

Headline: Students block Grand Ave. in protest of Mac's Enbridge investments

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Student activists and members of the student divestment organization Fossil Free Mac (FFM) led hundreds of participants in a blockade of Grand Ave. on Friday, March 5, in the most openly contentious act of Macalester student activism in a decade.

The protesters called for an end to Macalester's continued investment in Enbridge, the company currently constructing the Line 3 tar sands pipeline in northern Minnesota. Students organized the event in hopes to build momentum and urgency behind their [petition to the Macalester Board of Trustees](#) demanding divestment from Enbridge.

“Though institutions like Macalester funding Enbridge are not directly building the pipeline, their money enables Enbridge to continue to pollute the environment, destroy the Earth and oppress Indigenous peoples,” Betsy Foy '22, a student involved in the frontline fight against Line 3, said. “Today, students across the nation are calling for divestment.”

Student organizers brought the focus to the broader fight beyond Macalester, too. A number of Macalester students have participated — and been arrested — in northern Minn. while protesting the construction of Line 3.

In November 2020, Enbridge secured the last of the [permits for Line 3](#). Construction in Minnesota began in early December. Since then, [Indigenous and youth-led actions](#) in northern Minnesota have aimed to halt construction and draw national attention to the movement, pointing out the pipeline's route through [treaty lands](#), its potential [environmental harm](#) and the history of pipeline construction [exacerbating](#) the crisis of [missing and murdered Indigenous people](#). On the political front, activists have filed numerous [lawsuits](#) and [appealed to state](#) and federal leaders including President Joe Biden.

“There are dozens of Mac students who've been arrested trying to work to stop the pipeline up north,” Quintin Grabowski '22, who has spent time at resistance camps and rallies in northern Minn. this winter, said. “At the same time, Mac is literally making money off it. It's incredibly hypocritical of them.”

Multiple speakers at Macalester's rally encouraged students to participate in more resistance activities, both at Macalester and in northern Minnesota. Several Macalester students have been taking advantage of remote instruction to spend time up north on the front lines of the protests.

“Go up north, keep showing up,” Grace Jones ’22 told *The Mac Weekly* after the rally. “It is scary, especially when there’s actual real consequences to showing up in these things. No one wants to interact with the state like water protectors have to, that is really scary. But... there is nothing more rewarding and fun than showing up with people you care about.”

Macalester’s protest was a facet of a nationwide day of student action for divestment from Line 3. Seven other colleges and universities across Minnesota participated, including Carleton College, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities and St. Olaf College. These protests worked to call attention to each institution’s fossil fuel investments and the Indigenous-led frontline resistance movement in northern Minnesota.

Student leaders also encouraged protesters to attend the Student Divestment Virtual Rally to #DefundLine3 later in the afternoon. The international virtual rally offered more context on the investing practices of higher education institutions like Macalester, highlighted student actions across Minnesota and featured Anishinaabe frontline leader Tara Houska.

At Macalester, the divestment movement has faced a plethora of blocks and stalled momentum. Several student speakers cited a lack of transparency and long bureaucratic processes as two factors that have bogged down the movement.

Vice President of the Black Liberation Affairs Committee (BLAC) Gabby Whitehurst ’23 noted in their speech that the administration did not share the full extent of Macalester’s fossil fuel investments.

“We have to be able to hold institutions accountable and we have to have open communication to do that,” they said. “How are we supposed to hold the school accountable if we don’t even know what the fuck they’re doing?”

Administrators have said that [confidentiality agreements prevent them from sharing this information](#), although certain investments, including the public partnership with Enbridge, are disclosed on [publicly available tax documents](#).

And while students spend time scrapping for information, the process for getting a divestment proposal to the board can take several months on top of that. The students behind the divestment proposal are demanding that the board review it immediately. According to the board’s policy, however, the college’s Social Responsibility Committee (SRC) must first lend its stamp of approval.

The newly convened SRC, chaired by environmental studies professor Roopali Phadke, plans to complete its review of the proposal by the end of the semester, after which the board will review the proposal. Jones said that's not soon enough.

"We don't have five months to wait for the SRC, and we definitely don't have a year and a half to wait for the board of trustees, because Line 3 is being built as we speak," she said.

According to Enbridge's timeline, pipeline construction will be [nearing completion](#) in May when the SRC hopes to finish its review of the proposal.

In an email to *The Mac Weekly*, President Suzanne Rivera affirmed students' rights to express their views and advocate for issues which are important to them. She also expressed trust in the SRC's review process.

"I look forward to the conclusion of the SRC's review of the most recent [FFM 2.0 divestment proposal](#)." Rivera wrote. "I have utmost confidence that the students, faculty, staff, and alumni members of that committee will do a great job."

