



Tent State MN

April 9-14, 2007

*Photos, Quotes, and Resources from a grassroots student movement
Macalester College, St. Thomas University, The College of Saint Catherine*

Many believe that a crisis is looming in higher education in the United States of America. The ever rising costs of tuition, combined with rising student debt can leave a student with few options both while attending college, and the years following. In many cases, tuition has increased tenfold from 1969 to 1999. In a prior generation, college students could pay for tuition and expenses from part-time work or a summer job. Now, students can graduate from a four-year col-



lege with an average of \$17,000 in student loan debt, and monthly loan payments equal to that of rent. State funding for higher education has continually decreased, and more and more, colleges and universities rely on private and corporate funding to continue their missions.



Tent State believes that something is deeply wrong with higher education. Access to higher education has become scarce to those who cannot afford the price. As well, with corporate interest providing more educational funding than the State, are public interests well served in higher education? Tent State believes in education as a human right, not as a restricted privilege for the economic elite. As well, Tent State wishes to engage students by encouraging them to build student power and solidarity. It stands in stark contrast to the hierarchical nature of the modern university and the oppressive processes of society at large, showing us that there is an alternative.

“Why are you in tents? What will Tent State accomplish?” were common questions to the participants of the first Tent State demonstration in Minnesota. There were as many answers to this question as participants at the three colleges – Macalester College, St. Thomas University, and The College of Saint Catherine. Here are some of the responses to these questions, as well as photos from the first Tent State MN gathering which took place from April 9 – 14, 2007.



“With the rising costs of tuition and student debt, someday we all may have to hold classes in tents in order to afford an education.”

“We are reclaiming this space to create our own university at this time. This temporary education area is about students and the public coming together to learn from one another. It is free from the influences of an oppressive system. We have the power to teach and learn what we want – for free – in a tent.”



“As an undocumented resident of this country, I have no access to higher education. Tent State has given me a voice to advocate greater educational freedom for all people.”

“Learning does not happen in a restrictive ‘departmental’ fashion for me. My interests and passions are not being served by higher education. I am looking for an alternative.”

“Colleges and Universities now serve to create workers for a broken and sometimes corrupt economic and empirical system. We need an education that unites the global community, and doesn’t simply serve corporate interests.”



“I worry about how I will pay for my education after I graduate. I want work that is meaningful – not just a stressful job to pay the bills. I need something else than what I’m getting right now.”

“More and more, the voice of students on college campuses continues to diminish. Once a source of welcomed protest and dissent for war and inequalities, college campuses are growing quiet in the midst of so much turmoil.”

“I want the freedom to learn what I want, choose my own textbooks, choose my own educational goals, and to not be placed in one academic ‘box’. Tent State shows me a doorway into this kind of educational freedom.”



“Rising costs and tuition for education is not a crisis stemming from budget cuts and funding deficits. This is a crisis of the values of leadership in our country. We need to stop believing in the myth of equality in the United States.”

“We are on the tip of global climate change and a world-wide ecological disaster. If I supposed to face this crisis, why is my college not preparing me for this in the least? My campus is so wasteful.”





Tent State is a national student movement which began at Rutgers University in 2003. The organization strives to promote education as a human right, advocates for the elimination and forgiveness of all student loans, and demands equal access to education for all people. In addition, Tent State sees the inequality of educational opportunity as a threat to our very democracy. The actions of Tent State provide a space where students, faculty, staff, and community members can come together to practice democracy both as a means and as a goal in itself.

Further Resources:

Tent State Minnesota

<http://www.tentstatemn.org/>

Tent State

<http://www.tentstate.com>

Tent State on Wikipedia

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tent_State_University

Students for a Democratic Society

<http://www.studentsforademocraticsociety.org>

Photographs by Scott Schumacher

Quotes based on actual student views while attending and participating in Tent State MN.