Imprints of the Tents in the Grass: Archival Interventions into Protest Camping

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We Rode the Bus to Celebrate Their Wedding

The wedding celebration only lasted two days. Under blue skies the wedding guests assembled their houses of metal piping and canvas.[1] The bones of these tents, these tabernacles, must be hammered together. Flags in the breeze, people warming their hands around small fires. Wedding guests praying. At night, wedding guests sitting around a fire together, singing, clapping.

As the israeli occupation forces blocked out the roads, barring the wedding guests in, the end became clear. Journalists arrived,[2] following the light of the bonfires, *with a gift card in one hand and a present in the other*.[3] The guests know that shortly the tents will be dismantled, but still, they celebrate the wedding.

Leaf town (Interviewee #1)

"When I was in fourth grade, like, all the kids in my ele- I went to a really small school, elementary school, so like all forty or whatever kids in my grade… created this thing called 'Leaf Town,' and the way that worked was we created, essentially like a floor plan, but out of like fallen leaves. And everyone had their own house, and there was a bakery, and a mayor's house, you know, kind of deal. And everyone had different roles. And I remember the way, it feeling cute. Because it was this flat open space, that felt like a world unto itself, and it felt like so many of those boundaries were almost like suspension of disbelief, because the rest of campus was right there. But it didn't feel like the rest of campus was right there. It felt like we were in our own city, in some ways. And, yeah, I remember walking through the encampment and feeling like I was in a space that was entirely separate from campus, to the point where stepping onto campus became like, disorienting, because it felt like stepping through a portal."

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Introduction

In the early twentieth century, encampments without an explicit connection to protest arose out of need, shantytowns like the Hoovervilles of Great Depression era America. It is difficult, though, to not connect need to protest. In the summer of 1932, thousands of veterans and their families marched on Washington demanding compensation for their military service, and camped out at the Anacostia Flats in Washington. In the 1960s protest camping became a more common repertoire of protest. In 1968 the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and its allies staged Resurrection City in Washington D.C. as part of the Poor People's Campaign. This encampment directly made reference to its predecessor, the Bonus Army. In the 80s and 90s encampments became common in the anti-nuclear and anti-globalization movements, especially in Germany and the UK (Feigenbaum et al. 10, 30-33). More recently, there were broad protest camp movements in 2011, with the Occupy movement, and in 2024 with the Student Intifada, which began at Columbia University and spread to over 100 colleges and universities.

This was where my experience with protest camping began, at Vassar College and with the Vassar Popular University for Gaza. We began camping on Liberation Lawn in front of the library on Tuesday, April 30 after planning for around two weeks. The encampment was up for five days, and was taken down on Saturday, May 4, at the end of a negotiation process with the college administration that left the campers feeling beaten down and demoralized, despite the joy and community we found while we were camping. While I was camping and organizing there, I fell in love with the camp as a form of protest, and as a form of world-building. I also began to consider the implications of archiving those five short days. It was a question with which I had already been grappling.

During the semester leading up to the encampment, I worked on a teach-in about the process of divesting from South African Apartheid at Vassar in the 1970s. During my research, I visited and worked with the collection on the Coalition for Social Responsibility at Vassar's Special Collections. For those materials to enter into that archive, and become accessible to me, those student activists had to collect and submit them to the college's library. I began to wonder, should we, in our process of working for divestment from israeli apartheid, also be gathering and submitting documents to Vassar? Or would that be antithetical to our purpose, which runs in opposition to Vassar's power as an institution?

That question only grew larger during the encampment. Not only were we opposed to the institution ideologically, but we were engaging in a form that was in and of itself in opposition to traditional systems of knowledge making. A protest camp redirects power beyond that which it protests. It stands in physical opposition to it. To what extent does this include the archive? The archive, I know, is violent. To what extent was I willing to commit mine and my comrades' precious memories, knowledge, and materials to that violence, so that some other students in the future might be able to access it and learn from it? Was it better or worse to find some alternative way of storing and sharing materials, that I know in all likelihood would not have the same degree of reach and accessibility without any institutional power behind it? If so, what would that look like? With a turnover of the entire student body every four years, it is difficult to build momentum, much less build a means of transferring materials across time without the interference or facilitation of the institution, which remains annoyingly constant while its population shifts.

This dilemma that I was stuck on, (and continue to be stuck on. I write this knowing that like all theses produced by Vassar students, I will submit it to Vassar's Special Collections to be

stewarded by the institution,) I have found, has been pondered by many other protest campers. Especially during the Occupy movement in 2011, occupiers at both Wall Street and Boston asked these questions. They navigated the answers in similar ways. Both stressed the need for autonomy, but ultimately made the choice to work collaboratively with archives that had been courting them for their materials (Occupy Boston Audre Lorde to Howard Zinn Records, Northeastern University Archives and Special Collections). Protesters at Tahrir Square in Cairo, concerned that the intense police repression they were under would crush the stories about what was happening inside their movement, worked intensely from their media tent to ensure documentation and materials were uploaded and shared widely on the internet. Even their copyright licenses allowed for the widest possible sharing (Feigenbaum et al. 105-108).

My project here, then, is not to reach a conclusion about how best to archive the form and the work of protest camping, but to explore potential pathways. Through a combination of methods, including Saidiya Hartman's method of critical fabulation based on archival materials from various camps and original interviews with my peers from the Vassar Popular University for Gaza, I intend to showcase an array of archival interventions into protest camping. It will not be a narrative, but a mosaic, showing camping from different angles and in different lights, and focusing on the life and work of protest campers, as much as it focuses directly on the process of archiving them.

What follows is an amalgamation of several different forms. The work is divided into vignettes, which take different camps and different aspects of camps as their subjects, and which follow various methodologies. Many sections are attempts at critical fabulation, the method Saidiya Hartman describes in *Venus in Two Acts*, and elaborates on and develops in *Wayward*

Lives, Beautiful Experiments. Hartman writes, “But I want to say more than this. I want to do more than recount the violence that deposited these traces in the archive,” (“Venus in Two Acts” 2). Hartman asks the question of how we can say more about the people who have not been allowed to speak. She answers: carefully, by balancing narrative, imagination, and doubt.

> Is it possible to exceed or negotiate the constitutive limits of the archive? By advancing a series of speculative arguments and exploiting the capacities of the subjunctive (a grammatical mood that expresses doubts, wishes, and possibilities), in fashioning a narrative, which is based upon archival research, and by that I mean a critical reading of the archive that mines the figurative dimensions of history, I intended both to tell an impossible story and to amplify the impossibility of its telling. (“Venus in Two Acts” 11)

I have tried to follow her lead, reading across and between the archive and trying to imagine what is lost. I found the process quite difficult, especially in terms of allowing myself to imagine into the archive and let go of certain strict practices of history writing. I have, in several places, allowed my own voice to interrupt the act of fabulation to speak about the process of archival research, or my difficulties in finding materials. In other places, I have written a pure narrative of my frustrations in the archive.

The other constituent of the project is a series of interviews I did with members of the Vassar Popular University for Gaza. I had nine conversations with campers between November 2024 and February 2025, and have more planned in the future. This oral history project emerged from my desire for a wider understanding of my own experience, and I was amazed to learn during these conversations about events I had no idea took place, or be reminded of things I had almost forgotten. I plan to in the future create complete transcripts of each of the interviews, as well as a composite of the various interviews narrating the history of the encampment.

The campers I interviewed had various roles and levels of involvement in the encampment. About two-thirds of them were aware of the plans for the encampment before it went up, and were involved in planning it to various degrees. The others joined later, on the first or second day. Five of the interviewees (six counting myself) were point people on working groups. Most but not all were sleeping in camp. Members of the media, programming, onboarding, security, and food working groups are represented, as well as a member of the small team of negotiators.

Sections presented in roman text are my own words. This includes fabulations, personal narratives of my experiences camping, or of my experiences working within the archive. Some dip back and forth between fabulation and personal narrative, or else narrate my own trouble working within the archive and working with fabulation.

Sections presented in italics are the words of my comrades, forming the chorus out of which I am just one voice (*Wayward Lives* 345-349).. These sections are labeled by interview number to protect the privacy of my fellow organizers and campers. Likewise, within the fabulations words that are not my own are presented in italics, following Hartman's lead in *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments*. The voices from the archive and the voices of my peers are united in this way.

I use both formal and alternative archives. I spent time this winter visiting formal, institutional archives in order to work with their collections on various camps. I visited the Snell Library at Northeastern University to read about Occupy Boston and the A-Z Library, the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture to read about Resurrection City, and the Tamiment Library and Wagner Labor Archives at New York University to read about Occupy

Wall Street. Of these various collections, I have made significant use of the Snell collection on Occupy Boston and the A-Z Library.

I also draw on alternative archives of various kinds, in keeping with the spirit of the alternative archives created by protest campers and with expanding the meaning of 'archive.' These alternative archives include contemporary publications on Resurrection City such as Jill Freedman's photo books and Charles Fager's *Uncertain Resurrection*, creative projects produced by campers such as a music video made at Bab al-Shams, and innovative digital archives such as the "virtual anarchivist museum" of Greenham Commons. These alternative archives are discussed in more detail below.

Though there is a rich history of protest camping, there is limited scholarship on the form itself, with most focusing on individual camps. There is a small body of work produced by Anna Feigenbaum, Fabian Frenzel, and Patrick McCurdy, who are known as the Protest Camp Research Collective, which includes *Protest Camps*, the most comprehensive overview of the form produced so far. *Protest Camps* lays out a framework for thinking about protest camping which I draw on, though do not use strictly, which divides the processes occurring in a protest camp into four main infrastructural categories: media and communications, protest action, governance, and re-creation/domestic infrastructures.

There are several other works which are not about protest camps but which have significantly informed my thinking on the subject. These are Fred Moten and Stefano Harney's "The University and the Undercommons: Seven Theses," and bell hooks' "Homeplace: A Site of Resistance." Moten and Harney have informed my understanding of the university and the

place of myself and my peers within it. They have allowed me to conceptualize our encampment as a kind of visibilization of the undercommons. They write:

> It cannot be denied that the university is a place of refuge, and it cannot be accepted that the university is a place of enlightenment. In the face of these conditions one can only sneak into the university and steal what one can. To abuse its hospitality, to spite its mission, to join its refugee colony, its [g*psy] encampment, to be in but not of—this is the path of the subversive intellectual in the modern university. (Moten and Harney 101)

Encamping on the grounds of the university is a way of abusing its hospitality. Demanding divestment, forming community, are ways of spiting its mission. What can we steal? Knowledge, yes, time, yes, but hopefully also each other.

In "Homeplace: A site of Resistance," hooks theorizes a homeplace as a home in which cultures and communities of resistance are cared for and nurtured, and describes the history of black women building homeplaces. She says:

> Historically, African-American people believed that the construction of a homeplace, however fragile and tenuous (the slave hut, the wooden shack), had a radical political dimension. Despite the brutal reality of racial apartheid, of domination, one's homeplace was the one site where one could freely confront the issue of humanization, where one could resist… It was there on the inside, in that "homeplace," most often created and kept by black women, that we had the opportunity to grow and develop, to nurture our spirits. This task of making a homeplace, of making home a community of resistance, has been shared by black women globally, especially black women in white supremacist societies. (hooks 384)

Feigenbaum et al. conceptualize protest camps as homeplaces, and Catherine Eschle, in her critique of Feigenbaum et al.'s deployment of bell hooks' term, pushes further, and points to the work that needs to be done within a camp to push for transformation and make a camp into a radical space of resistance, rather than an environment which mirrors and reproduces the conditions that it protests (Eschle 157-158). The protest camp can, with work, be both a home which fosters radical community and resistance, and a community of resistance turned into a home. Homeplace gets to the core of protest camping, the bringing forward of social reproduction onto the stage of protest and the melding of the front and backstage of social movements.

