TUCSON SUMMER



THREE REPORTBACKS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA ENCAMPMENT

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AUX ARMES! MAY DAY IN THE OLIVE GROVE

Emelina Rosa · May 8, 2024

What can we do against the steady drip of almost unbearable news, not only from Gaza, but from all around this beleaguered planet? This is what we can do, we can be ungovernable. There is alchemy in coming together and facing them down. This is how we find ourselves: Gaza is us.

I took part in the two Gaza Solidarity encampments at the University of Arizona and left minutes before police attacked in the early hours of Wednesday, May 1. I've been affiliated with UA for twenty years, first as a student and now as a visiting scholar, and it was an honor to take part. We overturned the local tradition of pacificism and civility. I'm proud of us.

I stayed on campus until the order to disperse on Monday evening and was furious at having to take down the barricades we had just built. I met with my crew in the morning, and we grumbled about the tyranny of fear. I was packing to go home when word came that we were setting up another liberated zone and this time we would stay and fight. This came from the same folks who decided to disperse the day before. That they changed their minds, not because they were overruled or outvoted but because they themselves overcame their own caution: this was a moment of transformation.

This was my first encampment. (It's a long story but I've been in Bisbee for decades.) A lot was new, I was unprepared for how solicitous folks were with one another, how well we worked together. There was such tenderness, such mutual respect, that it took me awhile to understand the culture. (I know it's more complicated but give me this moment. I remember when macho assholes ruled.) The first evening I turned down an escort to my car—this is my campus—and I bristled at people constantly offering me water. I declined the first young woman who offered to be my buddy—my instinct was to be autonomous—and now I'm sorry, because it was rude—forgive me, if you read this—and because I did not expect it. I accepted the second but remained uneasy, not used to being shadowed.

I had to realize I can no longer run up and down the march, as I did in my

twenties. I'm restless and I could never walk in place back then, so I would patrol the perimeter with an old Nikkormat taking photos. That was my role. Now I can hardly walk.

I'm seventy-four, with arthritis, I could barely sit on the ground. I kept squirming. Even when I went over the wall to Park Avenue, I sat on a chair. I was there with my back to the wall when a line of frat boys formed in the street with a huge speaker blaring pop music. That was the only time I felt fear and for only a moment. We drowned them out as we drowned out the cops, but they stayed a long time. I stood up and blocked one when he wandered among us, screaming as loud as I could and then shoving a poster between us. In the moment when we were inches apart, he mimicked a gesture I made. I expected him to be brutal and vulgar, but that mockery was odd. They seemed to think we cared what they thought, perhaps because they're brought up to rule.

I was surprised that most of the campers were women and trans people. Despite the years I've been lurking on the fringes of anarchist movements, I did not expect that, because nearly all the writers are men. I won't name names and I love my comrades, but women, trans folks—please—step up. Writing is a way of thinking things through, don't let the cis men do it all.

I went to my first protest when I was eleven. My father picked me up from school and took me to the Utah state capitol, where they were debating a civil rights initiative. We lined up around the edge of the rotunda, Black and white. The initiative lost, but we bore witness.

Sometimes it's worth it, to simply bear witness, as it was that time in Salt Lake City. But I have taken part in countless marches, rallies, and demonstrations, and most of them were shows of weakness. We respected their protocol, we marched within the lines they drew, and acquiesced to the containers we're stuck in. We blew off steam and went back to our lives, having done "something." We gave them the chance to identify us and gauge our strength.

Most demonstrations focus on a specific issue and are only about themselves, but our demands made it clear that we are fighting not only for divestment and an end to the genocide in Gaza but for our liberation as well. Palestine will free us all!

The university will not divest, since that would mean turning itself inside out and denying its own primary function, of maintaining elite rule. (It also provides, through its contradictory nature, spaces of creativity and precious learning, but that's another story.) Divestment is a demand that points to the limits of the wretched system we're caught in, a demand that this world cannot satisfy, that begs us to destroy it, now, in totality, and not bit by bit, through incremental improvements that are usually turned against us. Our demands are nonnegotiable. None of us are free until all of us are free. Don't look for a series of accumulating wins, building to a

better world: we will lose every battle but the last one, but we will learn to lose better, and we will keep advancing.

