

Lines in the Sand



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

with whatever weapons at hand

withwhateverweapons.noblogs.org



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.

Lines in the Sand

As a concrete activity (not a speculative one), the art of war never encounters two identical situations: neither the means nor the enemy nor the terrain nor the socio-economic conditions are ever the same. What's more, war is not just a confrontation between material forces, it is also a confrontation between wills, between moral forces that often radically modify the value of material forces.

—*T. Derbent*¹

[T]he materiality of discourse is as solid an aspect of political economy as the Gross Domestic Product, and its far-flung subtleties and evasions, its coded displacements and well-choreographed insinuations, decidedly more pernicious as the missile that hides its hand. To spot it by preventing, or warding off, its closures, on its own terrain, with its own weapons, defines the “war,” as I understand it.

—*Hortense Spillers*²

I

What occurred between April and June 2024 is not a “student intifada” but a convergence of society onto the university campuses. The struggle that had erupted on the University of California, Berkeley campus was composed of three dynamically involved and contradictorily-situated *counter-hegemonic blocs*: “students/student-workers,” “non-students/non-faculty,” and to a lesser degree “non-student campus workers” (predominately faculty). Each of these blocs is heterodox and internally diverse. Yet the participants from each bloc are also all defined by certain distinct structural positions and political subjectivities. The distinct dynamism generated by this convergence of the different blocs at the site of the campus—as well as the limitations and constraints that restricted our struggle from generalizing any further beyond it—is papered over by the narrative misrepresentation of the intifada as one of only students. I argue that it is a *misnomer* to label what took shape last spring a “student intifada,” and to do so repeats a historical framework that is unhelpful and theoretically flawed. This can be said of most campuses where there was an escalation of Palestine solidarity activity in the form of encampments and building occupations last spring.

To privilege the “student” as the primary historical subject of this wave of escalation across university campuses is to commit a grave error with consequences that remain mystified in most analyses of the events and their representation in the public discourse. This error is fundamentally an issue of

narrative warfare and its correction exposes the density and ubiquity of colonial-bourgeois “common sense.” I additionally argue this misnomer is both a symptom of the ruling ideology and an active counterinsurgency technology that isolates the intifada’s most militant elements (who were often not students or student-workers), to subvert the potential for a cohesion of purpose among the various blocs converging across sectors of society that are traditionally segregated when they meet within the dominant spatio-ideological schema of the “university campus.” Ultimately, this misnomer leads to a *false image* of the intifada’s content, represented as a movement of students and campus workers in most retrospective analyses, which in its own turn has produced a kind of self-fulfilling misrepresentation as the 2024-2025 school year commences. That is, what a year ago was beginning to look and feel like a massive, vibrant *popular* uprising (or at least “pre-uprising” atmosphere) against the University of Empire, with essential and decisive participation from non-student/non-faculty bloc, now endures the 2025 school year as an entirely student-populated movement. Participants from the non-student/non-faculty bloc remain either exhausted and abandoned the initiative for new sites of struggle, recovering and stuck in strategic retreat, or, if they have stuck around, appear to have transitioned into a relation of deference to the “student activist.”

The misnomer of “student intifada” perpetuates a false image of the spring 2024 “escalations” as it actually had been formed, relying on a peculiar, wishful narrative framework: *the myth of student leadership*. The mytheme continues to mystify

the core dynamics of the insurgency as animated by the political will of the student/student-worker bloc, and relegates the non-student/non-faculty bloc to a secondary narrative position of “community support.” To historicize the insurgency of last spring as such is to affirm the perspective of its most conservative and domesticated elements.³

The myth of student leadership conforms to nothing in the reality of the most revolutionary sections of this insurgency, which only emerged because of widespread community participation from the non-student/non-faculty bloc drawn from the regional left wing, anti-fascist, and anti-authoritarian movement ecology where each university or college is located. Where the student/student-worker bloc was open to the possibility of genuine horizontal decision-making and refusal to isolate their provincialized sector from the vast ecology of resistance that surrounds campus, the most exciting, decisive, and combative forms of struggle seem to emerge: from the very first “Gaza solidarity encampment” at Columbia, to the first building occupation of Siemens Hall at Cal Poly Humboldt, and other scattered acts of expropriation and sabotage that sustained into the summer. None of the most celebrated of our tactical achievements generated by the spring intifada on the university campuses were the lone work of students, and this is a fact to be proud of and embrace, not to shy away from or allow the State to shame you into presenting otherwise.