This is, perhaps, what is most important about protest camps. In a protest camp, the campers are not only organizing, but also creating new systems of social reproduction that allow them to sustain the movement and to live their lives in service of the movement. This includes feeding and housing campers, generating power, providing religious services, etc. It both re-imagines and visibilizes the production of life. Protest camps also necessitate a more intimate relationship with weather, plants, animals, and the natural world. Living that close to the earth, and to the weather, in a way we don't often nowadays, means that we are not just living in a new kind of community with each other, but living in a new kind of community with the earth, recontextualizing, and hopefully un-alienating ourselves from our world.

In this way, protest camping queers both time and space. It redefines a relationship to time and space. It marks space which is claimed by the state or some other institution as re-claimed for use by the people. This can take many shapes. During anti-nuclear camps such as Greenham Common, the protesters reclaimed space marked for use in nuclear projects, while the

Poor People's Campaign called upon the symbolic power, and the literal line of sight, of the US capitol.

Protest camps provide organizers with a sense of immediacy and intimacy that is not afforded to them when they are organizing together but not living together. This allows for community building and formation, and it allows for different movements to come together and organize together. Fabian Frenzel describes a dialectical relationship between space and organization, in which access to space eases the need for organization, allowing protest camps, which have access to space to not rely as heavily on organization (Frenzel 29). This makes all the things that organizing achieves easier.

Even between camps, there is a compression of space. The camps I discuss represent only a small selection of the protest camps that have existed all over the world, but they highlight such complex relationships across time and space. Their common goals and common forms place them closer together than they are in space. The distance between Bab al-Shams and the Student Intifada shrinks due to their common goal of liberation for Palestine. The distance between Boston and Poughkeepsie shrinks due to their co-participation in the Occupy movement. The distance between Greenham Common and the Student Intifada shrinks due to their anti-militarization bent, and between Occupy and Resurrection City due to their populist approaches to economics.

The immediacy and intimacy of a protest camp also has the effect of compressing and expanding time. Spending all day every day together allows for organization to happen faster than under other circumstances, and for relationships, both individual and collective, to form more quickly. The heightened affective intensity, and often stress, of the environment also changes the timbre of these interactions. Though I was only camping for five days, my memories

of camping are some of the most intense of my life. It is also common for protest camps to experience a delayed sense of time. Charles Fager talks about how Resurrection City was always operating behind schedule, as does interviewee #4 about the Vassar Popular University Encampment.

In the body of this work, there are many threads I hope to draw out and consider while being in touch with these ideas about time and space. First, of course, are archiving practices used in protest camps, from the intentional archival work of librarians at Occupy Boston, to the improvisational saving of papers at the Vassar Popular University, to the documentary footage taken at Greenham Common. I am also interested in the various means of maintaining boundaries within camps (both geographical and informational), the ways in which the ideological foundations of camps impact what practices they employ, the relationship between the camp and the natural world, and in the four areas outlined by Feigenbaum et al: protest action infrastructures, media and communication infrastructures, governance, and domestic infrastructures. Other themes include repression and counter-repression, and art and music produced within the camp.

My portraits of various camps will include Resurrection City (Washington D.C. 1968); Greenham Common (Berkshire, England 1981-2000); Occupy Boston (Boston, 2011); Occupy Poughkeepsie (Poughkeepsie, NY, 2011); Bab al-Shams (West Bank, Palestine, 2013); and Vassar Popular University for Gaza (Poughkeepsie, NY, 2024). What follows is a brief historical overview of each to provide context for the fabulations that follow, as well as a summary of the archival sources used.

Resurrection City

Resurrection City was the result of the Poor People's Campaign, the last campaign of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Its goal was to bring the poor to Washington, to force the country's government to be confronted with the reality of poverty in America. It involved intense organizing work in the year or so leading up to the encampment, in which Southern Christian Leadership Conference staff and collaborators organized people all over the country, particularly targeting southern states and large cities, and focusing on developing a multiracial coalition of people to come to Washington and camp. Martin Luther King was assassinated in early April of 1968, shortly before the city was due to be set up. This caused delays, but the SCLC, its collaborators, and 3,000 poor people still marched on Washington, arriving in "caravans" from every part of the country (Hamilton).

The SCLC presented demands before various government agencies at the end of April and beginning of May (Catherine Clarke Civil Rights Collection, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture). On May 13, Reverend Ralph Abernathy, King's successor, broke ground on Resurrection City on the national mall (Fager 35-36). Construction began (very slowly) on a shantytown, and soon the first residents of Resurrection City had moved in. Resurrection City lasted about six weeks, and in that time its residents lived together, staged educational events, protests, and draft card burnings. On June 20, when the permits ran out, the city was gassed and evicted.

I have drawn from various archival sources in my fabulations about Resurrection City. I visited the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, a branch of the New York Public Library in Harlem to look through two collections: the Catherine Clarke Civil Rights Collection in the Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, and the Albert E. Gollin Collection in the

Moving Image and Recorded Sound Division. The former largely contained organizational documents, documents related to the presentation of demands to government agencies, and newspaper clippings. The latter contained interviews by an anthropologist which turned out to be about the 1963 March on Washington, and not about Resurrection City. I also used a few alternative archives. These were *Old News: Resurrection City* and *Resurrection City, 1968*, two photo books by Jill Freedman with largely the same content, and Charles Fager's *Uncertain Resurrection*. The Freedman books contain photos from Freedman's time in the city and of people in the caravans arriving to the city, as well as a narrative account of the night the city was gassed. *Uncertain Resurrection* was published just a year after the Poor People's Campaign by a Southern Christian Leadership Conference staffer, and tells the story of the organizational problems within the camp and the conflicts between SCLC leadership and campers in the wake of Dr. King's death.

Occupy Boston

The Occupy movement began in September of 2011 at Zuccotti Park in New York. This was at the tail end of the year of the Arab Spring, and specifically after the protest camp at Tahrir Square in Cairo which served as a sort of base for the mass uprising against the Mubarak regime, which is often called a 'twitter revolution.' Occupy Wall Street went up on September 17 and lasted just under two months. It sparked a movement that resulted in hundreds of encampments being established all over the world. It was a populist movement with some anarchist underpinnings, using the slogan "we are the 99%," and positioning itself in opposition to banks and the ultra-wealthy. The particular Occupy encampments discussed here are Occupy Boston and Occupy Poughkeepsie.

Occupy Boston began on September 30 in Dewey Square in Boston. In October the campers tried to expand into a neighboring park, because the number of campers exceeded the number of people the park could hold. There were mass arrests and the campers were pushed back to Dewey Square (Arford and Hill).When it was ultimately swept on December 10, after a restraining order was lifted by a judge, it was the longest running continuous encampment of the movement. Occupy Boston was home to the Audre Lorde to Howard Zinn Library, a library tent and archive which housed a collection of books and which thoroughly documented both the camp and the process of doing archival work for the camp (Occupy Boston Audre Lorde to Howard Zinn Records, Northeastern University Archives and Special Collections). This library, also called the A-Z Library, is of particular interest to me, and a large section is devoted to the A-Z Librarians.

I spent a day at the collection devoted to the A-Z Library and Occupy Boston at the Snell Library at Northeastern University. The collection is quite large and very thorough, and particularly leaves you with a strong sense of what the work of the A-Z Librarians was like. Besides the formal archive, I also consulted several newspaper articles, an academic account of being arrested at Occupy Boston written by two sociologists, and the website of the Boston Radical Reference Collective, an organization of radical librarians that was heavily involved in the A-Z Library.

Occupy Poughkeepsie

Occupy Poughkeepsie began on October 15, 2011 and lasted until December 7. It was a relatively small camp set up in a park in downtown Poughkeepsie across from the library, about three miles from the Vassar campus (Crane). Occupy Poughkeepsie had strong relationships with

other Occupy encampments in the area, including Occupy Kingston, Occupy New Paltz, and others, which were collectively Occupy Mid Hudson (Occupy Poughkeepsie Facebook).

I worked with no formal archive here, and a limited alternative archive. I used an interview in an online socialist magazine with a former Vassar student who spent time at the camp but did not stay over, as well as another short write up by the same Vassar student. Very late in the process, I also got access to the Occupy Poughkeepsie Facebook page, which included various announcements and links, and seems to have largely been a resource for occupiers, rather than a public facing page. Had I seen this earlier in the process, the vignettes about Occupy Poughkeepsie likely would have looked very different. Instead, I began from the point of only having access to Bill Crane's words, and that shaped the way I related to the camp and how I moved through the process of fabulation.

Bab al-Shams

Bab al-Shams was an encampment set up by Palestinian activists in the West Bank for two days in January 2013. It was named for a novel of the same name by Ilyas Khuri. *Bab al-Shams*, or *Gate of the Sun* tells the story of an old and dying Palestinian freedom fighter through stories of his own life and the various people he knew, including his wife, who, during his exile, would sneak back into Palestine and meet in a cave known as Bab al-Shams (Paul). The encampment was in protest of new colonial settlements going up in the West Bank which would effectively divide the West Bank in half. It made reference to the israeli colonial tactic known as 'facts on the ground.' The camp featured learning, rallying, and celebrations of the couple from the novel, before it was shut down by israeli occupation forces ("In Photos").

My archives of Bab al-Shams include Drew Paul's "The Grandchildren of Yūnis: Palestinian Protest Camps, Infiltration, and Ilyās Khūrī' s Bāb al-Shams," a literary exploration of both the camp and the novel, various news articles, including a significant number found on Electronic Intifada, tweets from the camp and photographs of the camp as compiled in other news articles, and a song and accompanying music video, *At Bab A-shams*, written by Tamer Nafar and published on the youtube channel silwanic, which was written and filmed in and about the camp.

Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp

Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp was a spontaneous, but long-lasting camp that began as a march by a Welsh women's peace group in Berkshire, England in 1981 in protest of nuclear weapons being kept at Royal Air Force Base at Greenham Common. Realizing that their march would be insufficient, the protesters began camping, and stayed their for years and years, even after the base closed in 1992. Greenham Common was iterative, with evictions sometimes occurring, but there was effectively a continuous presence there until 2000, when a commemorative historical site was created at the original site (Feigenbaum et al. 32-33).

Greenham was a women only camp, and notably organized itself in neighborhoods at each of the RAF gates, which served as both a system of governance and as affinity groups. These neighborhoods were named for colors (i.e., Green Gate, Orange Gate) and varied in number over the years. The women of Greenham staged various set-piece actions against the weapons site, including Embrace the Base, where the women wrapped their arms around the base is if hugging it, or else crushing it, picnics which involved dressing up in costume and climbing over the fencing, and fence cuttings, including one notable fence cutting on Halloween 1983,

where the women dressed as witches and were able to take down four miles of fence (Kokoli). Song was an important part of the protest practice at Greenham. Many traditional protest songs were reused or rewritten for Greenham, and many more were written there (Feigenbaum). Singing was both a pastime and a part of protest: videos show women being arrested in mass groups while singing their songs.

My fabulation about Greenham Common is largely based on *Carry Greenham Home*, a documentary made by two students as part of a class project who became campers. The documentary presents footage of the women of Greenham Common in their daily lives and in their protest actions without much comment. It significantly foregrounds the use of song at the camp, and preserves the melodies of many of the Greenham songs for which only the words are recorded elsewhere, notably in the Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp Songbook collected by the Danish Peace Academy. I also used Alexandra Kokoli's "Greenham Common's Archival Webs: Towards a Virtual Feminist Museum," an interactive alternative archive which places images, art, and ideas from Greenham Common alongside thematically or historically connected other items.