We refused to negotiate. We rallied hundreds to our side through our intransigence and we avoided mass punishment. We hurled defiance at the pigs for hours and only a handful were arrested or hurt. We are part of a global movement. May 1 was a victory.

Be illegal, early and often. Look out for your friends and be brave together. Escalate and expand. Go Wildcats!

> *At the barricades the pain is over. The transformation is complete. It is completed by a shout from the rooftops that the soldiers are advancing. Suddenly there is nothing to regret. The barricades are between their defenders and the violence done to them throughout their lives. There is nothing to regret because it is the quintessence of their past which is now advancing against them. On their side of the barricades it is already the future. Every ruling minority needs to numb and, if possible, to kill the time sense of those whom it exploits by proposing a continuous present. This is the authoritarian secret of all methods of imprisonment. The barricades break that present.*

– John Berger, G.

AUDACITY!

Emelina Rosa · May 21, 2024

Audacity, still more audacity, audacity always!

Georges Danton, French Revolution

The best defense is disorder.

The Do-It-Yourself Occupation Guide

The first Battle for Tucson ended in victory for us when the cops trashed our encampment at the Olive Grove by the University of Arizona Main Gate on May 1. We escaped from campus after a four-hour standoff, supported by hundreds of comrades who held back a police charge in the street with linked arms. We suffered four arrests and a couple of rubber bullet wounds, at least one serious.

On May 9, we returned to the Olive Grove and built another camp, where we did our best to be the world we wanted to be for about six hours. We knew they were gunning for us: by the end it was only a few dozen battle-prepped people defending the camp. We had two lines of barricades and retreated when they assailed us, at midnight, and pushed us west on University Boulevard from the corner with Park Avenue that forms Main Gate. We turned and faced the police across a block crowded with bystanders now saturated with tear gas—bright lights and that dark Tucson sky, chiaroscuro, drained of color under the palm trees. It was the night before UA graduation, and we were UA's second Solidarity with Gaza encampment. Police shot pepper balls and rubber bullets. We retreated with dignity after a half-hour standoff, keeping most of us safe.

These weeks have been a school. We are learning in our bodies what has been only theory, understood at a distance. We are learning to act together and build a world. A few days of action are worth a year's study (although study is precious). We have momentum—it's not about negotiations, concessions, or reforms, it's about pushing for Everything. This is a rehearsal.

We are speaking with our actions, refusing to be governed. We can be the future.

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I went back for the second Battle for Tucson. A rally was called for 5:00 p.m. on May 9 in Catalina Park, just west of campus. I attended the beginning of a meeting in the park for UA faculty and staff, who were striving to protect the student protesters. We were asked how high our tolerance

was for risk. The plan was to get between the students and the cops. The organizers gave us ten minutes to turn to our neighbors and talk it out. My neighbor was an anthropologist, we chatted a bit.

This technique for getting active participation was new to me, and I love it especially for big meetings. Everyone gets space to think out loud, even the ones who tend to hold back. My friends also have a technique for voting in large groups by breaking into circles of five and then taking a tally after a quick discussion. This develops even shy people's skills by letting us practice in small groups.

The organizers were beginning a training when I left for the rally: I'm 74 and in no shape for the defensive lineup. I sat under a flowering desert willow and listened to speeches across the lawn. Catalina Park is one square block, landscaped to eliminate private spaces.

I had agreed to speak and did so briefly. I stated my UA affiliation (visiting scholar in the history department) and said: "You're beautiful! You are stronger than they are, stronger than you know when you move together! Be illegal, early on and often!" and not much else. (If I did this a lot I'd get better.) A faculty member from the School of Education announced he was proud of the students. Mohyeddin Abdulaziz from the Arizona Palestine Solidarity Alliance spoke about Palestine at length.

Then we walked, perhaps 300 of us as we left the park, resolute, with a marching drum. People joined us and waved, it was a sunny afternoon and not too hot. We turned down University Avenue and saw motorcycle cops a block ahead in the middle of the intersection, but they fell back, and back again, until we marched through Main Gate, onto campus, around the fountain and back to the Olive Grove. We returned!

