

University
of California as
Infrastructure of
Empire



LINES IN THE SAND

Writings on the Gaza Solidarity Encampment
& Campus Flood at U.C. Berkeley from
an Anarchist Prisoner of War

Casey Goonan

*transcribed, formatted, & edited
with love & rage from
comrades to the end*

cover images:

شهادة الاطفال في زمن الحرب

In Time of War: Children Testify

(Drawings by Palestinian Children)

Beirut: Mawakif / PFLP, 1970

April 17, 2026

Palestinian Prisoners' Day

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Editor's Note

The content of this book comprises writings and letters written by Casey during their time at Santa Rita Jail in the year before they were sentenced to federal prison. Some of the ideas and opinions expressed in this text are rooted in a particular moment in time and do not reflect Casey's current views on strategy, approach, and political action. These are not definitive statements and must not be construed as such, especially given that Casey is imprisoned and certain ideas may create undesirable repercussions.

The editors have aimed to be as faithful as possible to Casey's original words in the transcription and editing process, with minor spelling and grammar changes for readability.

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The modern university campus is certainly a localized and analytically identifiable geographic unit or scale of analysis. However, the discursive dimensions of its territorial presence and the ideological nature of its alleged “border” remains an undertheorized aspect of infrastructural analysis. A review of last spring teaches us that one of the tasks for a revolutionary theory, among many others, is to demystify the *reified* site (and scene) of the “university campus,” a task that was unevenly realized in practice by some participants of the intifada, although not by most. “Reification” is a Marxist concept that describes when a “relation between people takes on the character of a thing and thus acquires a ‘phantom objectivity,’” or an appearance of “autonomy that seems so strictly relational and all-embracing as to conceal every trace of its fundamental nature: *the relation between people*.”¹ The modern university is a complex set of relations between people that, under capitalism, takes on the appearance of an infrastructure that exists external to and autonomous from the labor-/power of people who are, in fact, the only concrete source of its historical formation and social reproduction.

The reified myth-image of the U.S. university *campus*, in this context, is also taken to be a discrete, self-enclosed space, which is isolated from its surroundings. The “campus” is thus widely perceived as a world relatively separate from an “outside” community and from the displacement it creates. Its fantastic “interior” is a provincialized space, in ways similar to the analogy that Fred Moten and Stefano Harvey discuss as the settler garrison-fortress and “the surround.”² Rodriguez’s theorization

of the reified site/scene of the U.S. prison is useful as a parallel figure for elaborating on the concept of “reification” and its application to an infrastructure like the university campus.³ Just like the university, the prison is a “capillary site.” This means it is not simply an infrastructure that facilitates a particular, peculiar circulation and management of bodies but also the “production and movement of power,” exerting a domination that reaches “significantly beyond its localized setting.”⁴ Drawing on Lukács’s notion of “reification” defined above, Rodriguez carefully demonstrates how the common-sense conception of the free world’s (non)relation to the imprisoned world is as a “thing” or a “natural feature of the social landscape, rather than an expansive and mind-boggling technology of domination and subjection.”⁵ This common sense evinces prisons as somewhere allegedly “outside” of civil society, somewhere else, when in actual fact these modes of human capture “surround, enmesh, and articulate with the normative everyday of the social formation.”⁶

In similar terms, we might best think of the site/scene of the university campus as both a physical geographic zone that mediates social relations while simultaneously producing and reproducing a myth-image of itself as an atomized institution in ways that conceal the dynamic set of relationships which directly constitute its corporate institutionality and social-historical form. The campus is a continuous discursive-political production. Internally concealed by its myth-image is the class character of students and student-workers as surplus populations; multiple hierarchized layers of precarious labor; and a chain of administrative command/authority that governs

through policing and criminalization primarily. The scale and scope of the university's situatedness as an infrastructure in the machinery of state power and capital is also relatively mystified—one is seduced into a common-sense conception of the campus as a “place of education” rather than accumulation and warfare. Unlike the myth-image of the prison as a domain that remains outside or beyond the pale of civil society, the university campus is envisaged as located squarely within civil society, if not a beacon of U.S. Amerikan civilizational ascendancy itself.

To demystify the common-sense conception of the university campus as a discrete atomized institution reveals the complex set of relationships between people as classes and sectors of the U.S. settler empire in ways that profoundly alter traditional perspectives of the campus as a “field” of struggle and zone of combat in the revolutionary historical process of decolonization and abolition. One of the most significant consequences that such shifts in perspective and interpretation yield is a more accurate description of the terrain of campus-based insurgency as it actually exists, allowing for greater interrogation of the so-called “student” intifada's content and the asymmetries that define the relationality between various hegemonic and counter-hegemonic blocs involved in this historical struggle in motion.

