

## **Occupy CU General Assembly Minutes**

Friday, February 17, 2012

Champaign Public Library, 6 to 9 pm

**NEXT MEETING: Friday, February 24, 2012, at the IMC in Urbana, 6 to 8 pm, followed by “Arts Underground” from 8 to midnight.**

In attendance: Chris G., Susan, Theresa, Pam, Amy, Ya’aQov, Chandler, Sandra, Cheryl, Aaron, Karen, Stuart, Meg, Rachel, Meadow, Regina, Mark, Rafter, Gabe, others.

**LOGISTICS/AGENDA PROPOSAL:** Ya’aQov volunteered to facilitate and Susan reviewed hand gestures; Chris volunteered to keep the stack and Theresa took minutes.

**WELCOME/MOTIVATION MOMENTS:** The room had a warm sharing of who they are and why they are here. Many new faces in the room. Welcome to all.

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

~ Susan announced that there is a County Board meeting on Tuesday, February 21, from 6 to 7 pm at the Brookens Administration Building on East Washington in Urbana. Unfortunately, it seems as though the people in charge feel that the jail expansion is a closed issue at this point, that the citizens will spend approximately \$20 million on the jail. Susan explained that if you go from 3 to 6 pm, you can put your name on the list so that you can speak publicly during the 6 o’clock hour. Later, Stuart added that while it may appear to the board that the jail expansion is certain, it is not until the ground is broken and maybe not even then that the fight is lost.

~ Cheryl announced that the SEIU has a lobby day planned for Tuesday, 2/28. The union is lobbying for personal aides to receive a working wage, as well as for individuals to receive the help they need. There have organized a bus that is going to Springfield and will leave our area at 8 in the morning. Please join her group where you are a PA or not. Cheryl will link information to our Facebook page.

~ Chandler announced that he met with city clerks this week and obtained the information about how to get the amendment for the reversal of Citizens United on the April 10<sup>th</sup> township referendum vote. Our referendum will put pressure on politicians to say that as a township/city, we do not feel that corporations have the same rights as people and should not be able to give unlimited money to campaigns. The ultimate goal is to amend the Constitution. Chandler will be going door to door on Saturday, 2/18, from 12 to 5, with the petition in order to show the townships that their citizens are behind this movement. If you are interested in petitioning or just getting sheets to get signatures for yourself, please contact Chandler at:

[Occupychambana@gmail.com](mailto:Occupychambana@gmail.com)

~ Stuart announced that from 8 to noon on 2/18, there will be an open session at the Urbana Civic Center featuring a series of workshops that helps communities improve police-community relations.

~ Stuart announced that Mark Braverman stirred up a hornet's nest in his recent talks about Israel and Palestine in the area this week. On this same topic, AWARE and McKinley Church will be hosting the film and discussion on Sunday, 2/26/12, from 2 to 5, at McKinley Presbyterian Church, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor East room. The film is entitled: "Steadfast Hope: The Palestinian Quest for Just Peace" and is by the Israel/Palestine Mission Network of the Presbyterian Church (USA).

~ Chris announced the location of this week's Occupy a Street Corner general protest. We will be at First Street and University Avenue on 2/18, from 2 to 4 pm.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

~ Rachel announced that next Friday, 2/24, there will be "Arts Underground" from 8 to midnight at the IMC. Additionally, there will be librarians on hand to help instruct in different workshops. This is a time for individuals to participate in doing creative work as part of Outreach, an effort at joining art and activism. If you choose, you can contribute to a 'zines, make posters or puppets -- anything that draws attention to the fact that there is a lot going on in the Occupy Movement in CU. You can work collectively or separately. All of the products of the evening can be used to advertise OcCUpy CU's actions and/or used during events as we go forward. Rachel proposed to move the weekly GA to the IMC's Family Room for the 24<sup>th</sup> only and limit the GA to an hour and a 1/2. The event aims at bringing in new people to the movement while also introducing them to the workings of a GA. Chris shared that he did not feel comfortable shortening the meeting since we may not get to all of our business in an abbreviated format. Most people were in favor of moving the GA to the IMC for next week and have it followed by the Arts Underground event. The proposal was approved.

