



**IF WE
CAN
DO IT
HERE-**

**STRATEGY FOR
ESCALATING AT A
COUNTERINSURGENT
COLLEGE**

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Sarah Lawrence College (SLC) is a small liberal arts school in Westchester County, NY. Legally, the school is in the city of Yonkers, NY, a majority Hispanic & Latino community with a largely working class population. However, SLC has a mailing address in Bronxville, a majority white community with a median yearly income of over \$206,000, over a hundred thousand dollars more than that of Yonkers. This is no accident. SLC materially benefits from its proximity to white, suburban, bourgeois Bronxville and has consistently distanced itself from Yonkers because of its working class Black and Latino population.

SLC is intensely liberal and bourgeois. Tuition at SLC is among the highest in the country, and working class students who can attend solely because of financial aid are routinely troubled by a financial aid office which is neglectful, hostile, and incompetent. Like all American academic institutions, SLC is a tool of imperial domination and hegemony. The underlying goal of Sarah Lawrence is to churn out a new generation of young liberals who submit themselves to capitalism and imperialism.

All of that being said, it's easy to understand why organizing the student body at SLC can be difficult. Because of the intense liberalism present in both the administration and the student body, counterinsurgent tactics are remarkably easy for the school to deploy when faced with disruption. However, if we establish a coherent strategy and platform for organizing and mobilizing at SLC, both to heed the call of the Palestinian resistance and to break down the college's walls, we can counteract the liberal elements of SLC and encourage revolutionary thinking among the student body.

1. PALESTINE TELLS US TO ESCALATE!

In a statement on October 7th, 2024, one year after the al-Aqsa Flood operation, Hamas said "We call for an escalation of solidarity activities in all arenas and fields, strengthening the boycott of the occupation, condemning its crimes, and pressuring countries, entities, companies, and organizations that support the genocide war in Gaza."

We answered their call by significantly escalating our tactics and thoroughly planning & executing an occupation of the school's main administrative building, renaming it Dar Al Fayoumi after Wadea Al Fayoume, a 6-year-old boy stabbed to death by his landlord in an act of anti-Palestinian hatred here in the colonial core.

While we were only inside for a day because of internal issues which would require a much deeper analysis than we can allot here, the student body showed up in droves when the barricades came down. Once the doors were opened, students rushed in and occupied every square inch of space they could, hanging banners and flags from the walls in solidarity with the resistance. Before the barricades went down, an encampment on the south lawn directly outside Dar Al Fayoumi went up. The first few tents had been provided to us by comrades at NYU and over the course of a week the number of tents and the size of our encampment expanded until most of the lawn was taken up by students. By the end of the week, the administration capitulated and agreed to our first demand: disclosure. At the time of writing this, the current deadline for disclosure which the administration has agreed upon is January 27th, 2025. We know that if we do not hold their feet to the fire, they will not listen to us. We are obligated to continue escalating for Gaza.

2. EDUCATION, AGITATION, ACTION!

The students at Sarah Lawrence are open to political education! We saw during the encampment that students were willing to listen to the perspectives of radical organizers and learn from radical student movements that were occurring before and alongside our own. A comrade from the New York Revolutionary Youth came up to give a teach-in on the Brazilian student movement and how their tactics of escalation and mobilization introduced a new revolutionary consciousness that tipped the balance of political power in their favor. Another comrade who was inside Hind's Hall gave a teach-in about how the student movement can continue escalating for Gaza and why it is necessary for us to align ourselves with the broader Student Intifada in the imperial core.

To escalate requires education! Everybody inside of Dar Al Fayoumi during the initial occupation was well educated on the Palestinian resistance, the Student Intifada here at home, and the tactics used by other militant student movements. Before we can effectively mobilize the student body, we must open their consciousness to their own ability to escalate for Gaza. Every student has the ability and strength to participate in escalation and every student has something to offer, but they must be aware that escalation is an option in the first place. Dar Al Fayoumi opened up their minds to this possibility. Now, everything is on the table.

