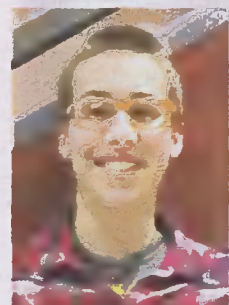


Reflections on largest climate rally in US history

"Well, this is it. This is the last minute in the last quarter of the biggest, most important game humanity has ever played."



BY ANNEY BOLGIANO
STAFF WRITER

That is how Van Jones, President Obama's former Green Jobs adviser, greeted the crowd at the Forward on Climate rally on Feb. 17 in Washington, D.C.

The Sierra Club, 350.org and the Hip Hop Caucus organized the rally, which placed a strong emphasis on the rejection of the Keystone pipeline and is said to be the largest climate rally in U.S. history. I was lucky enough to be home this weekend and attended part of the rally.

"(The main goals of the rally were) to demonstrate a growing climate movement that is on its way to being strong enough to stand up to and defeat the fossil fuel industry," said Daniel Kessler, media campaigner at 350.org in an email interview. "We outperformed our expectations and are excited."

More than 35,000 people attended the rally.

"(The rally) was diverse and led by young people," said Kessler. "The climate movement is being led by students. The divestment work on campuses is the hottest campaign going and is making a real difference."

William Mackin, Guilford's part-time lecturer in biology,



The climate rally in Washington, D.C., was the largest rally of its kind with more than 35,000 people attending.

attended the rally with his 12-year-old son, Andrew.

"OK, now it's time to deal with climate," said William Mackin about the message the rally sent to the president.

"It was kind of in between (fun and serious)," said Andrew Mackin, describing the rally. He thinks attending rallies is a good

experience for kids his age to learn "how to act at rallies."

Though Kessler emphasized youth involvement, others had a different assessment of the rally attendees.

"Besides the college groups, the main population of the attendees was older," said Pam Abutaleb, a Marylander who went to the rally.

"People who were old enough to actually have trouble walking, they were in the march, holding onto each other."

"The woman with the cat (was the most memorable part of the rally)," said Abutaleb, referring to a woman who attended the rally with a cat in her bicycle basket. Abutaleb added that the First

Nation speakers also made quite an impression on her.

For me, the atmosphere was inspiring not only of action but of reflection. Often, when we think of climate action and environmentalism, we picture people in REI clothing talking about polar bears and ice caps. These are valid concerns and good people but less talked about are the groups subject to the bulk of the consequences of environmental irresponsibility.

"The government doesn't recognize these people, and these people have been dying of mysterious cancers," said Jacqueline Thomas, Chief of the Saik'uz First Nation from British Columbia, Canada. "Their water is polluted. Their animals are sick."

Thomas emphasized the negative cultural and environmental effects of tar sands oil and environmental irresponsibility on First Nation people in Canada.

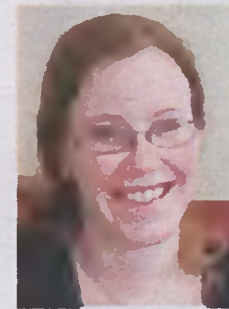
"When you see a person whose life has been ruined by it, it's pretty powerful," said Mackin of the First Nation speakers.

The rally made the connection between humanity, oppression and respecting our environment. It influenced young people and inspired older ones to attend. It marked a historic day in the history of environmental stewardship.

Environmentalism is not just for people who appreciate the outdoors or are intrigued by science. Environmentalism is for those drawn to and concerned with social justice.

Study: friends affect your vote more than professors

Have you ever thought about what has led you to your political beliefs? Have those beliefs changed since you entered Guilford? A study out of the University of California, Los Angeles, proposes that college students alter their political ideology by their junior year in school, and that their ideology isn't influenced very strongly by professors.



BY LAURA HAY
STAFF WRITER

In fact, college students' political opinions are more influenced by their peers than professors. The study puts forth the idea that most students enter college identifying as centrist rather than right or left. However, by their junior or senior years, many have shifted left.

I myself am not particularly surprised that most American college campuses tend towards liberal ideology; I did find the idea of students being so heavily influenced by peers to be unexpected.

I always thought that with added maturity and exposure to new ideas, a student would be less likely to follow the political paths of their friends. I thought college was a time for finding your own path, not your friends'.

"Professors do have influence in shaping students' political views," said Guilford Professor of Political Science George Guo in an email interview. "But students are influenced mainly by peer groups and the environment

where they live on a day-by-day basis. College campuses not only stimulate the collegiate life that shapes and strengthens the values of equality and acceptance but also offers a place for them to gain exposure to a myriad of world views."

According to the study, the majority of college campuses have more students who lean left than right. Students who lean towards the right were also concentrated at a smaller number of colleges than liberal students, which affected the result.

"If you find yourself in a peer group where on balance the attitudes lean left, you'll tend to move in that direction," said researcher Alexander Astin to USA Today.

"I think a lot of times, professors will plant the seed by just introducing you to a lot of different things that exist out in the world," said University of Kansas student Tyler Childress to USA Today. "And then it's really up to the student whether or not they're willing to look and be sympathetic to those different viewpoints of the world."

Rob Seiden, author of a similar study on the subject, found that many colleges and universities were very conducive to liberal ideology.

"We reasoned that such characteristics, along with others, might also produce an institutional context particularly conducive to the development of liberal political views," said Seiden.

Seiden also noted that most college professors tend to

lean more towards the liberal camp. It also pointed out that this was even more pronounced at small, liberal arts schools like Guilford.

"The small size of most liberal arts colleges would increase the likelihood of any individual student having frequent and extended interaction with these potentially more liberal faculty and peers," said Seiden.

Guo noted that Guilford was no exception to this. Students here were likely to fall in line with liberal policy and ideas.

Interestingly, many students begin a right-hand shift after graduation according to the study results.

Guo explains this is likely due to the demands of real life, which requires a person to wipe away an idealistic view.

"After graduation they are forced to deal with the practical pressures of the real world where there are a lot of hard choices," Guo said. "Idealism is replaced by a sense of tradition and realism."

These political transitions continue into later adulthood.

"Despite your political leaning when you enter college, after graduation people tend to move to the right, then after retirement, people tend to move more to the left," said Visiting Assistant Professor of Political Science Robert Duncan.

Then if things come full circle by the end of your life, anyway, maybe what your friends think politically in college doesn't matter so much.