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As Americans we are taught that our opinions matter - we are asked to participate in polls and are encouraged to vote. The Bill of Rights assures us of "the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances". We are led to believe that we all have a voice. But is everyone's voice truly heard? It seems that nowadays the government has turned a deaf ear. The pleas of the common man - citizens without any extraordinary social standing - are fading into a sea of insignificance.

2011 was a year of economic hardship for many. But while our national unemployment rate was at a peak and annual budget cuts called for a decrease in funding for education, General Electric paid a grand total of zero dollars in federal taxes and Donald Trump - a real estate mogul and famous TV celebrity - swore on national television and was still considered a serious candidate for the Republican nomination. U.S. Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis said that "We can have democracy in this country, or we can have great wealth concentrated in the hands of a few, but we can't have both." These words have proven to be true and are a prevalent idea in the current state of our nation. The Occupy Wall Street movement, created in late 2011, is protesting for the right to be heard and to be placed before the wealthy in the eyes of the government. It expresses its indignation at how laws are unfairly skewed to favor those who have money and thus power. The movement calls for sit-ins that are reminiscent of the Civil Rights protests of the 1960's. However, these protesters have been branded as "jobless bums", "hippies" and "socialist radicals" while federal deductions in funds to programs such as Planned Parenthood and the deprivation of access to affordable healthcare are accepted actions. In the 60's the fight was for equality and freedom from discrimination based on race. Today, the fight is still about equality. It is still about unfair prejudice - the discrimination based on social class.

Democracy is defined as a state of society characterized by formal equality of rights and privileges. As a self-proclaimed democratic nation America should have a government that works in the interests of all its citizens. No American should have to fight for the right to be heard. Every individual should be confident their opinion makes a difference regardless of the amount of money they have in their bank account. It's time that Washington unplugs its ears. Its time it pays attention to the needs of the common man even when it's not an election year. After all, our government was established by "We the people" - not just the socialites, not just the lawmakers, not just the average citizen - but by all of us working in unison for the creation of a better nation.