

You're Already An Anarchist

Mutual Aid and The Gaza Solidarity Encampment

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4/22/25

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To start off, anarchists believe in the idea that no one knows what's best for you better than you do. It rejects hierarchy, including those formed in organizing spaces which leave decision-making up to a handful of faceless "leads." Anarchy is this idea that people have the autonomy to make decisions for themselves and cooperate with each other, and that this cooperation-also called mutual aid- is important for the health and organization of the larger community, especially when against larger systematic repression, which exploits hierarchy via counterinsurgency.

The Gaza Solidarity Encampment

The Gaza Solidarity Encampment at UCLA was initially started by UCLA SJP, and leads were assigned to operate the encampment with very minimal consideration of the community, including the students who would go on to face white supremacists on the frontlines, and protest veterans from the 2020 uprisings. However, in spite of this, the encampment began to operate on its own, as the LA community including students came together to coexist and work in tandem with one another. Food and supply donations came in droves, and people took on labor voluntarily in order to keep people fed and the camp secure. There were many problems, yes, but we can trace most of them to the hierarchal structure which put "leads" at the top, and community (bodies, as defined by "leads") at the bottom of decision making.

There were many times throughout the encampment where conflict sprung up. It's understandable, we were being harassed constantly by white supremacists and losing sleep to constantly dealing with nightly violence. However, if we are to turn our sights back, there were many times where things agreed upon by the community came in conflict with the say-so of the "leads".

Specifically, one must recall the dilemma of violence vs non-violence. The "Don't engage" principle. While many in the encampment were in agreement that self-defense was necessary, leads continuously enforced the "Don't engage" principle with the likes of armed zionists and Proud Boys. But what exactly did that get us? Because at the end of the day, we ended up having to defend ourselves anyway.

What does this have to do with me?

If you were in the encampment, then you were engaging in Anarchy, whether you are an anarchist or not. If you helped with construction for no reason beyond keeping the group safe, then you engaged in Anarchy. If you formed autonomous affinity groups, then you engaged in Anarchy. If you tagged up Royce Hall despite the disapproval of the leads, you engaged in Anarchy. Any decision you made which was for the good of yourself, others, and/or the movement, whether it be mobilizing to the frontlines or serving some soup, was engaging in Anarchy.

The point to be made is that we don't need hierarchy, as hierarchy is the opium of the movement. Hierarchy is another form of policing which stamps on our ability to move as a revolutionary unit. We did not need leads to make sure people were fed, we did not need leads to check up on one another, we did not need leads to create art. We as the people are capable of our own movement and decision making. We are capable of active resistance and continuing the fight for liberation.

We already did it, and we can do it again!

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This was written and and originally released in zine format by Black, Brown and Indigenous
UCLA students who participated in the Gaza Solidarity Encampment.

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