, we would like to believe that this is an institution that works solely on behalf of the broader good, and there are many instances where we try to do just that. But in reality Harvard, as an institution, is also a factory that produces the one per cent, the very people who have caused a great deal of our present suffering."

Indeed, the university has likely produced more privilege than any other in America. While that alone is not a meaningful indictment, too many students employ their privilege in service of their own needs, often at the expense of their fellow citizens. Their decisions are the rational product of a society that has failed to provide them with better choices.

The past 30 years have witnessed a redefinition of what it means to be an American. The land of opportunity grew anaemic on a diet of easy credit and [stagnant wage growth](#) for all but the uppermost segments of society. Today, the broad promise this country once held has been replaced by a zero-sum relationship; I grow richer only when you grow poorer.

Moreover, our agents of change - young people - are handicapped by staggering student debt that restricts their choices. That debt further impoverishes a country which cannot gain the benefit of their diverse talents. Graduates from top universities are now faced with a decision: Either join the ranks of a self-serving, unproductive elite, or quickly fail under the weight of an [unmanageable](#) student loan burden. It is extraordinary that in today's America having any choice at all is a measure of privilege.

The broader OWS movement has been criticised by sideline observers as being directionless and unfocused. But young Americans do have an objective. They seek to forge an equitable future - "to [reclaim] democracy from a corporate oligarchy," as Professor Brad Epps said to me.

Towards the end of our march, we turned back in the direction of the yard at the heart of the university. We found that security guards and police had sealed the gates; we were locked out.

As I looked on, I was stricken by the allegory. Here was our America. An America of gates and gatekeepers.