

Past Social Movement Vets Offer Praise

NEW YORK (AP) — To veterans of past social movements, the Occupy Wall Street protests that began in New York and spread nationwide have been a welcome response to corporate greed and the enfeebled economy. But whether the energy of protesters can be tapped to transform the political climate remains to be seen.

"There's a difference between an emotional outcry and a movement," said Andrew Young, who worked alongside the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. as a strategist during the civil rights movement and served as U.S. ambassador to the United Nations. "This is an emotional outcry. The difference is organization and articulation."

The nearly four-week-old protest that began in a lower Manhattan park has taken on a semblance of organization and a coherent message has largely emerged: That "the 99 percent" who struggle daily as the economy shudders, employment stagnates and medical costs rise are suffering as the 1 percent who control the vast majority of the economy's wealth continues to prosper.

Labor unions and students joined the protest on Wednesday, swelling the ranks for a day into the thousands, and lending the occupation a surge of political clout and legitimacy. President Barack Obama said Thursday that the protesters were "giving voice to a more broad-based frustration about how our financial system works," some Republicans have been seeking to cast Occupy Wall Street as class warfare.

The growing cohesiveness and profile of the protest have caught the attention of public intellectuals and veterans of past social movements.

Issa To Target Justice Officials On Lost Weapons

WASHINGTON (AP) — A key House investigator says he could send subpoenas to the Obama administration as soon as this week over weapons lost amid the Mexican drug war.

House oversight committee chairman Darrell Issa suggested on "Fox News Sunday" that Attorney General Eric Holder knew about the gun trafficking operation known as "Fast and Furious" earlier than he has acknowledged. Subpoenas could go out as soon as this week, Issa said.

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives in 2009 allowed intermediaries for drug cartels to buy thousands of weapons from Arizona gun shops and lost track of about 1,400 of the 2,000 of those guns. Some of those weapons have been recovered at crime scenes in Mexico.

Idaho Facility Remains Most Violent Prison

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — In the last four years, Idaho's largest privately run prison has faced federal lawsuits, widespread public scrutiny, increased state oversight, changes in upper management and even an ongoing FBI investigation.

Yet the Corrections Corp. of America-run Idaho Correctional Center remains the most violent lockup in Idaho.

Records obtained by The Associated Press show that while the assault rate improved somewhat in the four-year period examined, ICC inmates are still more than twice as likely to be assaulted as those at other Idaho prisons.

Between September 2007 and September 2008, both ICC and the state-run Idaho State Correctional Institution were medium-security prisons with roughly 1,500 inmates each. But during that 12-month span, ICC had 132 inmate-on-inmate assaults, compared to just 42 at ISCI. In 2008, ICC had more assaults than all other Idaho prisons combined.

By 2010, both prisons had grown with 2,080 inmates at ICC and 1,688 inmates at ISCI. Records collected by the AP showed that there were 118 inmate-on-inmate assaults at ICC compared to 38 at ISCI. And again last year, ICC had more assaults than all the other prisons combined.

Am. Growth Theorists Nobel Top Contenders

STOCKHOLM (AP) — Researchers who study economic growth and how technology helps drive long-term development are among the top contenders for the Nobel prize for economics being awarded Monday, Swedish Nobel guessers say.

A day before the announcement of the prestigious 10 million kronor (\$1.5 million) award, Americans Robert Barro and Paul Romer stand out as favorites for the prize for their research on growth, leading experts say.

The Nobel Committee maintains it doesn't pay attention to current events when picking a winner, but an award to growth theory would be closely watched as the world debates how to revive the economy in the face of large public spending cuts.

Romer, a former senior fellow at Stanford University now at New York University, has been hot "for a couple of decades," said Uppsala University economics professor Daniel Waldenstrom. That is one of the unspoken criteria to win the prize because it typically takes that much time to evaluate if results are sustainable.

"His research is focused on powers within technology and development that drive growth, that had previously been overlooked," Waldenstrom told The Associated Press. "He has showed that it is actually significant for long-term growth and has changed our view of what drives growth."

Seven Rescued After 20 Hours Off Fla. Keys

MARATHON, Fla. (AP) — The U.S. Coast Guard says one woman died and seven people not wearing life vests treaded water in choppy seas for 20 hours before being rescued off the Florida Keys.

Petty Officer Nick Ameen says a person who rescued three of the boaters called the Coast Guard about 8 a.m. Sunday and told them others were still in the water. He says about an hour later a Coast Guard crew found the four who had drifted about four miles from the boat that capsized and sank Saturday afternoon off Marathon.

He says the group was not able to stay together and an 80-year-old woman never resurfaced. He says among those rescued was a 4-year-old girl.

