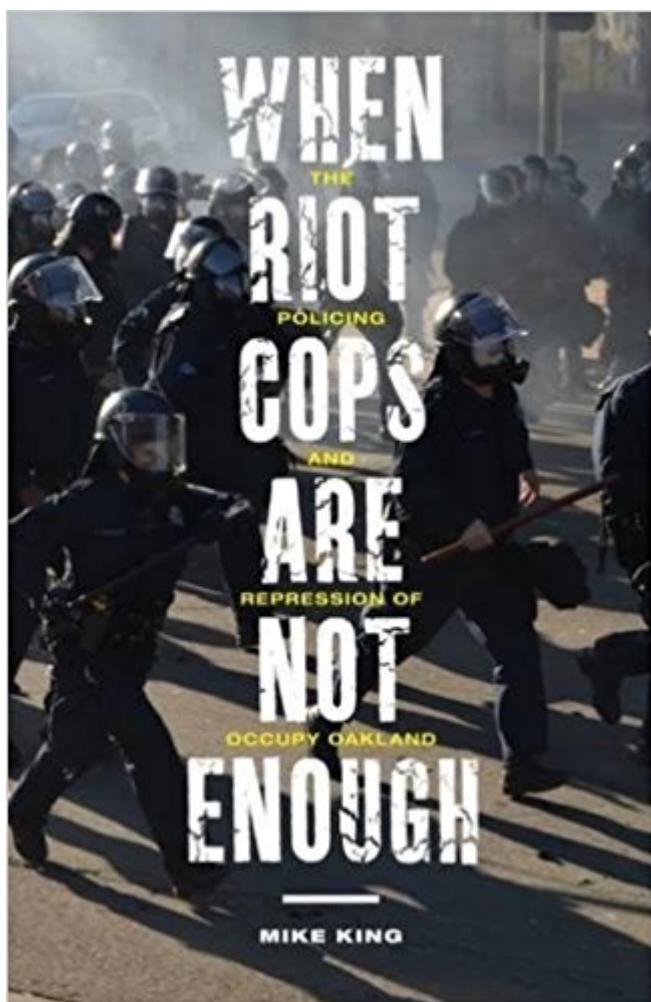


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# When Riot Cops Are Not Enough: The Policing And Repression Of Occupy Oakland (Critical Issues In Crime And Society)



## **Synopsis**

In *When Riot Cops Are Not Enough*, sociologist and activist Mike King examines the policing, and broader political repression, of the Occupy Oakland movement during the fall of 2011 through the spring of 2012. King's active and daily participation in that movement, from its inception through its demise, provides a unique insider perspective to illustrate how the Oakland police and city administrators lost the ability to effectively control the movement. Drawn from King's intensive field work, the book focuses on the physical, legal, political, and ideological dimensions of repression "in the streets, in courtrooms, in the media, in city hall, and within the movement itself." *When Riot Cops Are Not Enough* highlights the central role of political legitimacy, both for mass movements seeking to create social change, as well as for governmental forces seeking to control such movements. Although Occupy Oakland was different from other Occupy sites in many respects, King shows how the contradictions it illuminated within both social movement and police strategies provide deep insights into the nature of protest policing generally, and a clear map to understanding the full range of social control techniques used in North America in the twenty-first century.

## **Book Information**

Series: Critical Issues in Crime and Society

Paperback: 192 pages

Publisher: Rutgers University Press (March 9, 2017)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 081358373X

ISBN-13: 978-0813583730

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.6 x 8.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 9.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars 1 customer review

Best Sellers Rank: #1,750,864 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #75 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > Specific Topics > Privacy & Surveillance #1113 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > Elections & Political Process > Political Advocacy #2725 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > Specific Topics > Law Enforcement

## **Customer Reviews**

"By charting the tight interplay of resistance and repression that connects the murder of Oscar Grant

to the Occupy Movement in Oakland and beyond, Mike King's book provides an essential weapon for our collective arsenal." (George Ciccarello-Maher author of *We Created Chávez*) "Mike King has produced a fascinating study of the repression of Occupy Oakland. His groundbreaking analysis makes sense of one of the most significant political episodes in recent American history. This is a compelling demonstration of what theoretically informed activist research can achieve." (Andrej Grubacic author of *Living at the Edges of Capitalism*) "Clear, concise, and compelling, *When Riot Cops Are Not Enough* is not only a deep and rich narrative, but an extremely valuable piece of ethnographic research." (Patrick Gillham department of sociology, Western Washington University)

âœVital, important and compelling, Mike King offers a nuanced accounting of the cat-and-mouse game of social protest and social control. Grounded in the experience of Occupy Oakland, *When Riot Cops Are Not Enough* is immensely relevant to the upcoming generation of militant activists, engaged scholars and community police.â • (Micah White author of *The End of Protest*)