Vassar Popular University for Gaza

The Vassar Popular University for Gaza was a part of a broader student encampment movement that began in April 2024 in protest of the brutal genocide and occupation of Palestinians in Gaza being committed by israel, and which has been named the Student Intifada by those watching it in Palestine. This movement began with an encampment at Columbia University in New York City and spread from there. It called, among other things, for colleges and universities to divest from genocide and apartheid. Besides the Vassar encampment, several

other encampments in New York State, including Columbia and SUNY New Paltz are discussed in sections about the Student Intifada. I was an organizer of the encampment at Vassar, which we began planning in mid-April shortly after a round of suspensions at the Columbia encampment. Our efforts to pass a divestment bill through the Vassar Student Association had been thwarted by administration repression of the VSA, and an organizer who had been suspended from Columbia happened to be in the area visiting a friend, and came to speak with us.

We planned for several weeks, and put up our encampment on the lawn in front of the library, under a large tree, around 3 or 4 in the morning on April 30. Over the next several days many things happened. Many people joined us. At peak, we had around 100 people camping, and over 200 spending time in the encampment during the day. This resulted in a complete reorientation and reorganization of the encampment to fully incorporate everyone who was a participant. We staged several rallies, sent support to an encampment across the river at SUNY New Paltz while they were being swept, had teach-ins and music, and engaged in a painful negotiation process which resulted in the encampment being taken down on May 4 in exchange for a deal which the college president and board of trustees have failed to follow through on. It was the sentiment of many people then, and continues to be today, that we should not have accepted that deal, and should have continued camping.

We feel very strongly that you are with us (Interviewee #1)

"But I remember I got really, really emotional during that final meeting when there were all those people there because… I had just been watching, like, Bisan had posted a video, that was, like, her saying that the student movement was like the one thing giving her hope, and it was like the first thing that had given her hope, like since the genocide had started. And, I'm getting like emotional talking about it now. It was like, it was so powerful, and then to see, like these children, you know saying that we feel very strongly that you are with us. You know, we are watching you from over here. And, like, feeling so responsible for the actions that people were going to be taking the next, however long, because they were going to be literally live broadcast to Gaza, you know, in the way that all the student encampments were."

Mirrors the refugee camps (Interviewee #7)

"I definitely wasn't aware of the history of encampment as a form of protest, but in the moment, it felt very applicable to the situation, because of like the parallels between setting up a camp on campus and how that mirrors the refugee camps that were forming in Gaza and have existed in Palestine, in and around Palestine for a long time."

Mud

The boots help with the mud, but they're too big and leave the kids unbalanced. They step towards the camera, held by Jill Freedman. One of her closest friends in the city has a young kid, Cato, who she often cares for.[4] There's a row of shanties behind the kids, wooden siding forming a-frames, extending into the past. The mud is everywhere, but the kids stand in the center of the wettest part. There are three of them. The first boy strides towards Jill. He might be

ten years old. He wears jeans tucked into his boots and a shirt with three white stripes around the middle and white piping on the sleeves and neck. His arms extend from his body, blurring at the hands. He is in motion.

The second boy stands still. His boots are sunk deep in the muddy water. Denim cut-off shorts and a striped shirt. On his face is confusion, or mild annoyance. The last boy is a little younger, pulling his back foot up, out of the mud. He looks down as he walks, and he holds something to his chest, maybe a teddy bear. It's quite large, if that is what it is, its head tucked next to his, his arm cradling its chest to his chest.

Behind the boys in the mud, two adults stand beside a roll of portable toilets, watching. Two others stand in the doorway of a constructed building with *National Council of Churches* written on its side. Their attention is more on the camera, or the distance, than on the kids. Before the caravans arrived in Washington, the grass the city now sits on was all fertilized.[5] It certainly didn't make it less muddy when the rain came, and it brought mosquitoes out and into the air, even in May. But there was lots of rain, and lots of mud. *Four times in three weeks the campsite was reduced to a barely passable stretch of viscous mire.*[6] The rain kept coming, and the mud followed, and the mosquitoes followed.

Why did they fertilize the mall? Was it always their practice to do so, a routine of April? Maybe. But maybe they wanted that grass muddy and that city short-lived. Maybe they wanted those people mosquito-bitten, and tired and wet, and wanting to go home.[7] Maybe they wanted the mud and the manure to keep Soul City[8] from becoming a home.

Racoon (Interviewee #3)

"I was avoiding wearing any shirts with identifiable logos, I would turn my shirts inside out, uh, my, when I went to the library I was like, can people see the tattoo on the back of my neck, are they going to identify me by that. So, stuff like that, I was thinking about. Umm, also like because people were taking photos like all the time, it got to be like every ten minutes or so, somebody would come by and take a photo. Also like, people like driving around at night" [Interviewer: "right, oh my god I forgot about that"] "because I had a lot of… so I was like, nearly every night I was up in the middle of the night, with the flashlight, patrolling perimeter, in the cold, in the dark. Umm, that was like surreal, that was probably the weirdest part, and maybe most memorable for me. I had to chase a raccoon out." [Interviewer laughs] "Oh, you wouldn't even believe this, it found, like, there was like a softball or something it was playing with, and like wrestling, fighting it, and I was like okay, can you maybe, do that elsewhere? And I was trying to shoo it away. I saw it went into one of the empty tents, and to get it out of there, I was like," [interviewer: "oh my god"] "okay this is like a disease risk" [interviewer: "yeah"] "it like, it did not care about me at all. It was not scared of people, so I just had my flashlight, I was like, can you go go go please, please, go, please, and like waving it off." [interviewer: "that's so… lowkey that's so scary. I feel like, like I've had raccoons like in my house before, but I feel like interacting with it in that context would be so much scarier, cause like, there's 80 people here! Yeah, oh my god, that's crazy."] "I have a photo of that, I'll. Here it is with the ball." [interviewer: "yeah, oh my god it's like playing soccer, that's so cute. That's so funny oh my god."] "Like literally. As far as the tents, I was staying with a good friend of mine, and it was really nice to be sharing that space with her. We did both have to keep getting up in the middle of the night for various things. I was on security a lot, she was part of different, like, groups. Umm,

and so, we would have to have like sort of odd sleeping hours. I would go back on security and need to sleep til like ten."

Rain

Rain.

I encounter it everywhere in my reading. It rained on the first night of my camping experience. It rained for days at the beginning of Occupy Boston. Mud dominates the pictures of Resurrection City. On April 30, 2024 there was brief thunder. My tent mate and I, a dear friend, and my roommate of several years (referred to elsewhere as 'Interviewee #9'), were in our tent recording a video on her phone. We joked about how she records little vlogs for her instagram stories, and then we talked about our days. I had spent the entire day "onboarding" new campers. She was on the media team, and she told me about the interviews she had done. She had never been camping before and was worried about the rain. I had been camping before (and was also worried about the rain) but I tried to reassure her. Part of the way through the video I reach over to the side of the tent and feel the damp soaking through the edge of the tent. The video ends around the time we hear the thunder. It was only brief, which was good because though we had talked about the possibility of thunder in the planning stages, we were not prepared for it to actually happen. I remember being worried about the thunder, and annoyed that no one else in the group chat seemed to be. We were camping directly under a large tree.

In my mind, we made a few other videos like that, but it was actually the only one. I knew we didn't do it every night - we were doing different types of work, on different schedules, and my tent mate slept off site one or two nights. That first night we had a meeting out in the rain. Some folks who had visited the camp that day (I think, though I am not sure, that they were

the same people Interviewee #2 later references waterproofing the food station) and set up a tarp as an awning, extending from the branch of the large tree under which we were camping out over a small area of grass. We talked about the process that was already starting, and would have to continue, of moving to a new governance structure that involved all of the campers who I had spent the day meeting, instead of just those of us who were involved in the pre-planning of the encampment.

The weather, the grass, the trees, the insects, the sun, all become so important when you are living on the ground. We kept bottles of sunscreen in the med-tent. I made sure to re-apply multiple times a day, to wear my baseball cap and keffiyeh and cover my arms, to sit in the shade. On the second or third day, someone made an announcement during breakfast that the small caterpillars crawling all over the camp were spongy moth caterpillars. Sure enough, I later discovered a rash all over my legs that lasted longer than the camp did. Sitting in the grass in the meetings we had daily after the camp came down, I scratched my legs. I felt betrayed by the little insects, which were so tiny I had thought that they were inch worms and hadn't even noticed the tell tale hairs of something that will make you itch. In the welcome tent, which was where I spent most of my time doing onboarding, and which was one of the rare truly shady and cool areas of camp, I had let the caterpillars crawl all over me at first.

You need to sleep (Interviewee #9)

"So yeah, it rained, and I was so tired. I was so tired, I was out. Oh, and then one of the things the Bard people told us, is you need to sleep. Especially if you're one of the core people, that are like doing things, you need to sleep."

Waterproof (Interviewee #2)

"So I kind of just assumed food, in some ways, cuz, I forget who it was, somebody told me to, like, just help out with inventory, and then, this was when, after, I had to take a test that morning, and then I joined after, and, umm, this was in the beginning, and so there was just an onslaught of so many people bringing, just, bringing shit, whether it be students, or a lot of people from the outside world just coming in, dropping stuff off, saying a word or two and then leaving. So there was a ton of that, and then the rain came, and thank fucking god, I forget their names, but there was this family, local family who, noticed I guess our, our food set up and how it was not weather proof, and so they came and brought all their camping stuff, and they brought a bunch of bins and everything, and they helped us waterproof, waterproof our food set up, which you know, is integral because otherwise stuff goes bad! So they were responsible, sort of for the way we had it set up which is just there's a stash of shit underneath the tent, and then we had our made-food station."

Eating so good (Interviewee #4)

"...we had the community dinner that night which was so good. The people on food! I wasn't in that, but like that was perhaps the most organized…" [interviewer interrupts: "that's what I've heard, yeah"] "part of it, and honestly, wait, like this is not really important but I was eating so good. People would always be like 'are you eating enough' and my parents would be texting me like 'make sure to eat' and I would be like, I was eating so much, after anything stressful happened I would go up to the food table and there would always be some like new treat there, like people would bring food from their events, or like whatever, not important, food got it down!

Food was really good. And we had like, Thai food that night, I remember vibes were really high, and I feel like…"

The A-Z Librarians

At the wide intersection of Atlantic and Summer, across from South Station, is Dewey Square, a small park at the end of the much longer Rose Kennedy Greenway. A small wedge of grass and public art, tucked in between the tall gray and brown buildings of Boston's financial district, the wide sidewalks. Across the street is the Federal Reserve.

The camp was put up at the muddy end of September. The first two weeks were a flurry of organizing: 200 people gathered together at Boston Commons, and within a couple of days 100 were camping at Dewey Square. The people went about assembling. Students and unionists gathered together with the campers. The campers delivered a short letter to the state house, and brought 700 people out to march on the Federal Reserve. Occupy Boston clung closely to the broader movement ethos of horizontality, leaderlessness, and direct democracy.[9] People continued to flood into the movement. In order to support the amount of people being organized by the encampment with physical space, Occupy Boston needed to expand. On October 10, the occupiers tried. 10,000 people marched to the encampment while the campers flowed onto the Rose Kennedy Greenway. These 10,000 came to support and witness, just like *the many hundreds of people who come daily to join the occupation.*[10] Police clamped down on the expansiveness of the people of Boston. They thwarted the expansion and arrested over 100 people on the Greenway.[11] Still, the people remained at Dewey Square, and though Occupy Boston did not expand in space, it did expand.