3. LESSONS FROM THE PEOPLE'S WAR.

To win divestment (or any other demand), the administration must view meeting our demands as LESS costly than refusing them. To do this, we must engage in a protracted struggle with this institution to give them no choice but to divest from Israel at the threat of the loss of alumni donations, depleting enrollment, costly facilities repairs, and a seemingly never-ending PR crisis. This school is dependent upon its carefully constructed public relations and the astroturfed image of an idyllic northeast coastal liberal arts school. By destroying this projection of a socially conscious free-love "hippie" school, exposing the college as an agent of imperial domination, and assuming control over the narrative, we can thoroughly injure Sarah Lawrence's valuable public image. To do this, we must look to the past and learn lessons from those who have fought protracted struggles with an imbalance of power.

In "On Protracted War," Chairman Mao Zedong writes that a protracted popular struggle can be divided into three stages:

"The first stage covers the period of the enemy's strategic offensive and our strategic defensive. The second stage will be the period of the enemy's strategic consolidation and our preparation for the counter-offensive. The third stage will be the period of our strategic counter-offensive and the enemy's strategic retreat."

-- Chairman Mao, "On Protracted War" (1938).

We can apply the same basic logic to the Student Intifada within the imperial core. While our struggle is **nothing compared to that of the Palestinian resistance** or the Chinese Revolution, it is still important for us to take **lessons** from these struggles so as to remain disciplined and revolutionary. Should we view ourselves as nothing more than activists, we fall into the liberal trap of anti-revolutionary peace-policing.

The first stage of the Student Intifada at SLC was a rhetorical offensive by the administration. By deflating the value of our movement, condescendingly "explaining" that disclosure and divestment is impossible because the school's endowment is handled by a third party, and pretending to "hear us" while decidedly ignoring our voices, the administration was attempting to pacify us into silence. Their strategy was to get us and the wider student body to believe that this fight is pointless and will go nowhere, which would do the work of dissolving the movement for them. Obviously they were lying, as proven by the most recent advancements in the fight for disclosure, something which they previously claimed to be impossible.

The second stage of the Student Intifada at SLC was our preparation for escalation and the administration's gradual strategic "stalemate." The school's strategy prior to this point was to put polite faces in front of us like the Dean of Students, Dave Stanfield, who would pretend to be a helpful ally. Dave met with organizers one-on-one, smiled and laughed when we brought up our concerns, and made outlandish promises to get us to trust him. When he invited a small number of our organizers to a closed door meeting to scold them about some pumped-up conduct violations, we flooded the office with our entire team. After refusing his attempts to "befriend" us, Dave's strategic "politeness" broke down and he began speaking to us with open contempt. This provided a rush of energy to our ranks and a renewed spirit of escalation. From here, we began planning the creation of Dar Al Fayoumi.

The third stage of the Student Intifada at SLC has just begun. We successfully escalated in November of 2024, occupying Westlands and the south lawn and achieving a capitulation from the previously stubborn administration. By doing so, we have proven that the demands they claimed to be impossible are anything but. We have also broken the school's confidence that we are incapable of mobilizing the student body. As the comrades at Cal Poly wrote in their communique, "if you build it, they will come." Students were delighted to see our escalation and poured into the camp. We saw more turnout because of our escalation than we ever did during our period of rallies, pickets, and speak-outs. Tents were completely booked up every single night of the encampment, typically with two or more students. They actively participated in teach-ins, read and discussed revolutionary materials in their own groups, and began brainstorming new ways to escalate on their own.

4. IF WE CAN DO IT HERE, YOU CAN DO IT ANYWHERE!

As fighters in the Student Intifada, we have faced an uphill battle at Sarah Lawrence. A liberal attitude of peace-policing which runs rampant among students and administration, a politically disengaged campus, a small student body, and a bourgeois community have all made escalating here more difficult than it would be at any other school. However if we can do it here, we can do it anywhere. Sarah Lawrence should be seen as a case study in the ability of a student body anywhere in America to organize effectively regardless of the conditions working against them.

"Ultimately the enemy will lose and we will win, but we shall have a hard stretch of road to travel."

-- Chairman Mao, "On Protracted War" (1938).