We built a new encampment: tents, tarps, and pallets tied with zip ties. Snacks and heaps of small water bottles appeared. Someone announced, "Time to kick back and get to know your neighbor. Your presence matters." There was training for medics. Someone started a song. I spoke with a couple of folks briefly. I was too tired to engage but I had to be there. I ate a protein bar and tried to rest. We were told not to litter but the pigs are going to bust us up anyway—why am I searching for a trashcan? But an orderly space is part of its allure. We had camping toilets.

There was a wild moment of premature confrontation when the police attempted to snatch someone and we got them back. (I dashed for the exit when it broke out.) We were not sealed in, we could come and go. We had folks on the other side of the low wall, holding signs, but not many. We missed the supportive crowd that had filled Park Avenue the week before. Cars honked support. There was a convocation right behind us at Centennial Hall, where they were forced to exit by the back door. There were grads and their parents everywhere, bros and girls in tiny clothing, a few homeless people.

The university brought in a trailer-mounted flood light unit pulled by a golf cart and dozens of people surrounded it, kicked in the hood of the cart, stole road cones and boards to add to the barricades, and chanted "Pigs Out!" The contraption had folding legs to stabilize it and in the confusion someone detached one of them and spirited it away into the darkness of the encampment. The confrontation lasted for perhaps 10 minutes before the cops retreated, taking their damaged equipment with them.

One of the lessons of occupations is how to use down-time. We're in tight quarters, we can't bring anything we don't dare lose. I'm restless, so I left once to visit a hotel. I put my kaffiyeh away and wore lipstick, and slipped by the desk with a smile, pointing at the bathroom.

Some folks carried in a couple of couches. A lot of supplies came from dumpsters: this was end of the school year, the dumpsters were full. I sank down, then thought, My joints will freeze and when I need to move fast, I won't be able to. The cops will charge while I'm dozing. That's when I decided to go home. One of my crew appeared beside me and I said goodnight. (Thank you, you showed up both nights just when I needed to check out.)

The cops moved in at midnight and drove us out of Main Gate and west on University to the next block. (I had left earlier and watched this on live stream, I'm using the collective pronoun.) Faculty stood on the front line, holding signs that said, "Keep Students Safe," and chanting, "Faculty are here to say, Shame on you, Go away!" (We heard that two were arrested some place away from the main action.)

The stand-off lasted maybe half an hour. The cops could have pushed us north or south into an empty street. Instead, they drove us into a crowded pedestrian area the night before commencement, packed with bars, restaurants, grads and their parents, partying jocks. We think they counted on the bros to beat us down, remembering the line of drunken frat boys on April 30. We suffered only a couple of arrests, again a couple of injuries. I found police behavior bewildering and asked my comrades, "Are we that good or are they that bad?" They said, "Both."

Did the cops think about how many people would be hit by tear gas? (It would be interesting to see legal discovery. Or any impacts on asthmatics, for example, out for a late stroll that night.) I saw bros taunting us and a few skirmishes but nothing out of control. I think the frat boys were taken aback by our battle gear—helmets, shields, reinforced signs—and by women and trans folk fighting. It was a standoff, we threw canisters back at the pigs and kept up our drumbeat and shouting: "We keep us safe!" "Palestine will be free!" There was gas everywhere. Our comrade doing the live feed got gassed and kept filming. We finally fell back around 12:30 a.m.

I saw all this on live feed. I left at 9:30 p.m., reluctant to go but too tired

to stay in a volatile situation. There had been a direct action training that morning, focused on high-speed costume switches to thwart surveillance. I learned to make a mask from a t-shirt. At the encampment, I changed my head gear and top twice. Leaving, I switched again, put my backpack into a tote bag and shook out my hair. I wore a pastel zip-up hoodie and looked like a suburban granny. I had a long walk to my car.

I went back to the house where I was staying and hung out with our comrade who got a purple heart last week for being shot with a rubber bullet to the knee. We drank wine and dozed on our couches, then found a live feed to watch, then dozed some more. Folks got home around 1:00 a.m., jubilant but stinking of tear gas. They showered off outside. One of them was hit in the torso with pepper balls. They reported someone with a broken collar bone from stumbling through the chaos and falling, and someone hit on the head with a tear gas cannister.