Combative action in New York City and Humboldt, at Cal State Los Angeles and Portland State, or the campus flood at U.C. Berkeley did not emanate from the desires of “student

leadership,” but recurrently was catalyzed *in spite of it*. Rather, escalations on these campuses obviously precipitated from the fusion of all three oppositional blocs, a breakdown in hierarchized social roles, chains of administrative authority, and the specialized division of labor, as well as the circulation and cross-pollination of insurgents meeting between multiple campuses in a single region at once. Any revolutionary content and/or forms of struggle only advanced in situations and circumstances where insurgents refused any politics of deference to traditional authority based on the capitalist organization of social relations. More often than not, the student/student-worker bloc was actually a vector of disciplinary power within the scene of the Gaza solidarity encampment, as my experience at U.C. Berkeley certainly corroborates. Class antagonism permeated the inner life of these spaces due to the frequent attempt to consolidate authority through assertion of “student” identity as a property claim, a signifier of belonging and a possessive claim to valorized status within the fabricated borders of “the campus.”

Students must come to see themselves as the problem, which, counter to the complaints of the restorationist critics of the university, is precisely what it means to be a customer, to take on the burden of realization and always necessarily be inadequate to it. Later, these students will be able to see themselves properly as obstacles to society, or perhaps, with lifelong learning, students will return having successfully diagnosed themselves as the problem.

—*Fred Moten & Stefano Harney*⁴

Once you participate actively, once action is no longer the specialty of a separate group, you suddenly realize that you have power over larger projects....the “institutions” of society lose their character of external spectacles and come into focus as social projects which can be determined by you together with others.

—*Fredy Perlman & Roger Gregoire*⁵

II

In the context of narrative warfare, what is in a name? My rejection of a description of last spring's insurgency in identitarian terms (i.e. "student-led," "student intifada") is an important analytical move. Instead, i argue it is more helpful and accurate to speak of the intifada in terms of spatiality, geography, and place. In rejecting the identitarian title, our critical perspective challenges the simultaneous *over-representation* of the student/student-worker bloc as the principal "catalyst" and agent of action and *devalorization* of the extensive contributions from the non-student/non-faculty bloc. Surprising has been the prominence of the myth of "student leadership" even among various articulations of the non-student/non-faculty bloc throughout this "movement" as it continues on, albeit in fractured and stunningly gaunt form. In locales where the myth remains unchallenged, a new level of deference to the students has taken hold.

For the 2024-2025 school year, this problem has metastasized. It is now commonplace to see the remnants of non-student/non-faculty bloc participants—if their focus is even still on the campus as a site of ongoing organizing, planning, or resistance—waiting for the student/student-worker to initiate activity on a campus before joining in "solidarity," and then place blame on the student when activity isn't as bold or risky as the non-student/non-faculty participation desires. This is not revolutionary. Understandably, many anarchists are disillusioned after collaborating with the student/student-

worker bloc involved in the various encampments around the Bay Area. Many are also skeptical, after the experience of last spring, about centering the university as a site of struggle. As a close comrade of mine asked in our correspondence,

Of course [the university] is “implicated in the displacement and genocide,” as you wrote, but so are many other institutions, some perhaps even more directly. What makes the university stand out? Is it just that the encampments started there last spring? [...] I can also understand why some non-students would generally prefer to direct their energy elsewhere.⁷

Despite these legitimate concerns, the non-student/non-faculty bloc is still implicated in the failure of the intifada on the campuses to sustain itself and re-articulate in continuity with its origins as a societal convergence last spring: either by waiting for the students to be a spark, or by not taking enough responsibility for the initiatives themselves, or by withdrawing participation prematurely or altogether. We non-student/non-faculty insurgents can take action on (or against) any university or college campus, on our own accords, autonomously and even without students, at any time. In fact, what this specific struggle has revealed is that university campuses are infrastructures of state power and capital that are incredibly easy to access and within reach much differently than a factory or prison/jail/detention center. The destabilization of a major campus also has ripple effects that are different than, say,

blocking a highway or attacking a power grid.

Anarchists from the non-student/non-faculty bloc have a unique structural position to be leaned into during future articulations of action, given the intensifying administrative scrutiny and repression of students and faculty last spring. Possibly more than any other enclosure does a so-called “outsider” pose the capacity to physically move through, enter in and out, blend into, and directly support their co-strugglers who are employed or administratively managed by it. And in many instances, the potential consequences that such “outsiders” face for taking action may be less severe than for the latter. By not considering it as our equal responsibility to seize the initiative this 2024-2025 school year, many anarchists who participated in the non-student/non-faculty bloc last spring strategically retreated, and in the process demonstrated how *we as well* had not understood the full significance of the *models* of convergence that took shape between April and June 2024.