Within these first two weeks the library began taking shape. At first, there was a small collection of donated books tucked into the corner of the spirituality tent.[12] (Who donated these books? Were they the various gifts of the various campers and comrades who gathered, coming together to make a library? Did someone in particular donate them in the hopes of getting the work of library-making rolling?) This arrangement was unsustainable. The spirituality tent was a small, undedicated space, it was susceptible to water damage, and the spirituality tent's working group had its own needs for that space. After a rescue from a near-miss flood event, the library moved to a larger, durable army tent which was donated by Metacomet Books along with around 200 additional books.

On October 14, the Boston Radical Reference Collective announced on their website that they were working in collaboration with Metacomet Books and the Simmons Progressive Librarians Guild to *support a new, leaderless, collective library in the Tent City at the Occupy Boston encampment in Dewey Square*.[13] The following day Occupy Boston put out a press release announcing the existence of the library at Dewey Square. On October 20 at 8 pm, the library team had a meeting, with nine people in attendance, and discussed potential names for the library. Before this meeting, the idea of naming the library after Howard Zinn was already in the air. Zinn was *a native son of Boston* whose air of accessibility and habit of bringing the people into history seemed fitting for the library of a people's movement. The day before, Emily Belanger, a member of the library team who was unable to make the meeting the following day, emailed the group suggesting it might be better not to name the library for a white man. "I appreciate," she wrote, "current OB and OWS conversations including but not limited to discussion around indigenous peoples and Boston's black community, as well as the women's caucus, and would love for us to keep those conversations in mind when we choose a name for

our library." At the meeting the next day, the librarians played around with names.[14] Myrna Morales brought up *radical librarian* Audre Lorde. The librarians wanted the library to *be a representation of the revolution of the mind*. Terra Nova Kallemeyn suggested: *Name it after both of them.* Bryce Kieren Healy said: *"Audre-Zinn Library, A-Z Library."* The librarians arrived at a consensus. They would become the Audre Lorde to Howard Zinn Library.

The librarians of the A-Z Library numbered between 15 and 35 at different times, with a core group among them forming the backbone of the working group that allowed the library to run regularly, while others floated in and out, providing additional support when they had time. They were largely professional librarians and archivists, or graduate students studying to be librarians and archivists. Many came from Simmons, the premier school for archivists in the US, which was just a few stops away from Dewey Square on the Orange or Green Line. The librarians quickly began the work of weeding and collection development. The library's focus was *political activism, racism, anarchism, and feminism*. They assigned collection development and weeding work based on subject matter expertise and used a spreadsheet to organize their work. Occupy Boston's organizational documents, newspapers, legal documents, ephemera, and more also began to accrue there. The A-Z Library was not just a repository for books and zines, but also a functional archive.

The archivist-camper-librarians set up a system to protect and collect their materials. There were two copies of everything. The librarians placed one copy in a large plastic bin, (watertight) and the other in the reference binder, which they organized and dated. When members of other working groups wanted to check what they had said in an earlier meeting, or consult a legal document, they found their words in the binder where the librarians had placed

them. The librarians produced a finding aid which was kept on google docs, and as they sourced documents they kept track of where each copy was, as well as any digital copies (on flash drive, hard drive, or the Occupy Boston wiki, where a significant amount of the material was originally stored. A significant amount of the early archival work involved going through this wiki, printing copies out, and marking them as complete in a spreadsheet).[15]

The A-Z Librarians were largely not camping on-site. This was true of participants in Occupy Boston as a whole. Marches included tens of thousands of people, but the carrying capacity of Dewey square was quite small. 100-200 people camped there, in addition to all of the infrastructure it hosted. More people wanted to camp, but when the campers made their attempt to expand onto Greenway in October, the police crackdown and arrests were brutal and indiscriminate, extending as far as medics and legal observers.[16] Many regular, active participants in the movement were not living on site. Because of this, the A-Z Library's relationships with pre-existing library organizations helped to structure and provide people power to the working group.[17] Metacomet Books provided many of the books to the library, while the Boston Radical Reference Collective and the Simmons Progressive Librarians Guild especially provided expertise, workers, and thinkers who developed a method and an ideology to the running of the library. Many of the A-Z Librarians found out about the need for librarians at Occupy through the Simmons Progressive Librarians Guild listserv.

The librarians thought carefully about their approach to collection, and about how to continue to house and collect materials when the camp, a fleeting thing, came to an end. Their collection strategy, beyond the continuous collection of the constantly, and often overwhelmingly, produced minutes, proposals, legal documents, and ephemera, included a focus on what the librarians called "milestone moments." Their idea was to focus their collection

especially around certain events that were significant to the life of the camp. They made comparisons to Helen Samuels' "documentation strategy." To what extent was this successful? Or, rather, did this strategy pan out as envisioned? In their notes during the time of the encampment, the only milestone moment the librarians ever seem sure about is the October arrests. Besides that moment, a few others were identified retrospectively. The collection I looked at does not actually place much focus on the October arrests or any other milestone moment. Despite the archivists not seeming to have enacted this strategy they proposed, the archive they did produce is still incredibly rich and generative. Rather than milestone moments, the story of the librarians themselves is the string the archive plucks most often.[18]

Also important to their strategy was the collective production of the archive. *Everyone involved with the archive and Occupy participate in creating and collecting an archive.* In the library tent there was a bulletin board where people could pin up suggestions, ideas, and their favorite resources and means of knowledge sharing. While the narrative of the archive clings most closely to the work and interests of the archivists themselves, others are visible, too. There are children's drawings, articles people printed from the internet and stapled together to put in the library.[19] The librarians deliberately designed simple protocols and how-to guides to show others how to add to the archive, and made both the guides and the process easily accessible on google docs. They also note that other working groups expressed to them a desire to keep archives, and they gave working groups specific guides for how to do this work. The librarians saw this as a necessity. The work of archiving Occupy Boston was simply too large to be carried out only by the small group of librarians. Working groups needed to be responsible for their own archiving to an extent.

As was common in Occupy camps, the Boston occupiers were influenced by what was happening in Zuccotti Park.[20] Wall Street was swept almost a month before Boston was, and as such the Boston Librarians watched and learned from the police's ill treatment of the library and books at Occupy Wall Street. The Occupy Wall Street Library contained, at its height, around 5000 books. After the sweep, the police dumped thousands of books in dumpsters. Less than a third were recovered, and only around 500 remained readable. One person had a backpack full of books cut directly off their back.[21]

Only a couple of weeks into its existence, the A-Z Librarians developed a plan for what to do if their camp was swept. In addition to the waterproofing of materials, they created a phone tree and call system to ensure that volunteers could arrive to take care of the materials on short notice, and remove them from the site so the police could not damage them.[22] They brought extra storage into the tent so that the display materials and ephemera could be packed up at a moment's notice. They also had a triage system in place in case this did not go according to plan. The archive, and especially the legal documents, would be saved first. Learning from Wall Street, they also catalogued the books in the library to prove ownership so that the police could not pull the same tricks they had pulled on the Wall Street campers, which involved withholding books from the occupiers on the basis that they had no way to prove ownership.

When the camp was shut down in December 2011, this emergency plan went off smoothly. Because there was a restraining order preventing the city of Boston from sweeping or arresting the campers, and because that restraining order was going before a judge, the encampment had notice when the order was lifted and was expecting a police raid for several days. The library and archive were evacuated beforehand, and all of the materials were preserved.

The emergency plan was not the librarians' only concern about a post-encampment library. Beginning as early as October 20, the librarians were already wondering what would become of the library when the camp dispersed. They asked the questions a lot of campers ask. How can we continue to maintain this archive? Where can we store it? How can we ensure it is still accessible to the movement, and to others? Should we cede our materials to a traditional archive or try to maintain them independently with fewer resources? Should we collaborate with such an archive, and to what extent is collaboration with such an archive possible?

One librarian, Meghan Bailey, mentions having "an offer from a local well known archive to house the materials."[23] Then of course, there was an idea which seemed to grip one or more of the A-Z Librarians: the bookmobile. Among the other minutes and daily notes about the functioning of the library, are a few pages of research about bookmobiles and other small and/or mobile libraries. There are notes throughout indicating the librarians were thinking about some sort of arrangement like this as a solution for the library's continued life after the camp ended.[24] The research included lots of photographs of libraries tucked in vans or on the backs of bikes. It stresses the need for regular collections development work, given such a small space, something the A-Z Librarians were already dealing with in the limited tent space they had, and the camp as a whole was dealing with in the limited space of Dewey Park. In the end, the archive ended up finding a home at Northeastern University, though the reference binder, plastic waterproof bins, and the collection of books are not there.

I'm gonna save it (Interviewee #9)

"I still actually have physical copies of the risk level stuff, cuz I saved it, just like the onboarding, you were very familiar with this" [Interviewee waves around a piece of paper. Interviewer says:

'yeah, this sheet haunts my dreams'] "yeah, so I got it, like I stole a copy from somewhere, I don't know, someone just left it on the ground and I took it cause I was like I'm gonna save it!"

Pushed back (Interviewee #4)

"Yeah, umm, so the programming group, I don't like, I don't necessarily remember all the politics of how it was working, umm, but I remember we would try to meet at night, like late at night, and create a schedule for the next day. The schedules literally never happened as planned, everything always got pushed back, which I think is maybe a little to be expected. The teach-ins were great, we just reached out to people in our community who we knew had knowledge, like the people from WSC, and then somebody from Atlanta led the Stop Cop City teach-in. Umm, and then the programming, or like the music programming, like that band just happened to come, like pass through, and they said they would come, so that worked out really nice. And then the music stuff we gave over to people in StuMu, were like y'all figure this out."

Marshals

Even before ground was broken on Resurrection City and the first shanty was put up, the marshals were in conflict with the press.[25] Which caused a conflict between the marshals and the SCLC leadership. And between the SCLC leadership and the press. The marshals were mostly young men, many of whom had an ideological conflict with the strain of non-violence that Resurrection City was built on. SCLC leadership worried that many of the marshals *had only taken the pledge of non-violence for the summer in deference to Dr. King's memory.* They were hostile, and sometimes aggressive towards journalists, and they were out of sync with SCLC leadership on the policies for allowing journalists into camp. It was common for press to be told

by an SCLC staffer that they could enter the camp, or even that they would be given a tour, and then be rebuffed by a group of marshals.

Marshals, unlike a lot of the more formal leadership of the Poor People's Campaign, lived on site. They were a part of the daily, domestic infrastructure that ran the city, but at the same time their aggression sometimes extended to the other residents of the city. Fager refers to members of this group at one point as assaulting other campers. What does this mean? There are various examples of other protest camps where pervasive sexual assault was a problem.[26] Is this what Fager is referring to? He does not provide anymore information. Is this a polite elision of violence against women, or is he rather referring to what Reverend James Bevel called *beating up on our white people*?

On May 22 SCLC organizers sent 200 people home. Still, the problems continued. Hosea Williams, a member of Dr. King's inner circle, was one member of the group who stepped into a larger role in the wake of King's assassination in April. He was the field director of the Poor People's Campaign, and managed logistics at Resurrection City. On June 1, 1968, on a folded sheet of white paper, in blue ink, someone made notes. It includes a list, numbered 1 through 21, all under the heading "Hosea." *1. met w/ marshals re RC*.[27] Williams was one of the number of leaders who spent a significant amount of time breaking up fights that the marshals instigated.