Some friends came by and said they'd been supporting folks who'd been blinded by tear gas while heading for their cars. A bully on the sidewalk was filming them with his phone and snickering—our friend slapped the phone out of his hand and cursed him. He was astonished.

On graduation night, friends projected a series of poetic fragments on the wall of the city court building downtown at nightfall: "Palestine illuminates the colonial nature of the rest of the world. – Noura Erekat," "There will be no flowers to lay as they too will have died. No palms on graves, and no graves either. – Heba Al-Agha," and "I keep the dead in my head like knives in a block. – Benjamin Krusling."

People papered every car in the garage near commencement with a flier accusing Raytheon of war crimes: "U of A you can't hide: Here's proof of your genocide," and a list of investments tied to Israel. We heard that two people were arrested and charged with trespassing at the garage.

I can't believe I'm part of a movement where you can fight the cops one day and be offered herbal remedies and tattoos the next. (A Palestinian flag on the neck for me.) The day after there was "an abundant schedule for fun/chill/sweet/restful/caring thangs!": a pool party, a nervous system workshop, a healing support drop-in, and a writing group which was oversubscribed. Two days later, I drove home to Bisbee but stayed on my signal channel, where folks are still decompressing, debriefing, and beginning to make new plans. There was a request for tips on getting tear gas out of car seats. (Change the air filter and borrow a vac.) There was a bid for a die-in as our next direct action, since the comrade was too tired to march and shout but would gladly lie down. I harvested a crop of mullein to bring next time: good for lungs damaged by tear gas, grows in my yard.

Last week I found The Do-It-Yourself Occupation Guide at the first encampment. The authors offer practical advice for building takeovers, etc., from bolt-cutters and angle-grinders to how to wear glasses under gog-

gles. They offer social advice as well: occupations are more than expressions of rage, they are opportunities to live and fight together.

Leaving town, I saw a friend. While I was bubbling with excitement that I wanted to share, they told me they had no hope, as if that were a gift. I used to call myself a soldier from a defeated army. But I—we—have hope.

The time is now.

Everything or nothing. All of us or none.
One alone our lot can't better,
Choose the gun or fetter.
Everything or nothing. All of us or none.

—Bertolt Brecht, Svenborg Poems

ALL SPECTATORS ARE COWARDS OR TRAITORS

Living and Fighting · May 10, 2024

On Tuesday, April 30 and into the early morning of May 1, 2024, hundreds of people, fulfilling different roles and moving fluidly between them, collectively constructed an encampment at the University of Arizona, raised a perimeter around it, barricaded that perimeter, held off a police advance, launched a supportive rally of several hundred people on the public avenue west of the encampment, and then formed a defensive line in the street to protect the encampment from a second police advance. Throughout the night, engagement with the police escalated from encampment participants' willingness to negotiate, to a rejection of all attempts to quell the occupation through soft power tactics. This included rebuffing all bids for conversation from the police and administrators: all of their endeavors to negotiate or communicate were responded to with chants of, "Fuck you pig!" When sheriff's deputies with helmets and shields approached the camp, and when they later attempted to expand their lines to surround it, camp occupiers pelted them with water bottles and other projectiles, in some cases causing the police to fall back in response.

How was all this possible? Just twenty-four hours prior, an encampment on the University of Arizona Mall was abandoned an hour before the administration-mandated "curfew" by self-appointed leaders within the encampment who announced that they'd come to a "democratic decision" to leave. Camp was packed up and dozens of people who had been building barricades for hours resigned themselves to taking them down and going home.

In the span of one day, the movement escalated from toothless confusion into a force capable of acting with discipline and clarity to engage the police in direct confrontation, rally a supportive population of hundreds to its flank, and make calculated and decisive tactical calls to avoid mass arrest. In the end, only four people were arrested and all charged with low level misdemeanors, despite the continual and semi-public commitment of felonious activity throughout the night (several who were not arrested, however, did sustain injuries from rubber bullets, some of which are serious).

The outcome was so spectacularly successful that the president of the police union went on the local news to decry the inability of prosecutors to successfully charge anyone. "This just encourages that kind of activity," he said. Our conviction is that, in this final point, he is correct.

