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## Opinion: I'm not ignoring you anymore, Occupy

By Ashley Mason



Occupy Wall St. has recently had a resurgence and is currently protesting in Union Square in New York City. Photo by Andrew Burton/Getty Images

I have a confession to make.

I am a bad journalism student. I know very little about the Occupy Wall St. movement.

During the first five months they were in New York, I didn't visit them once. I didn't interview anyone associated with Occupy or religiously follow the updates in the New York Times. I didn't even know where Zuccotti Park was until a journalism professor assigned me the Financial District for my beat class.

I have been generally apathetic to the whole movement. Even my dad, a 45-year-old civil engineer, is more passionate about OWS than me.

"Sometimes I feel like we're headed for the next civil war," he said when I was home in California last December.

Every night the local news station showed playbacks of the latest Occupy protests like highlights from the afternoon's football game. While we watched on our new leather couch I insisted that we weren't.

"It's really not as bad as it looks, Dad," I said. "It's just a bunch of crazies in the Financial District."

"That's not what I'm talking about," he said. "The whole country cares about this."

But in January from my tiny dorm room overlooking Union Square, I wasn't sure they did. There was the occasional march down Broadway that would interrupt my ordinarily streamlined jaunt to class in Greenwich Village, but aside from that I never saw them. The protesters were isolated in their little pocket of lower Manhattan and as long as I didn't go searching through the inter-webs, I didn't have to acknowledge this effervescent group that captured the attention of the country.

Well guess what, Occupy? You have my attention now.

From the moment your cardboard signs and half-hazard chants moved into Union Square, my ears have been perked every hour of the day. You offer me your propaganda as I try to return home after a long day of classes. Your admirers — tourists, bloggers, and city-goers — clog the park on would-be beautiful sunny days made for walks and picnics. I'm confronted by you constantly.

I understand your mission now. You're unsettled because there are so many imbalances in this city. You want fairness and change. I hear your chants into the late hours of the morning. And I'm right there with you. I'm tired of paying for a five-figure education, crippling student loans and trying to make my way into corporations that could care less about me.

I understand your frustration. I'm in the 99% just like you, but please whine a little quieter about it. At 20-years-old, I'm incredibly fortunate to live in Union Square. Sure, I complain about tight living quarters (we have four girls to one bathroom) but our dead-on view of the Zeckendorf Towers makes it worth it. As I scour Craigslist for summer apartments, my little shoebox of a dorm room keeps looking better.

Don't ruin this for me with your crowd of protesters and corresponding police fleet. Places are expensive and I'll be lucky to stay in Manhattan, let alone have a view of anything other than a wall. I know I'll never again be able to afford a view as alive and dazzling as Union Square and it's only by some fluke in the system that I've been allowed to enjoy a sliver of prime real estate in New York City for as long as I have.

I'm not apathetic now. Occupy's shift into Union Square has forced me to take a position. While I would prefer that they were a little quieter, I can honestly feel the force of their nation-changing movement. I can see its grandness outside my window and it's something I can't ignore.

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