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COMIC BY COLBI LORANGER, ASSOCIATE MANAGING EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS

Where did all the campus protests go?

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In the past week, two articles have been published, from The Atlantic and The New Yorker respectively, with both asking the same question: Where did all the youth protests go? This co-occurrence of two large national magazines putting out articles on the same topic is not mere coincidence. Rather, this reflects a growing sentiment expressed since the beginning of President Donald Trump's second term. While forms of non-disruptive demonstration led by older sects of the population have become more prominent recently (e.g. No Kings Day), many are left wondering about the youth-led "uprisings" that characterized so much of the past political moments. Jay Caspian Kang simply stated the problem in The New Yorker: "We see everything now — the slaughter of children, the assassinations of political figures, the killings of unarmed people by police officers — but all of that witnessing has produced little in the way of clarity or effective political resistance."

For the wealthier, liberal or democrat-leaning readership of these two magazines, this is a significant issue. It appears that there is a sort of "mourning" among many in this group, who are becoming newly aware of the consequences of politics during this period of heightened right-wing escalation. No longer is it sufficient to just wait until the next election or let the elected officials do the fighting. So it is a mourning of resistance and its absence, of the feeling that significant swaths of society are no longer active or ready to seriously push back against this government.

What writers like Kang are so reticent to mention, though, is what happened the last time there was such a nationwide protest in this country. Two years ago, pro-Palestinian organizers put their bodies on the line nationwide to try and stop the US-Israeli led genocide. This was an organic, youth-led movement that spanned college campuses, cities, town halls and legislative buildings alike — the largest of its kind since the Vietnam War. In the first year of the genocide alone, there were about 12,400 protests, according to the Crowd Counting Consortium.

However, these protests

were not just exceptional for their size, but for commitment as well. In just spring 2024, over 3,000 students were arrested during the wave of solidarity encampments that rose up. They occupied space and came out in spite of overwhelming police presence against them, protesting in a way that

dissent on Palestine and ensure that those who protested against it did not have public support.

Then what happened? When Trump entered office January 2025, the first people he targeted with Immigrations and Customs Enforcement were pro-Palestinian activists. Mahmoud Khalil, Rumeysa Ozturk and 300 other students had their visas revoked or were directly detained, many of whom are still in federal custody or legal battles today. Strategically, this gave Trump the opportunity to centralize governmental power and escalate state violence against a group whom many Americans had been conditioned to believe "deserved it." The years-long slander campaign against activists, who were being aggressively painted as "antisemitic terrorists" and the like, had worked to provide cover and justification for any violence against them. Once this had become "normalized," it was only a matter of time before ICE kidnappings would be turned against others.

So, if the question of "where did all the youth protests go" could be answered succinctly, it would be that democrat officials and liberal-media killed them with Palestine. By supporting the extreme centralization of power that occurred at both university and federal levels of governance, the path to the current state of affairs was laid down. Now, students are operating in an entirely different strategic context from 2024. There are often new university rules restricting their conduct. Many have the criminal justice system or immigration enforcement threatening them with extra consequences for speaking out. The leaders are under fire and their classmates are, understandably, scared to join the cause. Whether it be on Palestine, ICE or anything else, the playing field has been largely shifted against them.

The problem with "resistance" is that it cannot start only at a certain point. A government that is willing to pass the moral barrier of supporting genocide will not hesitate to commit further violence against its own people. The students who fought for Palestine recognized this. The rest failed to. But the continuous opportunities for solidarity are many, and the future to come will depend on learning from mistakes of the past. If not, we will only reap what we sow.



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current "anti-Trump" groups have simply not been willing to replicate. These students, and many more, were willing to put their bodies on the line in protest of the violence which had by then killed nearly 40,000 and displaced over two million Palestinians. While there is always a need for peaceful, non-disruptive demonstrations, if there is anything that the last year of this administration has taught us, it is that they are not enough.

Yet, how was this movement treated? Protesters were beaten, harassed, arrested, put on trial and vilified in the public eye. This was not by Trump or the current administration, but by the former President Joe Biden, aligned liberal college presidents and billionaire elites. For example, a Washington Post investigation found private group chats wherein powerful New York City business and government leaders conspired to put pressure on Columbia to arrest its student protesters. This state-business-university coalition was further supported by the same liberal-leaning news outlets currently lamenting the lack of resistance to Trump. The Atlantic was chief among these, as several of its writers called for the arrest of student protesters and derided their movement. Rose Horowitz, The Atlantic staff-writer who originally asked where campus protests have gone (referenced above), has in fact based almost her entire career on depicting modern U.S. college students as being idiots in academics and politics. All of these various groups collaborated to silence



The UConn Divest coalition set up an encampment on April 25th, 2024 near UConn's Rec Center to "protest UConn's complicity in the genocide of Palestinians in Gaza and its shameful contributions to militarism around the globe." PHOTO BY CONNOR SHARP, PHOTO EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS