

Meet the Parents of the Revolution

By Brian Glaser

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When Occupy Wall Street set up camp in Lower Manhattan in 2011, it took the subject of income inequality and made it into a global teachable moment. And as the new documentary *Parents of the Revolution* shows, some occupiers also took the opportunity to make it a real-world lesson for their families.

Ridgewood resident Dana H. Glaser already had one parenting documentary to his name, *The Evolution of Dad* from 2010, but says when he was thinking about his next project, “I couldn’t get excited about just parenting.”

When Occupy began in Zuccotti Park in September 2011, he was reading about it online and happened to do a Google search for “Parenting and Occupy Wall Street.” To his surprise, “up popped this group that was planning to have a family sleepover in the park—Parents for Occupy Wall Street.”

Glaser had been looking for a good reason to visit the OWS encampment (“I didn’t want to go as a tourist”) and headed downtown with his camera. “It just opened the doors to these really lovely people that were in this group,” he says. “Then I followed them for over a year.”

The resulting feature-length doc *Parents of the Revolution* focuses on Kirby Desmarais, the young mom who started the POWS group; Rob and Myra Territo, an inner-city schoolteacher and real estate agent from New Jersey who want to teach their kids about speaking out against injustice; Rivka and Bruce Little, a biracial couple with 6- and 13-year-old daughters; and Mark Hamilton, who brings his young daughter Scarlett to Occupy.

And while the political subjects that surrounded OWS are often complicated, Glaser saw the families learning broader—but no less valuable—lessons. “It wasn’t about a specific issue or topic,” he says. “It was much more about engaging their kids in activism and demonstrating to them what that means. They were trying to give their kids a civic voice.”

But as OWS evolved and the city government and police started to get more involved, the situation was not always family-friendly. Media reports accuse parents at Zuccotti Park of using children as “human shields,” and representatives of Child Protective Services began sending observers to the Occupy site. “There was a lot of pressure on the parents,” says Glaser.

As he followed the families during and after the downtown run of Occupy Wall Street, Glaser assembled a film that asks questions about what kids are taught about the world around them. “When you ask a child what they think of Rosa Parks, they know the historical figure, but they don’t know what civil disobedience means,” he says. “As citizens, they are taught that our civic duty is to vote every 4 years, and anything beyond that is crazy.”

And while Glazer spent the active part of the Occupy movement behind the camera, he feels the time he spent with the OWS families and making the film has changed him as a parent. He notes that when it came time for him to lead a project with his own son's Cub Scout den, he got them working on an "Oil Memorial" sculpture that included talking about where oil comes from and what it means for the planet.

"If I hadn't gone through the experience of making this film," he says, "I probably wouldn't have been thinking in these terms, of engaging children in having a civic voice."

Parents of the Revolution will be released on May 15, however DVD preorders can be made here. For more on the film, visit parentsoftherevolution.com. If you would like to host a screening of the film, go here for information.