Amid the new push for divestment and activism around Line 3, student speakers took the chance to reflect on past social movements. Occupation and blockade are time-honored tactics for Macalester social movements, from [Expanded Educational Opportunities \(EEO\)](#) students' occupation of 77 Mac in the 1970s to [Kick Wells Fargo off Campus' \(KWOC\) 2013 occupation](#) of Weyerhaeuser Hall.

Speakers also highlighted a major Achilles' heel for student movements: time. Each year, with experienced students graduating and new first years arriving, student activists are constantly in a battle against the clock as they try to reach their goal before they lose momentum or graduate. In that time, students said, the administration tends to wait out the activism and let the movement fizzle out on its own.

Speakers said they saw this happen last year, when the seven-year-long student divestment campaign ended with the [Board of Trustees adopting](#) an altered [version of FFM's original divestment proposal](#) that altered the Board's divestment guidelines without actually divesting from fossil fuels.

Jennings Mergenthal '21 explained this pattern to the crowd of students, pointing out the common thread between KWOC, EEO and the divestment movement today.

"This is what Macalester does with student protests," Mergenthal said. "The goal is to wait until the students who are protesting have graduated and bought into capitalism, or are ground into too

fine a paste to do anything, and then maybe by that time the problem will have resolved itself or everyone will have forgotten about it... that's what they hoped would happen in 2019."

Although the divestment movement has maintained some energy and participation from alumni, Jones acknowledged the divestment movement still has a place in this historical context.

"By the time Fossil Free Mac figured out exactly what was going on, we were — you guessed it — either graduating or too burned out to keep going," Jones said.

Reflecting on the earlier movement for divestment, students also spoke about their hopes to better connect with other movements for racial justice and human rights. Student speakers pointed to the Black Lives Matter movement and the movement for Palestinian liberation.

With the trial of Derek Chauvin beginning on Monday, March 8, student leaders emphasized the importance of showing up to Black Lives Matter protests in Minneapolis.

"The next step is to show face not just throughout the Line 3 movement, but in every other movement that's going on right now," Andrew Lee '23, the host of the event, said. "If they don't all fall together, then we're going to keep running into these problems."

The blockade of Grand Ave. wrapped up with a performance by the River Rats, a band led by Rhubarb Cuddy '21, who has recently been living on the front lines of the fight against Line 3. The blockade went uninterrupted, with students blocking Grand Ave. at Macalester St. and Snelling. Macalester security and St. Paul Police stood by and passing cars honked in support.

Students sang protest songs and danced in the street before heading back to their homes and dorms. A number of student leaders set up a table outside the Ruth Stricker Dayton Campus Center where students could sign the divestment petition and get more information about future actions.

In a culmination of a rally that was both reflective and forward-facing, speakers called on Macalester's underclassmen to resist the burnout that so frequently leads to the death of student movements.

"I'm a senior, I know I'm very tired and in a lot of pain right now... when I leave, will there still be people to pressure Macalester about this, or are you all going to forget?" Mergenthal asked. "I fucking hope you're not gonna forget."

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General thoughts/themes:

- Get Mac students more involved in the fight against L3
  - Organizers forming a group chat with students interested in going to the front lines
- Intersectionality
  - BDS movement
  - George Floyd trial, Gabby's speech
- Board and burnout can't stop us this time!!
  - Jennings
- Anger at Macalester
  - Andrew Lee
  - BDS/Kate and archaeology, caterpillar, etc.
  - Not upholding purported values
  - Doing nothing = complicity
- Also plugging virtual rally today at 3

Speakers:

Andrew Lee

- MC
- "Shafted" by mac
- Anger at macalester - not upholding their values
- Horrors of the frontline -- what envrdge is doing
- As colonizers with privilege we must put our bodies on the line

Emma Harrion:

- "This pipeline is desecrating indigenous lands, threatening our water, and threatening the future of our planet for all people and for all living creatures"
- "We are going to tell macalester that being invested in this pipeline company is heinous, it's evil, and it has to stop"
- Mac people have been involved in resisting line 3 for years (calling reps, organizing on the front lines, etc.)
- FFM - done asking for divestment because Mac is not listening, so raising the stakes
- Historically at stop line 3 protests in St. Paul the cops show up (cops did show up)

Betsy Foy

- "Even if by some miracle Line 3 doesn't leak, it would still increase fossil fuels and deforestation. The increase in greenhouse gas emissions would be comparable to creating 50 new coal fired power plants and would make any plans Minnesota has to move to clean energy futile."
- "Climate change, as many issues we face, disproportionately affects people of color and people of lower socioeconomic status"

