

# Protestors stand in solidarity, despite differences in goals

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a brief rally, the group prepared to march to Times Square, not anticipating the barriers that would obstruct their entry into the square.

Filing along one portion of the sidewalk for two hours, stretching about a mile long, the march arrived on the street across from Times Square around 5:30 p.m. and immediately began funneling into the street.

"We'd been escorted by the police all day, everything had been relatively fine, but they wouldn't let us cross the final street (to Times Square)," Castor said.

It was then that the scuffle broke out. Batons began flying, people were arrested, a police barricade went up and horses were used to keep the protestors on the sidewalk. Senior Claire Healy, who documented the action, including the police barricade, said she was sure she'd be arrested.

"It was probably some of the scariest moments of my life," she said. "The one cop that could have hurt someone, we were all telling him, 'We have your name and number, you will be reported.'"

The power struggle continued for hours as the police attempted to hold the protestors back, while they in turn tried to make a plan of action using the system of mic check.

"You can hear this huge dialogue among thousands of people happening in real time," Castor said. "The police can hear everything you're planning all day. It's very transparent, there are no secrets."

In many cases, the police refused to make eye contact or communicate with the protestors. Castor remembers people crying in fear, saying they wanted to leave, but continued to stand their ground. Despite her own fear, Castor did the same.

"I have never been more scared in my entire life, but what was incredible is that I was firmly planted," she said. "I did not have the desire to go anywhere and I did not go anywhere."

### A conclusion is reached

The standoff lasted nearly three hours before Joseph Esposito, Chief of Department of the NYPD, joined the scene and told the police officers to stand down and that they were disobeying orders. To the surprise of the protestors, he began using mic check to communicate.

"No one asked him to use (it)," Castor said. "It was incredible and then there was the start of negotiating between the whole group and one officer."

Castor and junior Lauren Clapp were two of the first protestors escorted across the street into Times Square. It was a process that took about three hours as a total of 6,000 people marched across the street in groups.

"We went from tear gas to being charged with horses and threatened with



Mat Masterson (left) and Max Silver (right) were two of about 40 participants at Occupy Greensboro Oct. 22, playing music for others in attendance. CLAIRE ESPARROS | Staff Photographer

arrest to everyone winning," Castor said.

It was the best experience of the trip, Clapp said, and one she will never forget.

"I didn't know what to expect and I wouldn't say I felt safe in that moment because it could have escalated to real violence really fast," she said. "Knowing that feeling makes it more meaningful that the whole situation diffused peacefully, it could have been the opposite reaction."

Angel Aguayo, a local North Carolina high school student, said she traveled to New York with the intention of being arrested in support of the cause. But, when the barricade was removed and she crossed into Times Square, the success of the march was worth more, she said.

"This was a victory for the protestors, we had won using nonviolent methods," Aguayo said. "This was by far the best experience I have ever had. I'm not sure I have ever seen anything as beautiful as the movement."

### Grasping the meaning

As a horizontally led movement, some have questioned whether the protestors have any clear goals they are actively working toward. For the participants from Elon, that's not a fair judgment to make.

"When people say they don't have demands, that's the wrong question to be asking about the movement," Healy said. "It's more, how are they getting to their demands? What is making this such a success? You can't deny it's successful."

Hundreds of cities around the world are occupying so something is going right. We're trying to revamp an entire system, it's not going to be fast."

The plurality of ideas within the movement complicates the process of determining concrete demands, Clapp said.

"This kind of democracy is so hard because it accounts for everyone's differences," she said. "It's beautiful but very strenuous."

Blackney's hope is that the process of direct democracy is one that can eventually be applied to national political discourse.

"I think it would be awesome if, instead of money talking, the people talked, but it's important to remember that it's a month old," she said. "I have no idea what it's going to be yet. It's possible, but it could also fail, it's too soon to tell."

### A national movement localized

Though small in comparison to the movement in New York City, another group of people has pitched tents in a small, grassy area in downtown Greensboro.

Julie Southerland, a resident of High Point, said while she identifies as a socialist, the group represents numerous political ideologies. Though standing in solidarity with the national movement, the Greensboro branch has also set its sights on more local problems, including foreclosures in Greensboro and cutbacks at the post office.

"We see the movement as the antithesis of the Tea Party," Southerland said. "We are from the left and more grassroots. We're working on developing concrete demands."

Many of those joining the movement, Southerland said, have been mad about the system, but have gone for many years without an outlet to express their frustrations.

"Individual people have connected with one another at occupy groups," she said. "A lot look to Wall Street for ideas. Their camp has been established a lot longer with many more people. We are taking cues from New York and other places."

Lauren Guy-Mcalpinsaid, a Greensboro resident, said she considers herself a long-time activist and has always been frustrated with the lack of alternatives in the U.S. political system.

"I think the two-party system of



Thousands of protestors filled the streets of New York City Oct. 15 in an all-day march from their base of Zuccotti Park to Times Square. PHOTO SUBMITTED

Republicans and Democrats won't change anything," she said.

For Max Silver, who has stayed at the camp for four days, the motivations for participation are different. After hearing his friends make fun of the movement, he decided to join in.

"I'm staying until it's torn down," he said.

Many of the hallmarks of the movement on Wall Street are intact, including a library, press area and three meals a day. Southerland said some of the homeless population from the local community has also taken up camp at the site.

### Reflections on the experience

For the participants from Elon, a sense of community pervaded their time on Wall Street.

"In the park, everyone was committed to being a community and working together, even though they were pissed off," Clapp said. "They all had legitimate concerns for being there."

Though the thousands of protestors were not always familiar with one another, there was a feeling of safety that defined many of their interactions.

"In the middle of downtown New York for over 24 hours, things we needed and had brought were left unattended by us and were still in perfect condition when we came back," Castor said. "That was incredible."

Clapp and Castor are currently developing plans to return to New York during Winter Term and have already visited the Occupy Greensboro site since returning to campus from New York.

"I think now that we've had people there and are bringing back a very optimistic message with lots of information and levels of involvement, I think the conversation around Elon will become bigger," Castor said. "The optimism being part of it, that caught me off guard. It's easier to get on board with something that is so happy and positive. That can make the conversation easier and will help make it grow."



The camp site at Zuccotti Park is serving as home to thousands of protestors. PHOTO SUBMITTED