Thinking about “the campus” as a specific site and scene of anticolonial insurgency and struggle for Palestinian liberation does not necessarily mean “centering” anything besides our analysis, and it certainly does not mean centralizing the campus as a singular field of resistance. The analysis put forth here refuses to reify the university or college campus as a discrete, self-enclosed “institution” and geographically contained province in which the primary envisioned subject of action is “the student” isolated from: a) the complex *division of labor* that informs its purpose and self-coherence (e.g. graduate workers and faculty instructing classes, departmental staff, custodial

staff), and on another level: b) *sheltered from a supposed “outside” community* from which the student’s experience of subject-formation is premised on in a materially extractive way.

Because of the myth of student leadership and the above “common-sense” conception of the campus geography still pervade the public discourse and even much critical analysis, we can predict the further isolation of the campus fight from the broader global Palestine solidarity movement and greater descendance into attrition, without significant regrouping and contributions (once again) from the non-student/non-faculty bloc. That said, the university and college campus is a key field within the global anti-colonial insurgency and revolutionary way against the apparatus of U.S. American-Israeli Zionist settler empire. The advance of state repression and expansion of policing and surveillance and criminalization of campus life this new school year, if anything, has exposed that the government certainly recognizes it as such.

[Campus organizers should] open vortices of subversion within the campus themselves, welcoming “non-students,” anarchists, abolitionists, poor Black people, migrants, and others [who are not enrolled in universities] onto campuses for carnivals of refusal and action. If these institutions are developing the weapons, if they are conducting the research, if they are training the personnel, if they are manufacturing the consent, then it is not the privilege of students and faculty alone to challenge them. In fact, it is the right and obligation of all people of conscience to swarm the

universities and to stop the war where it is cultivated before it is dropped on the heads of the Palestinians in Gaza.⁷

Notes

1. T. Derbent, *Categories of Revolutionary Military Policy* (Montreal: Kersplebedeb, 2006), 13.
2. Hortense Spillers, "Peter's Pan: Eating in the Diaspora," *Black, White, and in Color: Essays on American Literature and Culture* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 7.
3. The Revolutionary Intercommunalism Research Group writes:

In the U.S. imaginary, the identity of movement protagonists is a uniquely significant factor for the perceived legitimacy of struggles. More than elsewhere, the social position of protestors determines whether and how people will support a movement, and what means can be reasonably brought to bear against participants without provoking further acts of resistance. The compositional question (i.e. "who are the protestors?") is at least as important to determining the perceived legitimacy of a movement as its stated goals or methods...

...Even though in some places the majority of arrestees were community members (so-called "non-students" or "outsiders"), this did not significantly impact the perception of these protests as "student-led" by those who were already primed to support them... [The] double bind between the pro-"student movement" camp and the pro-"outside agitator" camp formed a subtle but devastating trap for the protestors, most of whom opted to assert the "student-led" nature of the protests. By continuing to invest their creativity and energies

on campuses, and by legitimizing the protests on the basis of their real or imagined “student leadership,” protestors missed some chances to build the participation of rebellious social layers that are systematically excluded or marginalized within higher education and city centers, including poor people and Black people.

Cited in The Revolutionary Intercommunalism Research Group, “The Student Intifada and the Revolution to Come,” *Radar Journal*, no. 1 (2024), <https://radarjournal.online/pdfs/issue1.pdf>.

4. Fred Moten and Stefano Harney, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 2013), 29.

5. Fredy Perlman and Roger Gregoire, *Worker-Student Action Committees: France, May '68* (Olympia: Detritus Books, 2020 [1969]), 126.

6. Personal Correspondence (March 2025).

7. The Revolutionary Intercommunalism Research Group, “The Student Intifada” (2024).

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1. To Speak for Myself
2. Poetry
3. Academicism, within & without the Academy
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6. Light the Way, Part I: The Gaza Solidarity
Encampment at U.C. Berkeley
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10. Lines in the Sand
11. Federal Task-Force to Combat Anti-[Zionism]
12. A Message to a Prisoner Letter Writing Event
13. Timeline of the Gaza Solidarity Encampment Wave
& Campus Flood at U.C. Berkeley



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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