

Voices from Wheeler Hall

When we were handcuffed and waiting to be processed after the occupation, the plastic ties bit into my wrists, causing my hands to lose feeling and tiny capillaries to break along the unforgiving lines of contact between skin and restraint. But I did not ask for them to be loosened. At that moment, I consciously took control of the pain against the police's arbitrary authority that made it acceptable for them to take control of us. I derived no pleasure from the bruises, only anger and resolve. Only one of the people oppressing me could stop the pain, so I wouldn't let them; I would have fought to keep that pain constant until I was free.

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Mario Savio said "...you've got to put your bodies upon the gears and upon the wheels, upon the levers, upon all the apparatus, and you've got to make it stop."

I disagree; we must dismantle the machine, from top down, so that it never starts again. If we want freedom, if we want control over our own lives, we will dismantle this structure that facilitates the privatization of the wealth that should be the common inheritance of all. We will take buildings, streets, and all that is necessary until we are free and rid of this bureaucratic, authoritarian, and unjust structure. No student group should from now on pay for access to campus resources or request permission for anything. This is our campus, and we will use what we need and take what we need. We will occupy, we will appropriate, and in turn, we will liberate.

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I have no doubt that the reason our occupation was a success was because of the fierceness of students, faculty, workers, staff and community members outside the building—under falling rain and rubber bullets—committed to protecting not just the wellbeing of those inside Wheeler but to defending the very idea that our university, that our education, belongs to us. There is nothing "public" about an education that the people have to pay for—not with our wallets, not with our silence.

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In the apparent normalcy of an everyday school day, we will remember that this normalcy is always maintained through the threat of violence, that if we do not contest this violence we are complicit in it. We can understand also that this violence is heir to a legacy of colonial violence, that colonial violence was and is largely a product of the need of capitalism for raw materials and labor. When we come together in an outcry against the contemporary moment in the asymmetrical flows of capital we are inevitably met with the violence of the state which exists largely to facilitate these flows.

We will widen existing crevasses, proliferate reclamations of space and ruptures with the ordered asymmetrical flow of capital that is protected through state violence. This is only the beginning.

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We are surrounded with decay and know that there is no growth. The People (who have undeniable power) can be described as an axe. With solidarity, the axe finds itself in the hand of an invincible movement. Ease in the axe's movement depends on the surrounding environment – the time, the available force, and motivation – we have this. You have this. Even more importantly, the tree knows it's dead and this is the cause of fear for those in power. They are afraid of the ecstatic, spontaneous energy of every single person present at the time and this fear persists. The tree is coming down and it knows it.

“November is, for many reasons, the month for the axe. It is warm enough to grind an axe without freezing. But cold enough to fell a tree in comfort.”

- Aldo Leopold

Taken from After the Fall