At the core of this three way conflict between the marshals, the SCLC leadership, and the media were a number of issues. Who was the camp for? Who governed it? The organizational issues SCLC already had led to further problems in Resurrection City. Plans fell through, leadership failed to deal with rain or establish firm boundaries about either the press or the marshals. Most of the SCLC staff was based in a nearby hotel rather than out of Resurrection

City itself. The intention was for the camp to eventually have its own structure of governance outside of SCLC, but the timeline for developing such a structure kept getting pushed back.

What were the boundaries of the camp? How were they enforced? Both the physical boundaries the marshals were set on maintaining, and the boundaries of information between the marshals, SCLC, and the press. And what was the ideological foundation of Resurrection City? Non-violence, which was so important to Dr. King, and to many of the SCLC staff who were carrying on his legacy, was challenged by the Poor People's Campaign's new goal of coalition building. All of the residents of Resurrection City took an oath of non-violence, but they came from various backgrounds and had various personal stances on the issue. How could Resurrection City make a path forward that aligned with both its ideological foundations and the consciousness of all of its people?

This is why we're here (Interviewee #9)

"And the main advice [from media training] we got from those trainings, and from [interviewee #7's] training, is to be very careful with your word choices, because they can just cut a little clip, with you saying a word, and use it out of context, very obvious, but you know. I guess when you're not media trained you don't really think about it as much. Yes, so, and always bringing it back to Gaza, like all of our answers, trying to make them only about Gaza, Gaza, Gaza. Like this is why we're here. So not making it about us, not making it about us the students, because that's not the point. And I definitely feel like I, I knew that, but I feel like I failed to do that, at times, cause I just forgot, and like, I specifically remember, [name of another member of the media team] and me went to this radio interview, and it was a Spanish radio. And, I feel like, I don't know, because it was a radio, and it was live, it just felt different. I did feel more pressure,

and I feel like we didn't answer super well, to some of the questions. I specifically remember the interviewer… I mean they were super chill, and like very lovely people, like definitely not hostile media. Oh that was another thing that we were taught, like choose who you are interviewing with. You don't interview with just anyone, just because they want to interview you. Just be specific. I mean, what is it, you have control over that, and you should use that agency you have to benefit yourself. So pretty much, let's say, if Fox News decided to come, like, we were not going to interview with them, because like, what the fuck."

"Umm, yes. And, so, yeah so the radio interviewers, they were super nice, but I remember they were mentioning like, one of their questions was like 'oh, so, how do you guys feel about your safety, because we heard that there was this car that passed by with' - I think it was confederate flags? [Interviewer confirms.] And, hmm, [laughs] I honestly didn't know how to respond to that, and I think [name] answered first. I'm not totally sure, like I haven't listened to the interview again, but I think, I remember [name] was just saying, you know, basically not bringing it back to Gaza. I feel like it's, yeah, so there was that one moment. And I also feel like I kinda, didn't really, you know, I was just speaking about us as students, like our safety and stuff. Which, I don't, like that's not, after the interview I was like, oh, I shouldn't have answered it like that. So definitely a lot of overthinking with answers, and as the days went by, I was like, I don't know why I decided to do this. I don't think I'm fit for this role. It's just a lot of pressure you know. But even so, I don't think we did a ton of interviews. We did the radio interview, we did a few local interviews, and mostly what I did was helping with all the statements. So all the public statements that are on the instagram, I was involved in some capacity."

General Assembly

It's cold. Anna is taking notes. The general assembly begins with the facilitator acknowledging those dying in Yemen and Syria. There is a moment of silence.[28]

Tyler and Ivy are facilitating tonight. They explain to the crowd how the general assembly works, how working groups work. They usher people in, tell them to make room for others. How many people in the crowd are new? For how many people is this their first time, watching the process, the hand signals. The facilitation team is apart from the rest of the general assembly, and later when other people speak to give announcements or put forth proposals they will be, too. There are stack managers, floor managers, process managers. Ivy runs down the agenda. *We start with working group announcements, then individual announcements…* Tyler explains the hand signal system, the same one most Occupy camps are using. There's an issue with the sound system. Ivy explains the stack system.

Working groups run through announcements. Legal reminds the assembly not to drink or use drugs on site, reminds the assembly not to speak with cops. The women's caucus met for the first time today. They will meet again on Tuesday at 5:30. Gill from the Zinn group is *working with Howard Zinn memorial lectures.* Noam Chomsky is coming to camp Wednesday night. Stephanie from finance says that they will present a proposal later this evening. They have three different ideas for how to organize Occupy Boston's finances. Anna from the library says that a paper archive of minutes and proposals is in the works. Monica from 'ideas' says they want to use data analysis to hear from people. *We want you to put your tweet-size ideas out there, dump your ideas into a bank, go to the library tent where we have a board for ideas.* Ross from tech

says there is a new app called I'm Being Arrested. Tech is offering secure web hosting for projects, and they *welcome more women hackers*. Outreach met today with people from Citylife Vita Urbana. There will be an eviction blockade in Malden on Monday. Talk to the direct action group for details.

Bee from food says there is too much food. We need people to do dishes, people to cook or to offer their kitchens up to cook in. We need fruit, garbage bags. Label your food donations. *Talk to Dan the Bagelman or Derek or anybody else in the kitchen tent*. Students say UMass Boston students would like to know when marches are potentially illegal actions. Point of process: there is not a student working group. But they are going to form one. Nathan from logistics says get your personal items out of the logistics tents! We need that space! Medical says wash your hands and don't shake hands. Ask food about allergies. Eden from the Free School says a website is going up soon. They need volunteers and space. Somebody says *tomorrow is world food day, also known as million against Monsanto*. There will be a teach-in. Marney from faith and spirituality also wants people to stop storing things in the spirituality tent. Tomorrow there will be an interfaith workshop, yoga sessions, and meditations. Media says the blue tent next to food is a charging tent. Sasha from research says they are collaborating with people from five different Occupy camps.

On to individual announcements. Samani talks about *victims of American foreign policy* in Yemen, Morocco, and Afghanistan. Tyler says individual announcements must be under a minute. Anna, taking notes, can't make out the next announcement. Sherry talks about the homeless living in the camp. She has a website, is collecting donations. Savani reads a statement from an artist in support. Shay is visiting Boston from Iowa City, and is talking with other camps on behalf of the Iowa City general assembly. Erik says yoga will be at 1:30 by the info tent,

beginning on Monday. Nick is worried about infiltration. John says *internalize what it means to leave an area better than you arrived at it.*

It is hard to know what people thought as all of this was being said. Occupy used a system of hand signals, including shaking fingers, like jazz hands, to indicate agreement. What is lost because Anna was flustered, and because she was focused on words, not hand gestures? Were people passionate about Samani's announcement about international solidarity and the violence of the US military? How did they feel when she was cut off due to procedure? Did she know she was going over time, or was she upset to be cut off? How did people feel about Nick's concerns about *agents planting things*? Did they think he was paranoid, or was this one of the daily concerns the campers lived with?

The assembly moved on to proposals. The facilitators ran through the procedure. Finance has a proposal. Paper copies are passed around among the body of the assembly. Pages flutter in the cool wind. The finance group has been working with their counterparts at Wall Street. *What we've come with is not meant to be final but a first step.* The proposal is read aloud. Someone asks about emergency jail funds. Finance says jail funds are an exception, not to be managed the way the contents of the proposal will be. People want to know about other exceptions, have questions about their own working groups. *Strong support.* People suggest amendments. There is concern about this proposal not allowing the food group enough autonomy, about it being annoying to need additional approval anytime someone needs to print out flyers, about the transparency of the finance working group.

A pause.

Somebody interrupts. *The facilitators have been dictatorial etc.* Facilitator Michael explains that the facilitation team would love for more people to join them. There is more interference.

[Chaos.]

Our floor managers don't want to silence you, they want to give you the proper place to speak. Finance goes about accepting some of the proposed amendments. They will publicize minutes from their meetings, bail funds and food funds will be separate.

Organized her life (Interviewee #5)

"I guess, I guess, uh, it was an enjoyable experience. But my girlfriend, [name], well it doesn't matter, I don't know if she signed up for this, she should have. It was very interesting with her because it felt like, she was really involved with the encampment, like, even though she wasn't sleeping there, she was constantly going around, asking like what do they need, do they need supplies, like, she would go out and do homework in it, and things like that, and she told me, like when the encampment came down, it was really interest- like I don't know, I found it interesting that, she, she felt like she lost, a community I suppose, and like she lost, she lost a sense of belonging and a sense of - like she said the encampment like organized her life. And I don't think it was like that for me. And I think, the reason for this is that, the encampment organized her life because obviously like she is dating me and so, like, the conflict is having an effect on her too, through me, because, yeah. And it was organizing her life, and I would imagine organizing the lives of a lot of people who were in the encampment, especially people who were living there for the same reasons - it's the way, like from a framework perspective, the way like how they are experiencing the conflict, if that makes sense.

"It is, it is the closest, for these people, the closest thing, and for anyone, not even just people who slept in the encampment, like anyone who actively participated in the encampment, it's the closest thing you will get to how, to the conflict. It is the closest you will get to the conflict unless later, like at this point in life, unless you go later, obviously, and you move, you do journalism there, or whatever, but at this point in life, this is the closest you'll get to the conflict. Whereas, for me, like, I don't know, my family is actually facing genocide, you know, so like, like we're getting bombed every day, so the encampment was not, like, it was not like, how do I say this, it was not, my life did not turn around the encampment, I guess, and the thing that my life turns around is news from back home, and when I wake up every morning, like did they hit close to home, like no, everyone is fine? Okay good, everyone is fine. And this is like, what my life is centered around, and it, there is not room for anything else, if that makes sense, like there is just no room for any other centralized, like, structure for my life to turn around. And the encampment, yes it's part of, I suppose, part of the struggle, but it's not, it can't overcome, like, it can't overcome the, the direct experience that I have with it, I suppose. Well not necessarily direct, I don't know, I don't think it's direct, because I'm not there. Which is bad, I should be there. But yeah…"

Finding Aid

I was led here, to the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, by the bibliography of Robert Hamilton's *Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the Poor People's Campaign of 1968.* Hamilton used two collections at the Schomburg in his research, the Catherine Clarke Civil Rights Collection and the Albert E. Gollin Collection. My first appointment, I think, is to

listen to the Albert E. Gollin Collection. Gollin was an anthropologist with the Bureau of Social Science Research who, I believe, did research and conducted interviews about both the Poor People's Campaign, and its more famous predecessor, the March on Washington. The description of the collection that I've looked at online says the collection includes interviews taking place between 1963 and 1968.

As I sit down in front of the computer and take a look at the finding aid the archivist has given me, I begin to get worried. The finding aid does not mention Resurrection City. Most of the interviews are from 1963, with a few from 1967 and one from the May of 1968, when Resurrection City was getting off the ground. I begin with the interviews from 1967, wondering if they will in some way address the planning process for the Poor People's Campaign that the Southern Christian Leadership Conference was already engaged in. Instead, the interviews are retrospective discussions of the 1963 March on Washington. I move on to the interview from 1968, hoping that I will find some gem– an interview recorded in the city, maybe, or at least one that references it. Instead, Wiley Branton, a civil rights lawyer with the United Planning Organization discusses the March on Washington with Gollin. The second side of this tape includes a reading by an air force executive officer of a letter about the amount of time the Bureau of Social Science Research will devote to work in the upcoming year, between May 1, 1967 and May 1, 1968.