The revolutionary theory put forward by some of the more militant tendencies of the campus revolt last spring proposes that the “student activist” is a “transitional figure” whose actions should ideally help to “broaden the movement for Palestine liberation beyond itself from the campus as a battlefield,

generalizing into a struggle that engages with the material contradictions and antagonisms of society at large.”⁷ Yet not only did the “movement” fail to broaden beyond the reified site of the campus, but the social-historical subject of the “student activist” quite often in fact became a concrete obstacle to the generalization of antagonism. An attempt to flood the gates would ensue, following the initial encampment wave. Unfortunately, it will not be enough. Clearly the intifada last spring is not France 1968, nor is it a second iteration of the “Occupy Movement,” and the class character of the insurgency differs drastically from the composition of the most revolutionary segments of the 2020 George Floyd Rebellion.

Without a doubt, the university campus will continue to be a field of struggle, yet a reassessment of what this means is clearly in order. We must be willing to see “the general models behind the specific sequence of events.” We must be honest enough to each other—and to ourselves—to analyze “the content behind the forms.”⁸

To many it was clear that steps into the unknown had been taken, that the line in fact had been crosses, that the sea in fact had begun to flow over the dam... [W]hat they had not expected, what they only slowly and painfully accepted, was that the sea itself should begin to ebb. They accepted the retreat with pain because they knew, as they watched the water recede, that as high as the tide had risen, as close as the flood had come, the sea would have to gather much more force, the tide would have to rise far higher, merely to reach the level of the dam once again... [T]he same cracks will not be found

twice in the same dam; they will have been repaired, and the entire dam will have been raised. A future tidal wave will find new cracks in the dam, cracks which are invisible to the insurgents as to the defenders of the old order...

[T]he task of revolutionary theory is to analyze the sea itself; the task of revolutionary action is to create a new tidal wave.⁹

It would be easy to be complacent or disillusioned...but we have obligations to the martyrs, to the prisoners, and to all who fight to end this.¹⁰

Notes

1. Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1968), emphasis added.

2. Fred Moten and Stefano Harney, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 2013).

“In films....the settler is portrayed as surrounded by ‘native,’ inverting....the role of aggressor so that colonialism is made to look like self-defense. Indeed aggression and self-defense are reversed in these movies, but the image of a surrounded fort is not false. Instead, the false image is what emerges when a critique of militarized life is predicated on the forgetting of the life that surrounds it. The fort really was surrounded, is besieged by what still surrounds it, the common beyond and beneath—before and before—enclosure. The surround antagonises the laager in its midst while disturbing the facts on the ground with some outlaw planning... Our task is the self-defense of the surround in the face of repeated, targeted dispossessions through the settler’s armed incursion” [emphasis added], 17.

3. Dylan Rodríguez, *Forced Passages: Imprisoned Radical Intellectuals and the U.S. Prison Regime* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

7. Cited in Faisal Al-Assad, “Reflections on the Global Student Intifada,” *Ebb Magazine* (January 11, 2025), <https://www.ebb->

magazine.com/essays/reflections-on-the-global-student-intifada.
original source unknown.

8. Fredy Perlman and Roger Gregoire, *Worker-Student Action Committees: France, May '68* (Olympia: Detritus Books, 2020 [1969]), 31.

9. Ibid., 33-34.

10. Palestinian Youth Movement, "One Year," *The New Inquiry* (October 7, 2024), <https://thenewinquiry.com/one-year/>.

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Casey Goonan is a dedicated community educator, writer, distroist, printer, and anarchist/anti-imperialist political prisoner who has committed their life to struggles for liberation. Casey is incarcerated for actions carried out in solidarity with Palestinians facing genocide in Gaza and in response to the repressive actions against the pro-Palestine student encampments in the United States. In January 2025, Casey pleaded guilty to one count of maliciously damaging or destroying property used in or affecting interstate commerce by means of fire or an explosive for the arson attack on a campus police car. As part of a plea agreement, Casey took responsibility for other attacks but pleaded not guilty to the additional charges and was sentenced to 235 months in federal prison. Just as Casey has persistently for years cared for, supported, and struggled alongside incarcerated comrades, we aim to replicate these actions in solidarity with Casey as they continue their struggle from the other side of the wall. A note from Casey in September 2025: *“Thanks to everybody out there who has shown me love and offered support through this time. I wish every prisoner could experience the level of support you all have shown to me. In here, I’ve done my best to show my love to all my fellow prisoners and I remain steadfast to the movement to Palestinian liberation and the movements for decolonization and abolition worldwide.”* More information:

freecaseynow.noblogs.org

Writing a letter to a political prisoner or prisoner of war is a concrete way to support those imprisoned for their political struggles. A letter is a simple way to brighten someone's day in prison by creating human interaction and communication—something prisons attempt to destroy. Beyond that, writing keeps prisoners connected to the communities and movements of which they are a part, allowing them to provide insights and stay up to date. Writing to prisoners is not charity, as we on the outside have as much to gain from these relationships as the prisoners. Knowing the importance of letter writing is crucial. Prisons are very lonely, isolating, and disconnected places. Any sort of bridge from the outside world is greatly appreciated. Find out more:

nycabc.wordpress.com



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