- “Line 3 is another example in the US government’s extensive history of violating treaties.”
- “The man camps have been linked to an increase in sex trafficking of indigenous women and children. This february seven men were arrected in a human trafficking stng. Two of those men— Matthew T Hall and Michael K West— were contract workers for Enbridge.”
- “Those charges are no more severe than the charges many water protectors, including myself are currently facing for peacefully, non-violently protesting.”
- “Line 3 is a greedy attempt at gaining immediate profit but Canadian tar sands producers like Enbridge have been losing money since 2018. As we move towards renewable energy resources fossil fuel companies and the value of oil are set to continue to decline.”
- “Those institutions like Macalester funding Enbridge are not directly building the pipeline, their money enables Enbridge to continue to pollute the environment, destroy the Earth, and oppress indigenous peoples. Today students across the nation are calling for divestment.”
- “We are looking at Macalester. In Macalester’s mission statement, service to society is listed as a core value. And the school website also features some lofty environmental goals yet Macalester holds a limited partnership with Enbridge Energy?”
- “On its site Macalester also encourages students to choose actions or beliefs which they are willing to be held accountable. We are holding the board of trustees and other leadership of macalester to this same standard and asking them to divest from enbridge”
- “We want macalester to prove they care about our future, will they take the \_\_\_\_ (i cannot figure it out rip) or will they let us down?”

#### Jennings

- “Cursed with knowing too much about Macalester”
- “This is what Macalester does with student protests”
- “The goal is to wait until the students who are protesting have graduated and bought into capitalism or are ground into too fine a paste to do anything, and then maybe by that time the problem will have resolved itself or everyone will have forgotten about it... that’s what they hoped would happen in 2019 when they agreed to divest. Did it work?” (no from the crowd”
- I know I’m a senior. I know I’m very tired and in a lot of pain right now... when I leave, will there still be people to pressure macalester about this or are you all going to forget?
  - More black students in 1975 than it does now, employs more white men with the last name wells than it does tenured indigenous professors
  - “I fucking hope you’re not gonna forget. It’s not like I’m dying, I’m just retiring.”

#### Grace

- “Never fucking trusting the board of trustees”
- “Macalester is invested in enbridge energy, and that is fucked up.”

- “Institutions like Macalester financially prop up a dying industry and a deadly pipeline”
- Petition to SRC; will be reviewing by the end of the semester
  - According to Enbridge’s plan for construction, sometime in May, Line 3 will be near completion, so this timeline is completely un-fucking-acceptable
  - This tactic of bureaucratic stalling is not new, it’s actually kind of a time-honored tradition when it comes to how school administrations like Macalester crush student movements. Basically their plan is, make these bureaucratic reform processes so long and so grueling to get through that by the time students and their student movements get through them, they are either too burnt out or too graduated to keep going.”
  - Last round of divestment campaign: “By the time fossil free Mac figured out exactly what was going on, we were, you guessed it, either graduating or too fucking burned out to keep going. So last time we played by the administration’s rules and we got fucked over, so we’re not going to do that this time, because we don’t have five months to wait for the SRC and we definitely don’t have a year and a half to wait for the board of trustees, because Line 3 is being built as we speak.”
  - “The board of trustees doesn’t actually need a social responsibility committee to tell them what the right thing to do is. I think they know what the right thing to do is, they just don’t care.”

Gabby

- “The trial of Derek Chauvin is in three days. We all received an email from Macalester about it. I was assured in this email, again, that Macalester’s an institution that is devoted to ‘racial equity and justice.’ And sometimes, not so much anymore, when I would read statements like this positing again and again and again that I am heard, that I am seen I would question myself. Am I wrong? Am I pushing too hard? But of course I’m not. And these assertions of commitments to justice are nothing but pretty words. And they’re lies.”
- “There’s a reason why we’re not taught certain history in school... white supremacy and colonialism needs and breeds lies because itself is a lie and you cannot maintain an illusion with truth”
- “What good is procedure and the status quo when lives and ecosystems and promises are being violently destroyed? What good is an institution where no one trusts each other? Because nothing meaningful can come without trust.”
- “We have to be able to hold institutions accountable and we have to have open communication to do that. How are we supposed to hold the school accountable if we don’t even know what the fuck they’re doing?”
- “If that information isn’t opened by the school, then we’re going to open it. We’re going to keep digging, regardless. And we’re going to keep working together regardless. It’s the age of information, we’re going to find out regardless.”