Having written a self-published, non-academic book about Occupy Oakland, I've been looking forward to a scholarly study. This pricey treatise by an assistant professor of criminal justice, published by Rutgers University Press, ostensibly fills that void. However, author Mike King, Ph.D., wears two hats: sociologist and activist. "My role as a participant observer and ethnographer," King relates, "grew out of my already existing extensive involvement in Occupy Oakland." He organized, facilitated meetings, made flyers, and served as press liaison. Whenever possible, he uses the pronoun "we" to incorporate himself (and even his children) into the protest group. He acknowledges, "Love and respect is due to everyone involved in Occupy Oakland who made it what it was." Obviously, this is no objective examination by a detached social scientist. King's loving and respectful insider take may nevertheless rattle true believers. As he recounts, militancy "was a founding characteristic" of Occupy Oakland, which "was largely populated by seasoned militant activists who had prior experience in conflict with the OPD [Oakland Police Department]." From the outset, these hardliners renounced negotiation with authorities. "The camp and the broader community that was Occupy Oakland Â| was far more hostile to existing political structures than disillusioned by them. From the very first day, the stage was set for an inevitable conflict between the movement and the administration of the city." This contradicts the romanticized narrative of innocent protestors being unexpectedly attacked by police. Occupy Oakland orchestrated that showdown, and the City of OaklandÂ| "possessed of every tactical advantage but strategically

clueless" played right into their hands. Yet within 95 days, the political opportunity initially seized by Occupy Oakland had been squandered. "The two main mechanisms of protest movement social control," King observes, "physical force and negotiation | failed dramatically in Oakland in the fall of 2011," but "were reconstituted relatively quickly," as "the movement was successfully marginalized, demonized, criminalized." The public's perception of police repression shifted "from illegitimate to warranted." Occupy Oakland's downfall, King argues, "ultimately had more to do with effectively painting the movement as violent, apolitical, socially marginal, dangerous, irresponsible, and internally fractured than it did with street policing tactics." Disappointingly, rather than interrogate the antics that made this portrait resonate, King blames politicians and press for focusing on them. Writing about OO's January 27, 2012 Move-In Day, in which occupiers tried to take over the city-owned, unused Kaiser Convention Center, King concludes, "The planning and coordination of the movement's action left much to be desired." WTF? Move-In Day was widely regarded, including by many would-be occupiers, as a self-inflicted clusterf\*\*k that would in time prove fatal. Yet instead of holding Move-In Day's recklessly inept planners accountable, Mike King attacks the messenger, scolding in particular the San Francisco Chronicle for "overtly seeking to marginalize Occupy Oakland" and "discursively undermine militant, risky, or otherwise unsanctioned actions." Likewise, King totally ignores Black Bloc, OO's roving riot tourists, dressed in all black and carrying black flags, with black hoodies pulled over their heads and black bandanas concealing their pasty white faces. In mid-October 2011, OO handed Black Bloc a blank check, resolving: "Occupy Oakland encourages diversity of tactics [code for violence] for actions that occur outside the camp." Accordingly, during OO's otherwise hugely successful Nov. 2, 2011, General Strike & Anti-Capitalist March, which shut down the Port of Oakland, Black Bloc gleefully smashed plate-glass windows, spray-painted STRIKE in 12-foot-high letters on the facade of a Whole Foods Market in Adams Point, barricaded 16th Street at both ends with wooden pallets, trash cans, tables and tires, started a massive trash fire at 16th & Broadway that sent flames 15 feet high, and pelted first responders with a fusillade of bottles, rocks and chunks of broken concrete. This media-magnetic hooliganism stole the show, vaporizing Occupy Oakland's goodwill in the Bay Area and transforming overnight OO's greatest triumph into the beginning of its end. "The Black Bloc anarchists, who have been active on the streets in Oakland and other cities, are the cancer of the Occupy movement," wrote journalist and Occupy supporter Chris Hedges, who was of course roundly vilified by the collective. In February 2012, OO's Black Bloc contingent traveled to Sacramento, where they triggered a melee with police near the state Capitol. Back in Oakland, in what was billed as a May Day General Strike, Black Bloc again skirmished with police and

committed de rigueur acts of vandalism. In July 2012, two blocks beyond the Secret Service protective perimeter at a campaign fundraiser hosting President Obama, Black Bloc burned not one but two American flags. Eleven days later, Black Bloc Ninjas smashed the plate-glass window of Obama's reelection campaign office, with people inside. In October 2012, OO's Black Block joined Afghans for Peace in marking the 11th anniversary of the U.S.-led War in Afghanistan, by conducting a 30-minute round of smashy in downtown streets. Sometimes King's status as an insider equips him not with insight but with blinders. His refusal to acknowledge Black Bloc's destructive effect on Occupy Oakland reduces my rating from 5 to 4 stars.

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