We Are Still Here

Anonymous

2009

To those disaffected and affected by the budget cuts.

To those laid-off faculty who have been sent off this campus because Robert Corrigan values his six-figure income more than your pedagogy.

To those workers, always the unseen heroes who are the first to take the sacrifices.

To those janitors, who were denied from doing their jobs because of us. We do this for you.

40 years ago on this campus, San Francisco State College gave in to the demands of the 5-month Ethnic Studies strike, which gained valuable educational and economic opportunities for all Black and Third-World people. Self-determination for people of color was the word of the day, and although concessions were made, the struggle for self-determination of the working-class has not ended, but is going through a new phase of global class struggle intensified by the polarization of capital and labor.

Also 40 years ago, Indians of All Nations took a famous federal property known as Alcatraz Island, or The Rock, and again occupied the land that Lakota Indians had taken years prior unsuccessfully. The organizers, American Indians from tribes all across the continent, included young Richard Oakes, a Mohawk SF State student. The occupation lasted 19 months, whereby the IAN demanded a new American Indian Center on the unused surplus property, created a Bureau of Caucasian Affairs to deal with the white man, and purchased the island with feathers and beads worth more than the money paid to the native inhabitants of Manhattan Island by colonialists.

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The legacy of the militant student and working-class movements of the 1960's lit the revolutionary consciousness of the globe, from the Latin-American workers' struggles to the anti-colonial uprisings in Africa, and back home to the Black Panther Party in Oakland and the Third World Liberation Front. These movements challenged not only the dominant capitalist hegemony through class struggle, they spread new ideas of how to struggle.

Universities worldwide, like those in Austria, in Greece, Germany and our comrades across the bay at UC Berkeley have recently used the tactic of occupation as a means to challenge bourgeois property relations, where not production but knowledge and ideas are socially produced but privately appropriated for the ruling class, which categorizes and divides the working-class into hierarchal constructions that reproduce our high-level managers at the UC's, our technical workers at the CSU's, and the lower layers of the proletariat left to the crumbs of a community college education meaningless in this capitalist crisis; great training for the workplace, where

the administration becomes the corporate board, the professor becomes the boss, and the tailist union bureaucrats become…well, I guess some things stay the same. The student is the worker, adding use-value to her education for future exploitation and extraction of surplus-value.

Although occupation, or reclaiming space, is not a historically new idea, it is a new form of struggle for many of those disillusioned with the promises of lobbying, those too tired of petitioning "our" elected leaders, those who have lost all faith in politics as they know it. As direct actions like these redefine socially-acceptable modes of protest, occupations themselves redefine the power-relations at the site of struggle. We are occupying because we understand that the budget cuts, which are manifestations of capital in its search for untouched investment and the prospect of profits, are enforced through our consent, through our submission, when we focus the gaze of rebellion at the self-imposed sites of bourgeois political debate and conflict like the Capitol Building in Sacramento, or even its local subsidiary office labelled Administration Building at every elementary school, at every junior high, every high school, every college and university.

Our power as working-class people does not reside in the uneven and rigged political game where winners are chosen by their capacity to pacify those who wish to change the system, by their capacity to coerce the oppressed into rolling the dice one more time for the sake of chance: the opportunity that this time, maybe this time, change can come peacefully for the benefit of those subject to endless waves of unemployment, for the benefit of those faced with the racism of the workplace, for the benefit of those attacked by sexism and homophobia on the streets. The reclaiming of space that is occurring as we write this statement is a challenge to the assumption that politics and the power of political control is only suited for white-male representatives in black suits. The real power exists here, at the site of exploitation, be it the school or the workplace. We plant the seeds of these institutions as workers, students, staff, and faculty, constantly maintaining and watering them, looking after them as a gardener takes after hir garden, but we are not allowed to enjoy the fruits of that labor. This is the contradiction exposed.

By redefining and reclaiming these spaces, we expose the true violent nature of our society. After escalated police violence on the UC campuses in Los Angeles and Berkeley, student occupiers rightly proclaimed that "behind every fee increase, a line of riot police." In this structure, the Business Building of San Francisco State University, usually occupied by financial advisors for war-profiteering companies, there is no business as usual. Outside, the invisible hand of the market is holding a gun, revealing itself to us with a badge emblazoned "UPD". The act of occupation is violent because it is a threat; we are not those who wield weapons, we are not those who possess the means to subordinate people to not just physical violence, but the psychological violence that disempowers us to believe that we do not have the power to resist and fight back.

Then again, We Are Still Here

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