This essay is an attempt to draw some strategic and tactical lessons from the successes of April 30-May 1, 2024, to identify potential areas of growth, and to contribute to the accelerated learning process that people of conscience moved by the ongoing genocide in Gaza–and to forcefully confront the violence inherent in American society–are currently engaged in. American universities, and increasingly universities around the world, have quickly shifted from serving as mainly a loci for the proliferation of capitalist values to simultaneously functioning as a site in which the tactics and strategies of creative insurgency are rapidly developing. We hope to deepen this dynamic.

All Spectators Are Cowards Or Traitors

On Tuesday afternoon, participants arrived at the new encampment, located (with rich symbolism) in an olive grove on the northeastern corner of University of Arizona's Main Gate area. They peppered a variety of signs and banners throughout the newly constructed "liberated zone," including one that read "All Spectators Are Cowards Or Traitors."

This bold assertion, likely painted by one individual, nonetheless captured an affective shift on the part of the students and non-students present at the encampment that night. In stark contrast to the endless handwringing about ensuring that those who were unwilling to take on the associated risks of participation felt free to stand aside, the presence of this sign indicated a stark escalation: in the midst of a genocide, there are no spectators, only cowards and traitors.

Some of those who attended previous Gaza solidarity actions at the university experienced stark dissonance between the calculation of risk on the part of many of the students and activists and the reality of the situation in Gaza: low-level misdemeanor charges and one night in jail paled in comparison to being bombed while asleep in one's home.

This dissonance between the felt conditions of life in America and the felt conditions of life in Gaza may be the most pronounced difficulty that solidarity activists here must seek to address. If would-be insurgents in the U.S. do not, on a substantive human level, understand the stakes of the fight, they'll be unwilling to make sacrifices for it. And conversely, tangible human connection to the ongoing genocide is the most powerful motivator driving American students and activists toward a willingness to take risks. At least one major condition that drove the potency of the movement against the Vietnam War (including causing it to develop into its militant, armed wings) was direct communication that became possible

between the Vietcong and other Vietnamese people and American activists. Delegations of Vietnamese people were able to establish direct lines of communication with the anti-war movement and share with them both strategies learned in the midst of guerrilla war and the human toll the war was taking on their people—in other words, they shared the affective urgency of the stakes of the situation.

Throughout the evening, as participants built and fortified barricades, held their lines, and fended off police incursions, those on the megaphone were people who demonstrated a direct and immediate connection to Palestine, and who continually reframed aloud the stakes of the fight. "We do not negotiate with an administration and a police force that participates in murdering thousands of children in their sleep," they proclaimed. "We are here for the people of Gaza, who are being murdered and buried under rubble." These are not direct quotes, but summaries offered in an attempt to convey the sense of urgency and stakes continually broadcast to those within the encampment.

The successes of the evening stemmed largely from these felt, emotional interventions, and the way they were able to displace (while not directly confronting) tendencies within the camp that lacked the clarity to push the fight forward.

Green-Zoned

On the night of Thursday, April 25, students at Arizona State University in Tempe, Arizona, occupied the front lawn of their university, successfully bringing the Gaza Solidarity encampment movement to Arizona. Their efforts quickly led to a more comradely version of the competition between the two universities' sports teams: if ASU can do it, then UA better catch up.

The morning after the ASU encampment was broken up and seventy-two participants arrested, networks previously established between Palestinian solidarity activists in the two cities conveyed the story to people in Tucson: protest leaders asked participants to separate themselves into a "green" group (low risk) and "red group" (high risk). Green participants left the encampment or stood aside and watched as red participants linked arms and were passively arrested.

The week between the ASU mass arrest and the UA encampment saw ASU participants entirely caught up in jail support, post-arrest needs, and endless meetings. It also resulted in the least risk-averse element facing life chaos and confusion as they spent days sleep-deprived from a night in jail, locked out of their dorm rooms by administration, in jail support meetings, and the like, instead of showing up the next day to push further escalation. Meaningful mass action, a new encampment or otherwise, has not re-emerged at the time of this writing a week and a half later.

The question on the mind of some UA participants then became: how can the green zone participants contribute in a meaningful way to the encampment while not risking more than they'd bargained for?