These dates make me question whether this recording of Gollin and Branton even comes from May of 1968. Is the recording mislabeled? If so, how did that happen? It is still possible that the recording is from that May and was simply recorded over an earlier recording. This was clearly a habit of Gollin's, as many of these tapes also include recordings of panels and lectures from a conference on the 'international dimensions' of higher education.

The further I progress through these interviews, the more foolish I feel. Did I book an entire day with the wrong collection? In a panic, I look up the collection again, and sure enough, on the website the collection in front of me, entirely about the March on Washington, does say that it also includes materials on the Poor People's Campaign. I find a different collection, also labeled with Gollin's name, that is probably the collection at which Hamilton was looking.

Still, I am almost amazed by the incongruity between the finding aid and the website. As Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. became more radical near the end of his life, as he agonized over the problems that led him to conclude that the Poor People's Campaign was not just necessary, but inevitable, he became less palatable to mainstream media. This happened contemporarily, but also historically. The version of Dr. King taught in middle schools is the version from the March on Washington, maybe the version from "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," never the version who made the Poor People's Campaign the last dedication of his life. The archive reflects this. The Poor People's Campaign is subsumed into the March on Washington, 1968 is subsumed into 1963.

Counter-repression (Interviewee #4)

"I want to speak to somebody else's experience, this is not mine, but [name], who went [to SUNY New Paltz the night it was swept] had a really tough time coming back, because they were in, went in, to the encampment, and they like talked to the New Paltz people there, and had a very strong sense of like, we're in solidarity with each other even though we're over here at our cushy-ass Vassar encampment where the police hasn't even stepped onto campus, and we haven't faced any sort of threats, just completely different situations, and then people over here at New Paltz like, working class people who had built this encampment in a day and were getting ready

to defend themselves against cops, and the cops were encroaching, the national guard, or the state guard, whatever, were encroaching in, and that the people, the Vassar, those three people who were in the encampment, and pledged like we're gonna stay here with you guys, like we're gonna help protect you, but then at the last minute they like decided to leave, which, I think was probably smart because, we hadn't set up jail support for them, and like, they were necessary figures to our encampment, but [they] expressed like so much like, guilt, about that, that we couldn't even help physically defend them, and then come back to our liberal arts campus whatever, and then, I think the experience of hearing about what it was like from them in their eyes was like really a completely different environment, highly militarized police environment, like not the same sort of demographics as Vassar, like working class people getting brutalized by the police, and then I think to come back and have people talk about like, de-camping just because of like a suspension is really hard."

"Cause we should've, instead of having their, I think their negotiations and their, Vassar is like saying 'we're not gonna call the police on you, like we're going to treat you with this respect and that respect,' - that is a tactic of liberal counterinsurgency, because it makes us feel like they're our friends. When really we should have been taking that, their like sort of distance, and their like letting us be, to become so much more militarized. We had so much more freedom to become militarized! And like, actually counter repression. Umm, so I think yeah that was the, I think when people came back from New Paltz was really like, an emotional time, and I think made it seem so much more real, like just thirty minutes away, people are going to jail. I think it also sewed a little fear in people, like what if that happens to us, which is real. Umm, that's also part of repression. I went to a really interesting session on repression, at, there was this Stop Cop City

teach-in at the conference [National SJP conference] and people were talking about, would we, like, these threats of suspension and expulsions are getting really real for people, and like, federal police force, and like had a dual, in other encampments where shit got more serious, people were saying it had a dual effect, either like really making people super militant, and being like, like people from UCLA being like, let's get our knives, lets defend this encampment against the fucking fascists from Beverly Hills, or it has people quitting, and being like I can't do this, I'm too scared. And a point about counter-repression, that someone, that the guy leading the teach-in made, is that, you can never anticipate the full force of state repression, and that organizers cannot control the reaches of repression. But that can't stop us from acting. Our inability to control, like, what Vassar did or what the police did, like we were trying to anticipate it, control it, like mitigate it, even stop it, we, we were trying to eliminate any chance of like, repression, when really, we should have just accepted that it was coming and understood how to protect each other, and how to take the force of that …"

Worn Out

If the encampment at Wall Street was a catalyst to a movement, to a proliferation of other encampments, then that proliferation itself was a catalyst. People occupying in downtown Manhattan was not what let people in places like Poughkeepsie, New York or Aroostook County, Maine know that they could occupy, too. Rather, it was the fact that there were at least seven encampments in the US alone by the end of September that opened the window into occupations beyond the city, or the fact that there were other encampments being set up in their neck of the woods. By the time Occupy Poughkeepsie was set up on October 15, in a park at the corner of Market Street and Church Street, it had been almost a month since the Wall Street occupiers set

up and the extent of the mass movement was becoming clear. On October 15, as Occupy Poughkeepsie was being set up, at least forty-three other camps went up in the US.

It is a lesson, Bill Crane said five years later, *to American socialists that mass politics will never be limited to New York City and the Bay Area*.[29] Bill Crane was a student at Vassar in 2011, and is responsible for almost all of the writing about Occupy Poughkeepsie easily available on the internet. In 2016 he described himself to rs21 (Revolutionary Socialism in the 21st Century) as coming into the Occupy movement already as an *organized socialist*. He was a member of the ISO (International Socialist Organization) and on the Vassar Campus was a member of GAAP, the Grassroots Alliance for Alternative Politics.[30] Crane did not camp on site, but he spent time at the camp, participated in events, and was a student representative to Occupy Poughkeepsie's spokescouncil.

The camp in downtown Poughkeepsie had a permanent presence of around 15 people, with an ability to turn out about 200 for its biggest event, which was organized by local unions, notably SEIU.[31] The camp was mostly white, working class men and community college students. It was organized similarly to many occupy camps, with General Assembly meetings, working groups, a spokescouncil, and a symbolic target placed on local banks and financial institutions. In the early days, the occupiers had a general assembly twice most days, once around noon and once around 7 pm.[32] On December 7, police made a final, successful attempt to clear the camp, after repeatedly trying for quite some time, only for *dozens* to show up to *defend* the camp. This war of attrition is indicative of something important about Poughkeepsie's camp, and the movement over all. Though the constant presence at the encampment was small, even people who were not spending all their time there cared about it enough to show up to encounter the police. Though they were not camping there, people wanted the camp there.

The police made multiple attempts until *we were worn out.* Isn't that how all these stories have ended? The repeated knocking of the cops at their door, the battery of bureaucracy, of restraining orders being lifted, permits running out, of legislators looking for angles to make camping on the commons illegal, of sending out suspensions to make camping on your own college campus into trespass. The winter comes on, and it becomes harder to camp.[33] Without the camp it becomes harder to organize. Campers lose their common place, the place that structures their lives, and their organization.[34] They continue trying to meet, but eventually they fizzle. This is not an inevitability, it is a result of being *worn out.*

Though Occupy Poughkeepsie itself fizzled, it did have a long term effect on organization in the Mid Hudson Valley. Its anti-foreclosure working group eventually gave way to Nobody Leaves Mid-Hudson, an organization working largely on housing issues. ENJAN, or End the New Jim Crow Action Network, a group working against police brutality and prison expansion, began in 2012 and also had a relationship with both Occupy Poughkeepsie and Occupy Kingston early in its creation.[35] The Occupy Poughkeepsie Facebook page is still up and posting, though the associated website and most of the links to external materials are no longer functional. The intro cheekily reads: *Hulme Park on the corner of Market and Church Street. There currently are no set GAs, but feel free to try to organize one.*

It is hard to say what the experience of the campers at the corner of Market and Church was like based on Bill Crane's experiences. Even the Facebook page gives a limited view into the lives of the campers, though perhaps it would have had more to say if links hadn't decayed over the past decade. It directs people to general assemblies and other events, makes requests for specific supplies, comments on the weather, and during the slow process of being evicted makes calls for people to come defend the camp. It is also hard to say what the camp's neighbors

thought about the camp. Crane points out the steep whiteness of the campers (as do some commenters on the Facebook page), which is especially notable in comparison to the general population of the city, though not very notable compared to the Occupy movement as a whole. Crane speculates that the selection of this specific park may have had something to do with the whiteness of the campers - that picking a downtown park which is generally accessible to black and brown people taking their children to play as a campsite may have made the campsite inaccessible, and alienated people. He also points out Occupy's failures to intersect with black social movements, and the disconnect between Occupy and the protests after Trayvon Martin was murdered, just a few months after the last of the Occupy camps were taken down. These are possible, plausible explanations, but there is much they don't account for, can't account for, coming from a 22 year old organized socialist at Vassar College.

This gap in the archive is wide. It poses a problem to me, in my attempt to place one protest camp in Poughkeepsie in conversation with another protest camp in Poughkeepsie, over a decade later. How can I compare them? How can I help them speak to each other? I know nothing about the campers at the former, and I know everything about the campers at the latter. I am one of them, I see them and talk to them everyday.

Here is what I do know: Bill Crane described his classmates at Vassar as largely disinterested in Occupy Poughkeepsie. Those who weren't already interested in left politics were completely disinterested, and those who were, such as his friends from GAAP, were more interested in Occupy Wall Street than in the encampment only a few miles from them. *The typical Vassar student has no connection with the community that surrounds their campus. I thought it was important, and still do, that occupiers at Vassar should try to break down those*

walls in struggle with Poughkeepsie's community. Has this changed at all in the last decade? Have these walls been broken down?

I can't really say that they have, though I can say that even as Vassar students didn't show up for Poughkeepsie in 2011, Poughkeepsie showed up for us in 2024. People from Poughkeepsie, from the broader Mid Hudson Valley, and especially Palestinian families in the area, showed up for our encampment in hundreds of important ways. They brought us pizzas, they donated money, they waterproofed our food set up. They talked with us, told us how important what we were doing was, chanted with us, sang with us, played soccer.

Outside agitator (Interviewee #4)

"Thinking about like engaging with the community as well, umm and like the 'outside agitator' narrative, which I think was more relevant in encampments in the city, because you are like on the doorstep of these entire communities and Vassar is like a little isolated, from Poughkeepsie. And I loved that we did have families from all of Hudson Valley, like, coming, and I think that was potentially the strongest part, and I think we all remember, like, the day we decided to end, where the children came and they found out that it was ending and we all just felt like we had let them down. But yeah, I feel like there's this artificial divide between campus and the community, and even though we were always like, we can let outside people in, I think we could've gone further to open our campus to our community, and also start to engage community issues, because, divestment was a goal, but also like divestment isn't the end to like, racialized capitalism, and like the people of Poughkeepsie are facing like real, material oppression and poverty, and…"

Moms and Dads

It took me a while to go through the Occupy Poughkeepsie Facebook page, mostly because I didn't want to log in to Facebook for the first time in years. When I got in I found a link to a google group called Occupy Poughkeepsie Moms and Dads, with a little description: *"Moms and Dads" are people who are committed to supporting the occupation by providing food, comfort, and other support (not necessarily parents).* They get the occasional shoutout on the Facebook page, especially early on, in late October and early November. On November 3, they provided the camp with split pea soup and pumpkin bread. On other weeks they arranged a full schedule of meals.

I can't help thinking, here, about the people in the Poughkeepsie community who did this for us, brought us meals, asked what we needed. I wonder if any of them were the same people?

To my surprise, when I click the link to the Moms and Dads group, it actually brings me to the page. There's a long list of messages. I click on one titled *camp is gone.* It reads like a poem:

Hi Everyone,

Some of you might have seen the text messages at about 4 this morning.

The camp was raided at about 3 a.m. There were only about 8 people present and all were asleep.

Police told them to gather their belongings and leave and they did so without resistance.

There was no violence on the part of the police or the occupiers.

City workers removed everything from the park except for signs. Signs were placed in a pile near the bottom of the stairs.