~ *The Public i*: It was announced that we will have a running column in the *Public i*. Susan said she was trying to figure out how we can represent/reformulate some of the issues with which OcCUpy CU is engaged with an Occupy spin. That is, how can use the class consciousness of the 99% to refresh some of the issues that many in our community have been organizing around for years. Chris said that at the beginning of our formation, we agreed to be stand in accordance with the national OWS issues. He suggested looking at their manifesto/website to get ideas for reformulation. Ya'aQov said that we could maybe work on this next Friday at the Arts Underground event.

~ Rachel announced again a program that will be held at the Women's Resources Center on 2/27, from 7 to 9. As part of one of the center's "hot topics," there will be a panel discussion of "Gender and Race in the Occupy Movement." In preparation for this event, panelists and Rachel collectively come up with the generative questions that will inform the panel. The questions are thrown out at the beginning and then people discuss. Susan implored the women in our GA to get involved whether or not we felt "qualified" as we need to get out there and show others that we are the face of the movement as much as anyone else, that the people who are

actually doing the work in the movement should be out there. Anyone who is interested in being on the panel or formulating questions should contact Rachel at: [rachelstrm@gmail.com](mailto:rachelstrm@gmail.com)

~ Rachel also announced that she had contacted Justice for Flex-N-Gate to participate in the Eco-Feminism conference that is being held in March.

~ Ya'aQov read/performed a "pledge" he had written to international corporations and our government which made us laugh in recognition.

~ Rachel announced again Occupy the Midwest. Is there a group of people who want to work on the event? This item will be further discussed in next week's GA.

### **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

*Outreach Committee:* Most of the meeting was focused on the new jail expansion. Please see the Outreach Committee meeting notes of 2/13 for a thorough record of all that was stated (contact Stuart if you did not receive a copy of these minutes). Carol Ammons from the CU Citizens for Peace and Justice talked with the committee. In particular, she asked that Occupy help the effort by looking into the tax issue that pays for the jail, that we do some investigative research that will enlighten the public about a potential misappropriation/misuse of funds collected from the tax. Stuart reminded us of a problem that had existed in the past with phone call rates for prisoners and the County Board. The board thought that this was not an issue but after facts were revealed about shady dealings, the board reversed its position and changes were made. The group who is in favor of NO jail expansion wants to present alternatives to where the money might be spent, such as in the areas of mental health, detox services, the Prairie Health Center, veterans' services, the public defenders office, etc. It was suggested that Occupy CU have a working group to work on helping the larger effort. Please come to the next GA prepared to think about being on this committee to research/to follow the money. FYI: CU Citizens for Peace and Justice has a Jail Committee that meets on Friday mornings.

*G8/NATO:* No meeting this week, but the group is working individually gathering information.

*Anti-eviction Committee:* Chandler, Jesse, Julianne, Eleanor, and Sarah met this past Wednesday, 2/15 and going forward will meet once every 2 weeks on Wednesdays at 7:30 at the Urbana Free Library. Not much to report other than they learned that when the notice of evictions are posted at the County Clerk's office, they are notices of evictions that have ALREADY happened. They plan to attend Housing Court where things are in the earlier stages and put together a resource kit to help the people who are going through foreclosure. Not sure if they will only be referring people to Tenants' Union or if their efforts will be more on the side of direct action in preventing someone from getting evicted. They are still in an exploratory phase. Mark shared that he met with Dave of the Labor Hour and he might be a person who might be interested in the group's work.

### **DISCUSSION:**

~ Rachel said that perhaps in the future we have other workshops like the Arts Underground one where the skills that we might need as a movement are taught, such as public speaking.

~ Mark attended the Unit for Criticism, "Beyond Utopia." Readings for the unit were about anarchy. Mark reported there were professors and graduate student there who were interested in Occupy and he will make an effort to reach out to them.

Rachel added that she believed the theme of "Beyond Utopia" this year is Occupy.

~Rachel asked if anyone was interested in presenting with her at the conference in November at the National Women's Study Association in Oakland. The focus of her presentation will be occupying in a small Midwestern town. Please contact Rachel if you are interested.

**Check us out:**

FACEBOOK <https://www.facebook.com/OccupyChampaignUrbana>

OCCUPYCU.org <http://occupyCU.org>

OCCUPYthe AIR [weft.org](http://weft.org) or [occupytheair.blogspot.com](http://occupytheair.blogspot.com) OR

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