As the 10:30 p.m. curfew approached on Tuesday night, UA administrators explained to encampment leaders that if they didn't want to get arrested, they could stand behind the forming police line east of the encampment. Instead, some within the encampment spread the idea of holding a rally on Park Avenue, just west of the encampment, which police had closed off to traffic, forming a protective flank for the encampment. Green zone participants, under the legally protective cover of holding a rally on the sidewalk and the street, therefore offered a buffer that allowed those within the encampment to flee and blend in if they were unable to hold camp. Instead of police encircling and arresting in one place all those they knew to be responsible for the most militant actions, a subset of the protesters decided to blur the lines between the two camps, allowing more combative actions to develop with relative safety.

Neither Arrestable Nor Non-Arrestable

All week, a dichotomy had developed in meetings between those campers willing and unwilling to be arrested. Several times a day people would be asked to put their hands up if they were or were not amenable to going to jail. This contributed to a tactical confusion that ultimately benefited our opponents: by equating those with the highest threshold for risk with the willingness, or even certainty, of ending up in the hands of the police, it created a situation where the movement was likely to be stymied by a mass arrest situation that took the least risk-averse element out of circulation, at least for the evening. While risk-averse participants are absolutely necessary for advancing a struggle beyond the limitations of what the establishment can ignore (roles like supply runs, jail support, media, funding, and others must be fulfilled), in most U.S. protest movements these days (urban uprisings excepted) it's the lack of combatants that prevents their development.

On Tuesday night, this dichotomy was transcended in at least two important ways. First, those within the encampment were able to spend hours facing off with the police, including holding back their advancements with projectiles, and then, when the camp was about to be flanked by police and arrest immanent, encampment protesters were able to blend into the crowd on Park Avenue by either joining the front line there or changing their appearance and falling back. Second, when the police closed in in riot gear in an attempt to clear Park Avenue, where the "green zone" rally had moved, those formerly green participants linked arms and held a line against the cops to protect the camp. They quickly transformed, when the call to be brave was tangible and the material stakes of protecting their comrades became clear, from rear guard protesters to frontliners. This was

not a coercive situation in which people were forced to take on risk they'd previously been unwilling (in the face of the advancing police line, many people simply cleared the street), but a testament to the reality that it's difficult to know what risks one will take on until presented with a concrete circumstance in which to enact, or choose to not enact, bravery.

Importantly, those in the back eventually realized that the majority of those holding the line against the police were falling into a stalemate that they likely didn't want to be in, and they encouraged a strategic de-escalation to prevent, for a second time, a mass arrest scenario. Of course, complex communication about tactics is not always possible in those moments, and the days following the uprising included discussions of whether the de-escalations both at camp and in the street were strategically necessary to avoid mass arrest, or whether the conflict could have been pushed further. Those debates are generative and should continue; this is how we learn.

What Winning Looks Like

In a situation of asymmetrical fighting in which the police and those who direct them will almost always, up until a critical moment of systemic breakdown, be able to overwhelm us with the level of organized violence they can deploy (with their armies of militarized cops, riot gear, SWAT vehicles, chemical munitions, backed up by jails, prisons, courts, etc.) it can be difficult to notice when our tactics are successful and when we have achieved medium and short term goals. On the surface, it can look like the police always win. This illusion is sometimes promoted by media and communications teams within our movements, who are quick to put the focus on the violence of the police and those holding societal power.

While it's necessary to draw out the faultlines (or contradictions) within society and show the population that the power of those who run the world ultimately relies upon force–not any supposed "social contract" or democratic "will of the people"–this discursive strategy can lead to us talking mostly about police and their violence instead of movements and their power. It can make us feel like the police always win.

The university encampment as a tactic has spread throughout the country in large part because it has proven to be successful and the participants have proven themselves powerful. From images of hundreds squaring off against cops, mountainous barricades, five-gallon water jug bonks, and university architecture remade into a vision of a free Palestine and free world, displays of our power have built this movement. We must figure out for ourselves what small wins look like, set short term and medium term goals, and celebrate what we achieve. Meanwhile, we need to reveal the police as both violent and stupid (memetically bonking them is a perfect way of doing this) as often as we can.

