

James R. Bean
Statement for Occupy C-U
Saturday, October 15, 2011

My name is James Bean, and I'm a local musician and activist, and a proud father of two beautiful daughters who are working hard to make their way in this world.

My friend Jesse and I were the ones who first put together the original call to Occupy C-U today, on the international day of solidarity with the protesters occupying Wall Street in New York.

I am so happy to see so many of us here today – I have been waiting for this protest for a long time, for at least the past two or three years!

I couldn't believe that I could be the only one seeing what was happening with our economy and our democracy.

I couldn't believe that I could be the only one who was angry – really angry – about what I was seeing.

What I was seeing was that our futures, including my daughters' futures, were being stolen right out from under us.

I felt like it was time for a mass movement in our country, a movement by the people, for the people, against corporate dominance and corruption, and for the greater good – for economic justice, and for real democracy.

And then, about a month ago, the protesters in New York City began their non-violent protest to Occupy Wall Street!

And despite the mainstream media's best efforts to ignore or dismiss this massive protest, Occupy Wall Street sparked a mass nationwide, and global protest against corporate dominance!

Today, here, in Champaign, we stand in solidarity with the Occupy Wall Street protesters!

Today, here, in Champaign, we join with our brothers and sisters around the United States – in big and small cities all over our country – who are also having the events in solidarity with Occupy Wall Street.

And this isn't just a national day of action and the building of a national movement.

This is a worldwide day of action with the potential to become a world wide movement!

From New Zealand, to London, to Frankfurt, to cities all over the United States, people feel squeezed and harmed by the global financial crisis that started with our financial institutions, and our government that failed to regulate those institutions!

We, as citizens of the United State, have not only a vested interest, but a moral obligation, to change this corporate dominance and greed-based economy. We have to change it, not just for ourselves, but also for our brothers and sisters around the world who are suffering as a result of what started here in our country, what started in New York's financial district and in Washington, DC!

It's important that we express our anger and our outrage! We have to educate others and we have to influence public opinion.

But not only that, we also have to work for real changes – the kinds of changes that will break the corporate dominance and stranglehold on our nation and its economy.

Many of us around the country, and here in our own community believe that some of the changes that we need to make – that we have to force to happen, include these:

1. We have to break up the monopolies of the "Too Big to Fail" financial companies.

These companies are above the law and they are dangerous and accountable. And they have become too influential in government. There are about 20 such firms in the U.S., and they need to be dismantled. A law allowed them to consolidate, so now it's time to pass a law to dismantle them!

2. We have to make them pay for their own bailouts! They need to be taxed on all their gambling and trading.

3. We have to prohibit the use of public money for private lobbying.

A company that receives a public bailout should not be allowed to use the taxpayers' own money to lobby against the taxpayers' interests. Private corporations have been allowed to use taxpayer money to facilitate their own agenda in Washington. They have used our money to destroy our futures. This has to stop!

And one of the absolutely most important things that we have to do is:

5. Get REAL campaign finance reform!

We're in this mess we're in because for too long, politicians – our elected representatives in Congress and government – have been beholden to their highest campaign donors.

Corporations, Political Action Committees (PACs), and soft money donors have bought and paid for our representatives year after year.

We need a national movement in order to force these changes, because, as Frederick Douglass said, "power concedes nothing without a demand."

We need an organized, strong, powerful, nationwide demand for these and many more changes. Today is the first day of making that demand, and I hope we all will stick together to make that demand. It won't be easy and it won't happen quickly – but if we do nothing, it will not happen at all. Let's make it happen!