- “Why not show us an ounce of decency, an ounce of respect and just be up front with us? We can heal from anything and for justice, for real justice, there has to be a willingness to be undone, but too often we’re too scared to close our own eyes that we can’t open them.”

Kate Massell

- “A college that organizes trips to its students to practice archaeological excavation, reconstruction, and conservation on my stolen land under the name of education, a land that I as a Palestinian is my home, yet I am not allowed to visit.”
- “I am a Palestinian student that saw her college using the same construction company, Caterpillar, that works with the Israeli occupation to destroy Palestinian homes, build illegal settlements and a separation wall. And also build our beautiful Macalester theater building.”
- I am a Palestinian and a Macalester student and I demand that my college stops investing in companies that are causing suffering and violating human rights not just in the United States, but also overseas and in Palestine.”

Quentin Grabowski (on snelling and grand crosswalk)

- “Looks like [the cops] are going to block off the road for us. As far as I know their not planning to take any action against us at the moment. They’re just trying to keep this area blocked off.”
- “I’ve been spending the last couple months going up north and doing a lot of work trying to resist this pipeline, so when I found out that Macalester is literally investing and profiting off of this horrific project it just made me really pissed off.”
- “There are dozens of Mac students who’ve been arrested trying to work to stop the pipeline up north and at the same time mac is literally making money off it. It’s, to me, incredibly hypocritical of them.”
- “It’s really horrific when you actually see what they’re doing. They’re clear cutting forests, they’re destroying the land in ways that are irreparable. Until you get up there, until you spend a lot of time scouting around and looking at things, you don’t really understand the scale of it. It just looks like a line on a map until you’re up there and it’s like — holy crap. This is so big and so monstrous — the scale of this project and the scale of the devastation it will cause.”

Halvor Morris, they/them, 24

- “Line 3 is obviously a huge danger to Anishinaabe peoples and the natural diversity of one of the most important biomes in Minnesota.”
- “I firmly believe that if my tuition dollars are going to an institution that they should divest from not only fossil fuels but especially Line 3.”



Will Hamlin he/him '21; Maddy Tuttle they/them '21, Adele Welch she/her '21

- Will: "Hearing how close it is — just a three hour drive away — reminded me how important this is for us as Macalester students to act in our communities because it is a part of our community and a part of our state. It's our responsibility to take action on that."
- "We've been hearing about it for so long, but it suddenly feels a lot more urgent when it will be done in three months." Maddy
- Adele "I think Enbridge's tactic is to make everyone really scared... but hearing Rae and other folks who were talking about how if you come up you'll be taken care, people will take care of you, you'll be part of a movement and you already are part of a movement by being a Mac student and coming to an event like this."
- "You learn how to do things as you do them, so if you're new to campus organizing or you don't really know what's up it's totally fine. Coming to an event like this is a great place to start and see the kinds of relationships that you might build by doing that."

Kate (background DO NOT QUOTE)

- BDS at Mac
  - MacSUPER -- is an organization that raises awareness about the violations of Palestinian human rights and other connected issues in the West Bank, Gaza, Israel, and the worldwide diaspora
  - The push for divestment from fossil fuels needs to be intersectional and support BLM, investigate Mac's investments not only in Enbridge but also in private prisons, the police, surveillance systems
  - Caterpillar — erases indigenous people's homes in teh Middle East and also in northern minnesota. So why use caterpillar to build theater building.

Grace and Betsy

Grace:

- "So well. I have never seen Macalester students show up to something like this before, so I was a little skeptical, but I think it went so well, and it warmed my heart to see everyone out here. People really brought the energy."
- "Keep showing up to things. Go up north, keep showing up. It is scary, especially when there's actual real consequences to showing up in these things. No one wants to interact with the state like water protectors have to, that is really scary, but I think something that I have learned from Betsy is that there is nothing more rewarding and fun than showing up with people you care about."

Betsy:

- "I think it went really well, it was exciting to see a lot of people show up. Also seeing a lot of people that signed the petition, especially in the last couple of days."

- “What I’m hoping is that people who came to this feel a little more inspired and maybe a little braver and that they maybe find a way to make sacrifices in their life and to take action to really make a difference. This is the start, I don’t think this is what is going to make Mac divest, but I think it can really give us a good push.”
- Student organizers are talking about how to keep the energy going - have a twitter now
- “It can seem scary to take risks, but there is a lot of support behind it and there are people that will look out for you and try to guide you through these processes. If you have a little bit of fear that is holding you back, just know that there are people there for you. I hope people are brave”

Andrew

“The next step is to show face not just throughout the line 3 movement but in every other movement that’s going on right now because if they don’t all fall together, then we’re going to keep running into these problems. Keep showing up.”