

Occupy movement and "Chilean Winter" share similar goals

By Haley Hawkins
OPINION EDITOR

Since its recent entrance into the public consciousness, America's Occupy Movement has become a household name, so to speak. It is an iconic symbol of the whole and the plight of the collective. But, is it truly pluralistic in regards to race, age and gender? Is this what makes the movement so appealing and, yet, so open to critique?

These questions are all well and good, but let's look at this American movement within an international context.

In Chile, 23-year-old Camila Vallejo has started her own popular uprising. Its title? The Chilean Winter. Its slogan? "We are the 90%."

Sounds awfully familiar, doesn't it?

In focusing on eliminating educational inequality resulting from entrenched social class disparity, Vallejo—vice president of the Student Federation of the University of Chile—has taken the world by storm. In fact, Vallejo, who identifies as a communist, was voted person of the year for the British newspaper "The Guardian," garnering 78 percent of votes in a poll of readers.

Why is it that this relatively little-known public figure received this honor? Well, I have a few guesses. First of all, in addition to furthering her cause of educational equality in Chile, Vallejo has become the poster child for protestors' rights, enforcing respect for the peaceful demonstrator and asserting her right to go against the grain of society.

Furthermore, it is more than notable that she is a young female. While they do exist, highly publicized female activists are rare. How many 23-year-old women have you heard of that have made such an immense international impact and gained deserved attention for it?

Finally, this issue of educational inequality has echoed around the globe.

"The student movement here (in Chile) is permanently connected to other student movements, principally in Latin America, but also in the world," Vallejo says. "We believe this reveals something fundamental: that there is a global demand for the recovery and defense of the right to education."

So, while the Chilean Winter may be vastly different from that of the Occupy Movement, there are similarities that cannot be ignored. After all, Occupy protestors, while striving to demand that the needs of the majority be met, have faced alarming opposition and aggression against their organized protest—much like the opposition which Vallejo continues to fight against in Chile.

The Occupy Movement also prides itself on exhibiting the principle of inclusion—and this certainly means young female activists, people who do not fit into the minuscule 1%.

And if there is one thing that unites these two movements and makes them one global initiative, it is the demand for

educational equality and, by translation, equality among social classes.

You may have never known that the ideals of a 23-year-old female Chilean communist could resonate so close to home. You may have never realized that unification can result from unrest.

Well, maybe, just maybe, it can.



The Occupy Movement is not only found in cities across America. In Chile, the movement "The Chilean Winter" is bringing protestors, mainly students, to the streets. Featured here is a protest in Santiago, the capital of Chile.

Guilford's \$500,000 grant part of a conservative agenda

A RESPONSE TO JANE MAYER'S ARTICLE, "A STATE FOR SALE," IN THE OCTOBER ISSUE OF THE NEW YORKER

By Richie Zweigenhaft
GUEST WRITER

Jane Mayer's excellent article in the October 2011 issue of The New Yorker ("A State for Sale") helped to place Guilford's ten-year \$500,000 BB&T grant in the larger North Carolina and national perspective. Mayer showed how millions of dollars from "conservative multi-millionaire" Art Pope, funneled through a number of "ostensibly nonpartisan policy groups," including the Locke Foundation and the Pope Foundation, and aided by the 2010 Citizens United Supreme Court decision, provided unprecedented funding in the 2010 elections in North Carolina, resulting in Republican control of both chambers in the state for the first time since 1870.

The Republican-controlled North Carolina state legislature now has slashed the budget for higher education, and, as we at Guilford well know, its decisions have affected not only the public colleges and universities, but private schools as well.

Mayer's article shows quite clearly how the foundations that Art Pope supports have sought to influence college curricula, making the materials in classes, and sometimes creating entirely new programs, friendlier to the free-market version of capitalism, and to arguments for the ethical nature of capitalism.

The ten-year grant for \$500,000 that Guilford College accepted in 2009 included the stipulation that students in certain classes read Ayn Rand's 1957 novel "Atlas Shrugged." The grant also stipulated that students who major in business and economics are to receive "free" copies of the novel at the beginning of their junior year, as are certain students in the

Principled Problem Solving program.

It does not seem like all that much money — \$50,000 a year for ten years, in a budget that runs around \$50-\$60 million per year — but the college's acceptance of the grant, and the faculty's acquiescence to it, raise fundamental

When a member of the college's chapter of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) asked that the faculty discuss the process by which this grant was accepted, the Clerk's Committee agreed to put the topic of the process by which the college accepts grants with curricular strings attached on the agenda at the November faculty meeting (the faculty was asked not to discuss the BB&T grant itself), and the general topic was discussed at some length

their jobs, especially those who taught in departments that had been eliminated at other colleges and universities. Even if they had qualms about the grant, or about the way it was accepted, few were willing to raise questions about a \$500,000 grant just because it required some students in some classes to read Atlas Shrugged.

We are now in year three of the ten-year grant. Meyer's New Yorker article reveals clearly how money from conservative foundations has affected both North Carolina politics and what students read and talk about in certain college courses.

Therefore, as those Guilford students enrolled in classes in which they are required to read Atlas Shrugged examine her novel, and those business and economics juniors enjoy the benefits of receiving a "free" copy of it, and as those of us who attend the on-campus presentations by speakers who address issues like Rand's place in American culture, we should all keep in mind that wealthy supporters of Ayn Rand have underwritten her recent ascendancy in academic discourse at Guilford and elsewhere.

The grant that Guilford College accepted was part of a much larger conservative agenda that has sought to redefine the nature of higher education in the state of North Carolina.

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issues about who determines the curriculum, about faculty governance, about the nature of higher education these days, and about the kind of society we hope to be.

The college announced the grant during the summer of 2009, much to the surprise of all but very few faculty members. By the time most students and faculty returned to campus for the fall 2009 semester, they seemed to have little interest in the fact that Guilford had made this ten-year commitment (if they were aware of it at all).

during that meeting and, subsequently, at the December meeting.

There was, however, no consensus. In fact, the faculty was not able even to approve the following statement: "The acceptance of all gifts that involve the creation of new courses and/or academic programs is provisional pending the completion of the normal approval procedures."

The college faced hard economic times in 2009, and it still does. Many faculty understandably were worried about

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