When I visited the park this morning, 5 people were on the street waving signs and singing.

They seemed angry but in good spirits and getting lots of support from passersby.
They seemed disappointed that they did not resist and I heard that some plan to return tonight to resist non-violently.

I think we need a GA this evening.

Vonn

Compliability (Interviewee #4)

"But then as they started spreading out around the country, it became much more possible, like okay like, we need to do this. Umm, also because, it's a time commitment, to plan an encampment, I think we were sort of pushing it off, and honestly, I think we missed the mark on the time when we should have started. We put our encampment up after some other encampments had already been taken down, which meant that the administration had time to prepare for what it meant for a small liberal arts campus, to have an encampment. For example, Brown had already had their encampment up, entered negotiations, and taken it down, so Vassar now knew that they could weaponize Brown's quote un-quote, like, compliability, in order to like, think about tactics to bring us down with negotiations as well, and I think if we had just started off, like boom right off the bat, even if we didn't know what we were doing yet, even if it was just like three tents, we figure it out as we go, we would have had more momentum, and also would have caught Vassar off guard, which I think is a really big weapon."

Villagers of Bab al-Shams

Bab al-Shams was not a *settlement*, not an *outpost,* not even really a protest camp. It was a *village*. A *Palestinian village*.[36] Abir Kopty, one of the residents and builders of Bab al-Shams, who regularly reported out on Twitter, told journalist Max Blumenthal[37] about the difference: *"We are building on our own land unlike the settlers who are occupying and grabbing land that isn't theirs."* Kopty threw light between the ethos of Bab al-Shams and the israeli facts on the ground strategy Bab al-Shams sought to disrupt. Though they can be seen to have similarities, they are different in important ways. The action of claiming land, of living on it, of making it your home, is entirely different when you already have a stake in the land you are declaring a stake in.

On Friday, January 11, 2013, around 20-25 tents were set up at Bab al-Shams. They were large, off-white, and uniform. Six or seven people, bundled up against the cold, worked together to pull a tent into place by the ropes attached at the corners. People arrived, in cars and by foot, waving flags. A river of flags, red, green, black, and white, leading into the village, leading more villagers into the village.[38] *We will remain here.* People put up flag poles, four sets of hands helping to plant them in the ground. The israeli army arrived, the israeli media made chatter about the village, calling it an 'outpost.' The people of the village prayed their Friday prayers, gathered together on the dusty, gentle slope of a hill, shoes lined up around the edge of their mats.

The army arrived with an evacuation order. *We won't leave.* When it was delivered to the villagers of Bab al-Shams, they *were ready. Along with building #BabAlShams we went to the court & got suspending order! We are using their tools.* Mohammed Khatib held the evacuation

order in his hands. In a statement on that first Friday, that only Friday, the people of Bab al-Shams said “we the people, without permits from the occupation, without permission from anyone, sit here today because this is our land and it is our right to inhabit it.”[39] They did inhabit it: they made music, they gathered around fires to warm their hands as the night came down. It was cold. People continued to come, and as they did Kopty made two asks for supplies on twitter: *food that can last and blankets*. The army set up checkpoints away from the village. It was looking like a cold night, *freezing cold, bone-chilling.* Tents glowed in the night, light emanating off of the dark hill.

Imprints of the tents in the grass (Interviewee #6)

“The monday or tuesday that the camp came down, I remember emailing my professor and being like, hey, I’m feeling really, I’m sure you saw the email from the college, I’m feeling really emotionally and physically exhausted, from like, this whole process, can I have an extension please. And them emailing me back and being like, sure I can give you a 24-hour extension, congrats on negotiations or whatever, and just kind of being like, yes, congrats on negotiations but also we didn’t get everything we wanted, kind of just like, feeling some frustration about it, and I, I don’t know, I just felt, a lot of like, really like, kind of a loss, in my like soul almost, of having this space that was really, lively, and this kind of communal space of everybody who, for the most part wants the same thing, and then for all of a sudden it just to be gone, was just kind of like, very jarring, and especially like, walking through Lib Lawn to get to the library and stuff, to do homework, and like, seeing the imprints of the tents in the grass, and kind of just being like, those are there for now, but eventually the grass is gonna grow back, and then it's gonna kind of be erased, and what do we do after that?”

We are singing, singing for our lives

A woman with a blue scarf wrapped around her face knives away at a head of lettuce. The leaves she cuts off fall into a metal bin between her knees. Someone nearby discusses neutron bombs. She keeps her head down, focused on the lettuce.[40]

Two women sit in chairs on the side of the road, a banner between them. Cars and trucks pass by. One woman rocks her chair a bit. She whistles, then sings. *No man has any right, to buy or sell this earth for private gain, by theft and plunder, they take the land, now everywhere the walls spring up at their command.*[41] Trucks rush past. The sound of her voice carries above the noise of the road even when the words are indiscernible.

A crowd of women bobs, bodies close together, colorful coats and hats. *Old, and strong, she goes on and on and on.*[42] The women hold a skein of yellow yarn, and pass it between them, unspooling and detangling as they go. *You can't kill the spirit.* Women clap. *She is like a mountain.* The yarn extends into the distance.[43] *Old, and strong, she goes on and on and on…*

A woman's pant leg is stuck through with a thorn of barbed wire. She's stuck, hanging in the air, her leg pointed to the sky, to the fence, upturned and in danger of falling. Her whole body on the base side of the fence. Another woman stands on a ladder on the camp side of the fence and fiddles with the crossroads between the woman's pants and the fence. "Pull it, pull up," someone says. Eventually, with some help, the stuck woman gets free. "Jesus!" someone says. The stuck woman hops down and trots off to where other women are setting up a picnic on the base.[44] "Are you alright?" someone on the base side calls to her. "Yeah!" she calls back.

A woman is looking for checkbooks in camp. She has spent all of the previous day investigating, and has determined that there are three total.

A woman with red hair sits on her knees in the grass, painting on white canvas spread out below her. She talks about her plans, what she is painting, all of the imagery of Greenham Common: *the web, and the moon, and snakes*.[45] She wears a knotted headband in her hair, and two silver necklaces. She talks about a drawing she made the previous week while the women were at the High Court. *It was like sort of holding onto yourself and your sanity, holding onto that sort of core of whatever it is that you are, that you just must protect and keep safe.*

After the stuck woman gets down, the women start draping cloth, blankets over the barbed wire at the top of the fence before they climb over. They move faster like this, and hold onto the fabric as they drop to the ground. A helicopter whirrs overhead. Some of the women are dressed up, a pink easter bunny, brightly colored orange jumpsuits, a panda bear. Women tumble over the top of the fence, one after another. One woman loses a mitten to the barbed wire. A woman's jacket gets stuck, and she lands without it, laughing up at it, her face surrounded by it. Women dance on the base side of the fence and pass snacks through the holes in the chain link.

A woman wearing a sweater stands in a crowd with her arm around a woman with pink hair. Another woman taps her shoulder from behind and she turns to her and greets her with a kiss and a hug. She then reaches out to a fourth woman and kisses her in greeting. The crowd is waiting for something, the woman with pink hair is looking up, in the direction of the camera in anticipation. A saxophone is playing somewhere, or perhaps at another time.

A u-lock holds a fence closed. There's a string wrapped around it. A uniformed military official approaches from the base side of the fence and, with some struggle and a knife, pulls away the string. He runs back to camp. An official returns with a large pair of bolt cutters. He tries to cut at the lock. It does not work. He returns with another pair of bolt cutters, so comically

large they require two men to operate. These, too, do nothing. Women sing: *joining hands we dance, joining souls rejoice. Under the full moon light…*

On and on and on and on… Women sit on pavement, singing. *You can't kill the spirit.* Police officers drag a woman by her arms. *She is like a mountain.* Women's bodies go limp. They struggle against the officers. *Old, and strong.* One woman holds a blank piece of paper up into the air. One woman dances between officers and sits down on the pavement. *It goes on and on and on…* The song changes.

A woman in a blue sweater talks to the camera. Her hair is ruffled by the wind. *Because I didn't find out until I got here, what learning there is!* She sits under the edge of a green tent, and puts her words together slowly. *What things you can learn, just by living differently.* There are other voices talking somewhere. *Your values change here, and you're bound to take that back with you. Everyone seems to care about one another here… everyone's sort of caring!* She gets excited as she talks. *It's amazing. And just that thought, that everyone's sort of looking after you makes you feel better.*

Making coalition (Interviewee #9)

"They both were at the Columbia encampment for like ten days, prior to getting to Vassar. I think it was like ten days, maybe a week, something like that, but I'm pretty sure it was ten days. Don't quote me on that, completely, but I'm pretty sure! Anyways, so, they came to us, basically, because we had just launched. And I think Bard hadn't launched yet at this point, but they wanted to give us advice, because they had direct experience. And, hmm, a lot of the stuff, we already knew, but it was good to have that reinforcement of that information, so things like media… A big thing, very important advice, that I really tried, that I thought was super

important, was like the whole thing about coalition building. And I have like all these notes. So, basically, they started off by saying that Vassar and Bard are very similar in the sense that, both their, their SJPs have been historically white, both have been historically white, and small. And also, more like single issue kind of focus. So they're level of connection with other campus orgs, and more diverse groups of people on campus, is extremely limited. And, I definitely felt that. Actually, before we started the encampment that was a huge issue that I was trying to figure out how we could, acknowledge, not acknowledge, but rather… [interviewer interrupts: 'address?'] address, change. But again, thing is, okay it's like SJP, our chapter of SJP, grew so much from October 7 to the time of the encampment, and again, like, a lot of us were inexperienced. So it was a very complicated situation. So anyway, they framed our conversation that way and I was like oh! I am paying attention, because this is something that like super interests me. And, they were basically saying like, you need to open up the space to non-SJP people, that haven't been as involved, that are not necessarily part of SJP, but that are showing up to this place, this space. So basically, opening up leadership. And also speaking about if you have a predominantly white leadership, maybe step, step back, and let other people fill that role. And, they were also saying that the only way the encampment could fail is if we left, if we ended the encampment without making coalition, without making connections with other orgs, and that was always in the back of my mind, throughout the whole encampment, and also post-encampment…"

Last night, I dreamed we were camping again

Last night,
I dreamed we were camping again.
We set the tents up on the side of a hill
by the highway. It was hard to make
them stand, and I knew
it would be difficult to sleep like that,
always falling down.
Even so, I felt so happy.

Notes

We Rode the Bus to Celebrate Their Wedding

1. **The wedding guests…** In a song called *At Bab A-shams,* written by Tamer Nafar and published on the youtube channel silwanic, Nafar frames the encampment as a celebration of the wedding of Younis al Asadi and Nahila al Shawah, characters from the novel after which the camp was named.
2. **As the israeli occupation forces blocked out the roads, barring the wedding guests in, the end became clear. Journalists arrived…** In "Revolution: How a New Creative Palestinian Struggle Breaks Through the Stalemate of the Status Quo," journalist Lia Tarachansky writes: "As we came closer we saw bonfires with activists wrapped in blankets chain-smoking and talking about the inevitable upcoming army demolition. Sitting at one was an old friend, Hamde Abu Rahmah, whose uncle and aunt were killed in nonviolent protests a year apart. Hamde is a self-taught photographer with a permanent smile on his face."
3. **With a gift card in one hand and a present in the other…** Line from Nafar's *At Bab A-shams.*

Mud

4. **a young kid, Cato, who she often cares for…** from Jill Freedman's *Old News: Resurrection City.*
5. **the grass the city now sits on was all fertilized…** from Jill Freedman's *Old News: Resurrection City.*
6. **Four times in three weeks the campsite was reduced to a barely passable stretch of**

viscous mire… Charles Fager, a Southern Christian Leadership Conference staff member writing in 1969, described the terrain of resurrection city as such. He emphasized how the rain exacerbated the organizational issues occurring in Resurrection City, and how the organizational issues resulted in no solutions being implemented for the recurring rain.