On the night before the uprising, the encampment was evacuated an hour before curfew following two warnings by a bootlicking administrator. The next night, when police, sans riot gear, initially approached camp and began taking it apart from the outside, those within threw things at them, held tight lines, and fortified barricades that both made a police incursion difficult and dangerous, and prevented them from seeing what was going on within some parts of camp. Meanwhile, frontliners in the encampment made their intentions clear by chanting, "If you come in, we will fight you!" telling the cops what they already suspected: attempting to enter camp would create a violent shitshow, a media spectacle, and, eventually, a legal nightmare. Because those inside the camp showed their force, the cops stepped back and held a line for hours past curfew. For that moment, this is what winning looks like.

Next, when police advanced on the crowd in the street, that crowd held a line, preventing the police from easily achieving their goals. The police had been forced to don riot gear: no small victory against the Tucson police, who prefer to project an image of liberal, first amendment protectors. Instead, they were forced to appear in the morning news like the occupying army that they really are. When we force them to make the violence upon which they rely obvious, and especially when we can do so without getting people too badly hurt, we've won.

Tucson police were forced to shoot protesters with rubber bullets, deploy chemical munitions, and generally behave like violent assholes. This led to hundreds of faculty and staff signing a petition calling out the violence of the police: "Under the cloak of enforcing a legal curfew, you violated not only the primary directive of caring for students in your charge but also turned a peaceful protest into a violent confrontation." Any time liberals and other fence-sitters are forced to draw lines like this, we've won.

Finally, while camp as a physical location was lost, camp as a zeitgeist was proliferated by the intensity of the spectacle that was created. Hundreds of students and community supporters filled the streets to watch, participate in, support, and be forced to consider the demand for a free Gaza and the free use of public space the encampment implies. Every action like this shifts the popular common sense and leaves behind dozens or hundreds of people who know in their bodies what it feels like to hold their ground against the police. These lessons do not go away when we go back to work and class. They stay with us and we keep them in our back pocket for the next time it's necessary to push back together: whether against genocide, an unjust war, against the cops killing yet another Black person, or against the nihilistic march toward climate apocalypse.

What is a University Anyway?

The university promotes a certain ideology of itself and fills every visible surface of campus with propaganda that reinforces this ideology. We

must see this for what it is: the university is doing politics, it's attempting to control the terms of the debate and hold onto power by promoting a certain self definition.

Within this ideology, a university is a supportive environment for learning and nurturing young minds, and for promoting free inquiry, free speech, and contributing in important ways to the progress of society. It's an environment of co-creation among equals, where the needs and creative impulses of students are nurtured.

While elements of this ideology may in certain moments prove true (some students may genuinely feel nurtured and may learn during their time there, insights that contribute to society can do and develop there) the main purpose of the university at this time is to contribute to the development of the economy by working in concert with corporate backers to create workers–especially a higher educated, specialized classes of workers–as well as the research insights necessary to promote the profits of corporations. Ultimately, it exists to make money.

The university is therefore a strategic nexus of private and public interests. One reason that the university occupations have been so swiftly repressed is because administrators are aware of the encampments' impacts upon the economic activity of the university system. This also exposes how fundamentally alienated the university environment is: even a simple protest encampment perched on the fringes of campus is enough to draw out the riot cops. Clearly, this is not an institution open to the non-normative creative impulses of students.

Awareness of these realities are strategically important for a few different reasons. When we see the university as an artery for capital, we can ask ourselves different questions about how to strategically confront or seek to disrupt it, rather than getting caught up in endless debates common to the logic of the university: free speech, rights, and demands. We can instead ask ourselves: what impact will this tactic have upon the ability of the university to function properly (i.e., to generate profits)?

Specifically, demands about "divestment" must take into account the reality that the University of Arizona, the largest employer in Tucson, is deeply intertwined with the second largest employer in Tucson, Raytheon. The University cannot actually divest from Raytheon and the other weapons manufacturers with which it is intertwined without ceasing to be the university that it currently is. Such a divestment would require a fundamental, even ontological, shift in the nature of the University. As such, this demand is something quite more than a typical demand: it marks a horizon beyond the frame of the negotiation table. As such, it is endlessly escalatable. We can always continue to demand further divestment, until we ultimately accomplish the total rebirth of the university as a public structure truly serving the needs of the people.

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