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speech at the statue dedication to the brave people who pulled it down.

Congratulations to all.

The day before classes began at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the state's flagship public university, a crowd led by students of color and anarchists tore down the Confederate statue, "Silent Sam," which has dominated downtown Chapel Hill for over a century. You can read about the events in the campus paper and a variety of corporate news sources, some of which are remarkably supportive of this use of illegal direct action. The following is a report by participants, including a strategic analysis.

A Little Background

Silent Sam has been a flashpoint for anti-racist struggle for at least fifty years. It was donated to the university and erected in 1913 during the Jim Crow era by the United Daughters of the Confederacy. Capitalist, racist, and KKK-supporter Julian Carr, for whom the neighboring town of Carrboro is named, boasted during a speech at the statue's dedication that he had, just yards away from the monument and under the gaze of Federal soldiers, "horse-whipped a negro wench, until her skirts hung in shreds" because she had insulted a white woman. Protesters threw paint on the statue when Martin Luther King, Jr. was murdered in 1968; demonstrators gathered around it to remember two black men, James Cates, who was murdered on UNC's campus by a white motorcycle gang, and William Murphy, who was murdered by a NC highway patrolman, in 1971. A crowd marched on the statue when the police officers who beat Rodney King were declared innocent in 1992.

The latest cycle of protest began the day after the bloody clashes of August 12 in Charlottesville, Virginia, when two hundred people gathered around the statue to hear anti-fascists returning from Charlottesville describe their experiences. Activists defied police orders and climbed the statue in order to shroud it in black fabric. The following day, demonstrators in neighboring Durham, North

Carolina toppled the Confederate monument in their downtown in broad daylight—a feat for which no one was ultimately convicted.

One week later, on the first day of the fall semester, more than seven hundred people gathered at Silent Sam for an anonymously-organized raucous demonstration advertised as "The First Day of Silent Sam's Last Semester." During the demonstration, students chased police after they arrested a protester for donning a bandanna; some blocked the police car in which officers sought to abduct the arrestee. That night, demonstrators also marched on the university president's house, blocking part of the main street in Chapel Hill. The police erected metal barricades around the statue and mobilized at least a hundred officers in riot gear to control the crowd.

That night, a sit-in began at the statue. The occupation continued for a week before it was forcibly shut down by police. Organizers then began a protracted campaign utilizing a diversity of tactics, arguably culminating in last night's toppling.

The sympathies of local police have long been obvious. They led the charge to gentrify the nearby historically Black neighborhood of Northside, carrying out a SWAT team raid in 1990 that targeted an entire city block, in which whites were permitted to leave the area while over 100 Black people were detained and terrorized. When the same network of people that organized the "Unite the Right" rally in Charlottesville organized a rally at Peace and Justice Plaza in Chapel Hill on June 17, 2017—including a speech from "Augustus Sol Invictus" (Austin Gillespie), well-known fascist and headlining speaker at "Unite the Right"—police not only mobilized to protect them, dragging away anti-racist protesters, but also smirked while putting their hands over their hearts as the fascists played the national anthem. In 2017, an undercover police officer infiltrated the sit-in and spied on student activists. The university spent $390,000 during the 2017–2018 school year on police and security for the statue.

had involved considerably more people, the participants had been more hesitant to assert themselves. Since then, a necessary evolution had taken place in what demonstrators felt empowered to do.

Rumors had circulated that Emergency Medical Services personnel were briefed on tear gas decontamination in advance of the demonstration, but in the end, the police were not able to mobilize a successful defense of the statue. There are several possible explanations for their failure. The variety of participants made it very difficult to use brutal force without injuring random students, alumni, and business owners, which would have delegitimized the university even more than the toppling of the statue. The massive banners and Carolina blue bandannas were useful tools, but they were also works of art that centered the narrative of the demonstrators, creating a situation in which police would have provoked even more outrage if they had attempted to confiscate or destroy them. The police may have not anticipated that the demonstrators would be so fierce and numerous, as many less militant demonstrations had taken place over the preceding year. Finally, it's possible that the authorities were not able to mobilize the will to deploy the necessary numbers and weaponry, despite exhortations from some institutional defenders of the legacy of white supremacy who were determined to preserve Silent Sam at any cost.