7. **Wanting to go home…** According to Fager, by early June hundreds of campers had been sent home due to bad behavior, and others had left because they did not see the issues in the city as worth the trouble.
8. **Soul City…** Jill Freedman, in her writings, refers to the camp as Resurrection City and Soul City almost interchangeably. I have not found the term used formally anywhere else, though it does appear (or the word "soul" appears) regularly throughout Freedman's photographs.

The A-Z Librarians

9. **The camp… direct democracy** Accounts of the early days of Occupy Boston as found in the relevant collection at Snell Library at Northeastern. The archived press releases which were released every few days during the early weeks of the encampment especially provide an image of this time period.
10. **the many hundreds of people who come daily to join the occupation…** from an October 10 press release from Occupy Boston, titled "We Will Occupy."
11. **Arrested over 100 people…** Sociologists Tammi Arford and Andrea Hill describe their experiences getting arrested during this attempt to expand onto the Greenway in an essay titled, "Role Conflict and Congruence: Academic Sociologists Occupy Boston." They also describe the legal proceedings that resulted from these arrests including the choice that was offered to them to accept the charges and have them converted to civil, or to

fight the charges as criminal. Both chose not to have the charges converted. Arford and Hill also both discuss their positioning as academics at Occupy, and the tense relationship between the camp and the campus. This dynamic is also present with many of the librarians discussed in this section, many of whom were academics or had ties to universities in Boston.

12. Most of the details from this account of how the A-Z Library was formed come from an article called "Documenting a Movement: Creating and Sustaining the Occupy Boston Community Archive," written by Meghan Bailey and published in *Archival Outlook*, as well as various early drafts of the article which are included with the final version in the archive.
13. **Support a new, leaderless, collective library in the Tent City at the Occupy Boston encampment in Dewey Square**… This comes from the Boston Radical Reference Collective's website.
14. The details of this meeting and the related emails come from a folder of Library meeting minutes, agendas, and related documents. Included are printouts of emails from Emily Belanger, as well as responses and elaborations from Boston Radical Reference Collective members Alana Kumbler and Heather McCann, and minutes from the October 20 meeting. Also at this meeting the team designated someone (Eden) to attend the new Transparency Group meeting on behalf of the Library team that same night, which aimed to improve communication between working groups. After the librarians decided on the name they began to discuss possible futures for the library in a post-Occupy world, and discussed various logistics, including shelving space, the need for more librarians,

possible structural changes to the library tent, programming, and collection development practices.

15. Several iterations of these spreadsheets are available in the archive with minutes from different meetings marked as complete. This process appears to have been incredibly iterative.
16. **Extending as far as medics and legal observers…** According to Arford and Hill's account.
17. In their chapter of *Protest Camps* on infrastructures of governance, Feigenbaum et al. emphasize the ways in which affective relationships are themselves structures of governance. The preexisting organizing relationships between members of the Radical Reference Collective, or the Simmons PLG listserv, then, are themselves governance structures.
18. Of course, it makes sense that of all the working groups at Occupy Boston, the group full of librarians did the most complete job of keeping records. They also produced guides for other working groups on how to effectively keep records, and there are records from other working groups within the collection, but the records of the librarians are a particularly shining star. What might the archive have looked like if the librarians were divided among the encampment's different groups?
19. **children's drawings, articles people printed from the internet and stapled together to put in the library…** Folder 24, labeled "sketches and notes" includes a bunch of drawings and notes which look to be made by children or a child. They include drawings of cartoon characters (Charlie Brown) and references to video games (Mii tennis and Yoshi from Super Mario World). Folder 2, labeled "Articles Collected in Library"

includes printed out and stapled articles such as “Down the Rabbit Hole with Democracy and Three Urgent Pleas,” which discusses among other things the Arab Spring and israel’s violence against Gaza, and “2012=1968?” which was written after Occupy Wall Street ended but before Occupy Boston did, and makes hopeful comparisons to Resurrection City, including suggesting plans to occupy the national mall in 2012.

20. The connection was perhaps even stronger in Boston because of their physical proximity to each other. The Boston Occupiers often refer to “OB and OWS” as a unit. For example Emily Belanger does this in an email to her fellow librarians, quoted above, where her phrasing seems to imply that she has some knowledge of the conversations happening at Wall Street, or that there is some kind of direct relationship between the conversations happening in Boston and in New York.
21. The details about the problems faced by the Occupy Wall Street Library are from an article in the *Occupied Wall Street Journal* called “The People’s Library, 3.0: Mobile and in the Streets,” which was printed out and found in the archive, possibly as part of the notes of the A-Z Librarians, or possibly because it was one of articles that was part of the collection.
22. Details about the library’s disaster/police raid planning come from a document titled “Disaster planning for a library of questionable legal status/Importance of activist libraries.” It includes a quote from the Library Bill of Rights, a note about the initial emergency plan from before Wall Street was swept, an account of “Lessons Learned from the Occupy Wall Street People’s Library Raid,” and details about what occurred during the December 8 raid.

23. **An offer from a local well known archive…** This is from the *Archival Outlook* article. I assume this refers to Snell Library at Northeastern, as that is where these materials ended up, and where I sat as I read those words. I do not know anything yet about the path by which Snell acquired these materials, or the decision making process the librarians went through to land them there. The collection at Snell includes three well organized boxes. Most are labeled "A-Z Library," though some are more generally labeled "Occupy Boston." It is unclear to what extent the collection has been re-organized or rearranged since it left its home at Occupy. For example, the binder or the plastic bins are not present, but perhaps the chronology presented by the collection comes from the reference binder. Largely, the collection is arranged more by topic than by time.
24. The notes on bookmobiles are scattered throughout the collection, alongside press releases or meeting minutes. Almost always, they are multiple copies of the same or similar document.

Marshals

25. Charles Fager describes this conflict in *Uncertain Resurrection: The Poor People's Washington Campaign*. Most of the details in this sketch come from Fager's account.
26. At Occupy Glasgow there was a gang rape on site which led to the camp splintering, fewer women staying on site, and the camp's organization degrading. Catherine Eschle, and Alison Barnett, *Feminism and Protest Camps: Entanglements, Critiques and Re-Imaginings*.
27. **On June 1, 1968, on a folded sheet of white paper, in blue ink, someone made notes. It includes a list, numbered 1 through 21, all under the heading "Hosea."** ***1. met w/***

marshals re RC… The document described is in the Catherine Clarke Civil Rights Collection at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

General Assembly

28. This entire vignette is based on minutes from the Saturday, October 15 evening assembly at Occupy Boston. The minutes were taken by a notetaker named Anna, who may or may not be the same Anna who was so involved with the A-Z Library. They were collected by the A-Z Librarians, together with minutes from most of the general assemblies, and found in the archive at Snell Library.

Worn Out

29. **that mass politics will never be limited to New York City and the Bay Area…** Most of the details from this portrait come from an interview between Bill Crane and rs21, or Revolutionary Socialism in the 21st Century, an organization based in the UK of which Crane is a member.
30. **the Grassroots Alliance for Alternative Politics…** This organization no longer exists at Vassar. Based on its presence in the records of the *Miscellany*, Vassar's student newspaper, it is clear that the organization existed from at least 2011, as Crane says, to 2016, though it is possible it began earlier than that and continued on longer than that. It may have ended as a result of the mass dying of student organizations that took place around 2020 as a result of the lack of continuity of the student body due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, or it may have died a more natural death. My research about student movements at Vassar in the 70s and 80s indicates that around five years is a rather normal lifespan for a student organization at Vassar, especially a political organization. Even

without a pandemic, the turnover of the entire student body every four years is a contributor to repression of political organization.

31. **SEIU…** SEIU, the Service Employees International Union is one of the most prominent trade unions in the Poughkeepsie area, both in 2011 and now. SEIU represents dining workers at Vassar, and is currently engaged in contract renegotiations which the college has significantly delayed. SEIU also has a relationship with the Working Students Coalition at Vassar.
32. This is based on announcements posted on the Occupy Poughkeepsie Facebook page in October of 2011.
33. **Winter comes on, and it becomes harder to camp…** But not impossible! Bab al-Shams camped in January, and the campers dealt with the cold. An encampment was put up at Sarah Lawrence College just outside of New York City in December of 2024. It was their first encampment, as they had not camped during the first wave of the Student Intifada in April and May of that year. The videos of the campers putting their tents up as it snowed were very striking. At Occupy Poughkeepsie, they had around a foot of snow in one go before the end of October. They asked for blankets, tarps, and towels on the Facebook page and used a kerosene heater to keep warm.
34. As follows from Frenzel's theorization of the relationship between space and organization, the loss of a common space means that if a social movement is to continue it will require significantly more organization. This contributes to the pervasive dying of protest movements post-encampment.
35. Both of these organizations continue to do work in the Hudson Valley, though Nobody Leaves Mid Hudson has changed its name to For the Many. ENJAN most recently is

doing work around the recent murders of Robert Brooks and Messiah Nantwi at two different "correctional facilities," and the attempts by correctional officers unions to reverse the 2021 HALT (Humane Alternatives to Long-Term Solitary Confinement) Act, which placed limits on the tortuous use of solitary confinement in prisons.

Villagers of Bab al-Shams

36. **A Palestinian Village…** Many of the details from this portrait come from a compilation of tweets, especially tweets from Abir Kopty, published by Electronic Intifada. The language pattern I adopt here, of referring to Bab al-Shams as a village rather than a camp, comes from Kopty and I use it throughout this section.
37. This quote comes from an interview with Abir Kopty by Max Blumenthal, and is published in an article titled "Eviction of Bab Al Shams exposes Israel as a lawless state" published on Electronic Intifada.
38. **A river of flags, red, green, black, and white, leading into the village, leading more villagers into the village…** This description, as well as most of the events described throughout this day, come from a combination of tweets from Kopty and from photos in a photo essay by Activestills.
39. **We the people…** This quote comes from a statement by the Popular Struggle Coordination Committee, as published in Electronic Intifada.

We are singing, singing for our lives

40. Most of the anecdotes in this vignette come from video footage in the documentary *Carry Greenham Home*.
41. **No man has any right, to buy or sell this earth for private gain, by theft and plunder, they take the land, now everywhere the walls spring up at their command…** These

lyrics that one of the Greenham women sings in *Carry Greenham Home* come from the song *The World Turned Upside Down* by Leon Rosselson. The song appears in the Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp Songbook under the title *Diggers' Song,* alongside another version called *Our Diggers' Song* with lyrics rewritten to be about Greenham Common.

42. **On and on and on…** These lyrics are from *You Can't Kill the Spirit*, written by Naomi Littlebear Morena. The lyrics repeat in a loop, on and on and on.
43. **The yarn extends into the distance.** It was common for women at Greenham Common to use fibers, and especially yarn to cause disruptions to the base, such as tying gates or fences up with string. Spider webs made out of yarn especially became a sort of symbol of the camp. It is not entirely clear what the women are doing with the yarn here, but it is possible they are constructing a spider web or something similar.
44. **…where other women are setting up a picnic on the base.** In this anecdote the women are climbing over the fence to have an Easter picnic on the base.
45. **…the web, and the moon, and snakes.** These were all common symbols of the Greenham women which played into the idea of the women as witches, or as having a relationship to Diana.

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