

Russell Simmons: The Mogul and Occupy Wall Street

Russell Simmons was among the handful of celebrities making a daily show of support of Occupy Wall Street (OWS) via a very visible presence on the ground in lower Manhattan and other cities. But since the police began banning and bulldozing the group's campsites all across the country, it seems that the activists might have lost some of their momentum. So, I decided to track down Russell to see whether he thinks OWS was just a flash in the pan or if it will be revived despite the recent crackdown.



CELEBRITY INTERVIEW

by Kam Williams

discontent back to all the corporate influence which has had a huge impact in terms of all the inequalities that people are suffering from. If you talk about the prison-industrial complex, I've fought against the prison-industrial complex

when I called for a repeal of the Rockefeller drug laws. The biggest impediment to get the laws changed was the lobbyists. Whether you're talking about healthcare, jobs going overseas, or tax reform, you're always coming up against lobbyists. Hello! So that issue is critical. And this dialogue is bringing a lot more attention to it.

KW: But are the politicians listening to OWS or to the lobbyists?

RS: The politicians already in office don't want to change. A few might have it in their hearts to change and to start working for the people, but even some of the most progressive politicians are silent because they know that the candidate with the most money wins.

KW: So, what's the solution?

RS: On the day that Mayor Bloomberg cleared out Zuccotti Park in New York, I went up to Boston where I promoted a Constitutional amendment calling for public financing of elections, a very straightforward, no-nonsense, no compromise amendment which prohibits any expenditures by any third party, by any special interests or

even by the candidates themselves.

KW: That would certainly level the playing field.

RS: Yeah, the elected officials should be working for the voters who elected them. Money corrupts the process. Why would you be giving a candidate money unless you expect something in return? That's why I want to get this amendment done. It's only four lines long. This is not a partisan idea. It's an American idea. We're trying to make a true democracy.

KW: Do you think the Occupy Wall Street Movement has been hurt by getting kicked out of park after park around the country?

RS: No, no, no... I think it's only made it stronger. The movement's just beginning. It's only a couple months old. I was at Zuccotti Park almost every day. The kids down there were very compassionate. They embraced the homeless, and they were even kind enough to give free food and tents to inmates just being released from Riker's Island. And some of those people would come out of jail and find purpose in joining the movement. Unfortunately, a few were disruptive, and the media would give the bad apples the most attention and so OWS' message was being misrepresented. But OWS was only taking care of people the City of New York should've been caring for. So, the cleaning out of the parks just means the revolution has to evolve.

KW: What would your answer be to people who ask: What, specifically, does Occupy Wall Street want?

RS: We want the government to be con-



Russell Simmons

trolled by all the people, not by the richest 1%. That's always been the first demand. That's a simple enough message, and I think it's pretty clear now, even though much of the media has been disingenuous in its coverage. We don't want the heads of the biggest industries to make all the decisions, because they're not for the people. They're for the corporations. Power to the people!

KW: How will eliminating political con-

See SIMMONS on page 7

is also available on mobile phones at theskannermobile.com

- LOCAL NEWS
- NATIONAL NEWS
- JOBS, BIDS
- aSTORE

- ENTERTAINMENT
- MUSIC REVIEWS
- BULLETIN BOARD
- RSS FEEDS

theskannermobile.com