He says the boaters likely were taken to a hospital but did not have their conditions.

24 Dead In Cairo Riots

BY MAGGIE MICHAEL
Associated Press

CAIRO — Flames lit up downtown Cairo, where massive clashes raged Sunday, drawing Christians angry over a recent church attack, Muslims and Egyptian security forces. At least 24 people were killed and more than 200 injured in the worst sectarian violence since the uprising that ousted Hosni Mubarak in February.

The rioting lasted late into the night, bringing out a deployment of more than 1,000 security forces and armored vehicles to defend the state television building along the Nile, where the trouble began. The military clamped a curfew on the area until 7 a.m.

The clashes spread to nearby Tahrir Square, drawing thousands of people to the vast plaza that served as the epicenter of the protests that ousted Mubarak. On Sunday night, they battled each other with rocks and firebombs, some tearing up pavement for ammunition and others collecting stones in boxes.

At one point, an armored security van sped into the crowd, striking a half-dozen protesters and throwing some into the air. Protesters retaliated by setting fire to military vehicles, a bus and private cars, sending flames rising into the night sky.

After midnight, mobs roamed downtown streets, attacking cars they suspected had Christian passengers. In many areas, there was no visible police or army presence to confront or stop them.

Christians, who make up about 10 percent of Egypt's 80 million people, blame the country's ruling

military council for being too lenient on those behind a spate of anti-Christian attacks since Mubarak's ouster. As Egypt undergoes a chaotic power transition and security vacuum in the wake of the uprising, the Coptic Christian minority is particularly worried about the show of force by ultraconservative Islamists.

Prime Minister Essam Sharaf, addressing the nation in a televised speech, said the violence threatened to throw Egypt's post-Mubarak transition off course.

"These events have taken us back several steps," he said. "Instead of moving forward to build a modern state on democratic principles we are back to seeking stability and searching for hidden hands — domestic and foreign — that meddle with the country's security and safety."

"I call on Egyptian people, Muslims and Christians, women and children, young men and elders to hold their unity," Sharaf said.

The Christian protesters said their demonstration began as a peaceful attempt to sit in at the television building. But then, they said, they came under attack by thugs in plainclothes who rained stones down on them and fired pellets.

"The protest was peaceful. We wanted to hold a sit-in, as usual," said Essam Khalili, a protester wearing a white shirt with a cross on it. "Thugs attacked us and a military vehicle jumped over a sidewalk and ran over at least 10 people. I saw them."

Wael Roufai, another protester, corroborated the account. "I saw the vehicle running over the protesters. Then they opened fire at us," he said.

Khalili said protesters set fire to

army vehicles when they saw them hitting the protesters.

Ahmed Yahia, a Muslim resident who lives near the TV building, said he saw the military vehicle plow into protesters. "I saw a man's head split into two halves and a second body flattened when the armored vehicle ran over it. When some Muslims saw the blood they joined the Christians against the army," he said.

Television footage showed the military vehicle slamming into the crowd. Coptic protesters were shown attacking a soldier, while a priest tried to protect him. One soldier collapsed in tears as ambulances rushed to the scene to take away the injured.

At least 24 people were killed in the clashes, Health Ministry official Hisham Sheiha said on state TV.

State media reported that Egypt's interim Cabinet was holding an emergency session to discuss the situation.

The protest began in the Shubra district of northern Cairo, then headed to the state television building along the Nile where men in plainclothes attacked about a thousand Christian protesters as they chanted denunciations of the military rulers.

"The people want to topple the field marshal!" the protesters yelled, referring to the head of the ruling military council, Field Marshal Hussein Tantawi. Some Muslim protesters later joined in the chant.

Later in the evening, a crowd of Muslims turned up to challenge the Christian crowds, shouting, "Speak up! An Islamic state until death!"

Armed with sticks, the Muslim assailants chased the Christian protesters from the TV building,

banging metal street signs to scare them off. It was not immediately clear who the attackers were.

Gunshots rang out at the scene, where lines of riot police with shields tried to hold back hundreds of Christian protesters chanting, "This is our country!"

Security forces eventually fired tear gas to disperse the protesters. The clashes then moved to nearby Tahrir Square, the epicenter of the uprising against Mubarak. The army closed off streets around the area.

The clashes left streets littered with shattered glass, stones, ash and soot from burned vehicles. Hundreds of curious onlookers gathered at one of the bridges over the Nile to watch the unrest.

After hours of intense clashes, chants of "Muslims, Christians one hand, one hand!" rang out in a call for a truce. The stone-throwing died down briefly, but then began to rage again.

In the past weeks, riots have broken out at two churches in southern Egypt, prompted by Muslim crowds angry over church construction. One riot broke out near the city of Aswan, even after church officials agreed to a demand by ultraconservative Muslims known as Salafis that a cross and bells be removed from the building.

Aswan's governor, Gen. Mustafa Kamel al-Sayyed, further raised tensions by suggesting to the media that the church construction was illegal.

Protesters said the Copts are demanding the ouster of the governor, reconstruction of the church, compensation for people whose houses were set on fire and prosecution of those behind the riots and attacks on the church.

Unemployed Seek Protection From Job Bias

BY SAM HANANEL
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — After two years on the unemployment rolls, Selena Forte thought she'd found a temporary job at a delivery company that matched her qualifications.

But Forte, a 55-year-old from Cleveland, says a recruiter for an employment agency told her she would not be considered for the job because she had been out of work too long. She had lost her job driving a bus.

"They didn't even want to hear about my experience," said Forte. "It didn't make sense. You're always told just go out there and get a job."

Forte, scraping by now as a part time substitute school bus driver, is part of a growing number of unemployed or underemployed Americans who complain they are being screened out of job openings for the very reason they're looking for work in the first place. Some companies and job agencies prefer applicants who already have jobs, or haven't been jobless too long.

She could get help from a provision in President Barack Obama's jobs bill, which would ban companies with 15 or more employees from refusing to consider — or offer a job to — someone who is unemployed. The measure also applies to employment agencies and would prohibit want ads that disqualify applicants just because they are unemployed.

But Obama's bill faces a troubled path in Congress, as Republicans strongly oppose its plans for tax increases on the wealthy and other spending provisions. Should the bill fail, Democrats are sure to remind jobless voters that the GOP blocked an attempt to redress discrimination against them at a time when work is so hard to find.

The effort to protect the unemployed has drawn praise from workers' rights advocates, but business groups say it will just stir up

needless litigation by frustrated job applicants. The provision would give those claiming discrimination a right to sue, and violators would face fines of up to \$1,000 per day, plus attorney fees and costs.

"Threatening business owners with new lawsuits is not going to help create jobs and will probably have a chilling effect on hiring," said Cynthia Magnuson, spokeswoman for the National Federation of Independent Business. "Business owners may be concerned about posting a new job if they could face a possible lawsuit."

A survey earlier this year by the National Employment Law Project found more than 150 job postings on employment Web sites such as CareerBuilder.com and Monster.com requiring that applicants "must be currently employed" or using other exclusionary language based on current employment status.

"It's really alarming to us that employers continue to ignore the strong public condemnation of this practice," said Maurice Emsellem, the legal group's policy co-director.

The issue has gained more prominence as the unemployment level remains stuck over 9 percent and a record 4.5 million people — nearly one-third of the unemployed — have been out of work for a year or more. And older workers, like Forte, often struggle to find new jobs.

"There's a flood of workers looking for jobs right now and unfortunately, this is a convenient way to streamline the process" by employers, Emsellem said. Some companies might assume people who have been out of work for several months may not be stellar performers, he said.

The practice has also drawn concern from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, where members at a hearing earlier this year said barring unemployed people from employment may have a greater effect on blacks and Hispanics with higher jobless rates.

Ron Cooper, a former commission general counsel during the Bush administration now in private practice, said he thinks the problem is being overblown.

"People, I'm sure, are looking for shortcuts to trim the applicant pool that they're looking at," Cooper said. "But I've never heard of this as a top-shelf criteria for people making those decisions."

Forte says she had sought a job at FedEx through the agency Kelly Services, where she said a recruiter told her the company was not considering applicants who have been out of work longer than six months. "Here I am, a seasoned worker. I didn't have six months, but I had eight years of experience," she said.

Jane Stehney, a Kelly spokeswoman, said the company does not discriminate on any basis, including unemployment status. And Sally Davenport, a spokeswoman for FedEx in Memphis, said her company has no policy barring the unemployed from seeking a job and never instructed the temp agency to discriminate.

"We interview and hire the candidates best qualified for the job," she said. "There was obviously confusion on the part of the temp agency."

Last month, the job search Web site Indeed.com announced it would not accept any job ad that seeks to exclude the unemployed.

"Our policy is to exclude job listings that do not comply with federal or local laws related to discriminatory hiring practices as well as job listings that discriminate against the unemployed," said Indeed.com spokeswoman Sophie Beaurpere.

Ohio Sen. Sherrod Brown, a Democrat who has sponsored a separate bill protecting the unemployed, said he understands that employers need the right to hire according to their needs and to factor in work experience.

"But they shouldn't have the right to discriminate from the start and preemptively deny qualified workers a fair chance at a job they need," Brown said.

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