The demonstrators who tore down the statue achieved a momentous victory. Refusing to accept that the movement against Confederate statues had peaked in 2017, they took the offensive in a month that had previously been dominated by rearguard struggles against fascists and the police who defend them. A great part of the credit for the victory goes to Maya Little for reigniting the struggle last April and for appearing at the August 20 demonstration to inspire people with her words and staunch resistance, but countless people kept the movement against the statue alive from one phase to the next, from the researcher who dug up Julian Carr's racist

Joyously chanting "I BELIEVE THAT WE WILL WIN," demonstrators embraced and danced around the toppled monument, heaping dirt onto it. Thunder rolled overhead and the clouds opened with the showers that had been expected all night. As celebrants made their way into the night, police were forced to stand guard over the toppled monument in heavy rain until it was loaded into a dump truck around midnight.

Takeaway

Make no mistake: the administration of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill could have moved the statue decades ago. They could have moved it last year, when hundreds of people gathered around it the day after Heather Heyer was murdered in Charlottesville, or a week later when several hundred students returned. The administrators claimed that a 2015 law prevented them from moving or destroying the monument—but they could have done what the demonstrators did, if only they were honorable enough to risk their comfort and status for the sake of the students they pretend to serve.

It is instructive that the statue was not removed by the university administration, nor as a result of reformist petitioning. It was removed by courageous and uncompromising direct action—the most efficient and effective way to make changes in a society dominated by oppressive authority. This lesson will surely not be lost on the students who are beginning their fall semester at UNC today, many of whom got their first taste of protest last night.

This demonstration had all the necessary elements for success. It centered the voices of those most affected by white supremacy; it involved a broad range of people from different parts of society; it employed both artistic expression and practical tools; and the participants were united in their willingness to assert themselves and defend each other. Although the demonstration a year earlier

On April 30, 2018, Maya Little, one of the sit-in student organizers, doused Silent Sam in paint and her own blood, contextualizing the statue in the real legacy it upholds. She was arrested and currently faces both criminal charges and university charges that could result in her expulsion from the university. At the end of the spring 2018 semester, at a panel discussion following a screening of a student documentary about resistance to the statue, Maya and several other Black women described meeting at the demonstration against Silent Sam on the first day of the fall 2017 semester. Panelists enjoined the attendees to get rid of the statue by any means necessary, to thunderous applause.

The Big Night

At 7 pm on August 20, 2018, hundreds gathered for an unpermitted rally at Peace and Justice Plaza, the site of a hunger strike against segregation in the 1960s and the Occupy Chapel Hill encampment in 2011, among many other events. The demonstration opposing institutional white supremacy at UNC was called in solidarity with Maya Little, whose trial had previously been scheduled for that day.

Four tremendous banners, fully 20 feet tall, were suspended on bamboo poles, almost concealing the courthouse façade. One proclaimed "FOR A WORLD WITHOUT WHITE SUPREMACY"; another listed the names of people who died at the hands of white supremacists, institutional or otherwise, in the local area. A student opened the rally with a beautiful rendition of the Black national anthem, followed by powerful speeches from Maya Little and Black graduate students Jerry Wilson and Cortland Gilliam, who announced that they would wear nooses around their necks until the statue was removed. The speeches, the applause, and the diversity of the crowd made it clear that a wide range of people of all walks of life were in agreement not only that the statue had to go, but also that the police who defended it had no legitimacy.

Some demonstrators distributed Carolina blue bandannas emblazoned with the words "Sam must fall"—using the school colors to associate escalated resistance with school spirit. At the demonstration against the statue a year earlier, police had violently arrested a lone masked individual. This time, masking was made to be a collective and participatory expression of opposition to the statue, not a security practice that could isolate those who employed it.

At the conclusion of the speeches, demonstrators bearing the four tremendous banners marched across the street onto UNC campus. Police immediately attempted to force demonstrators to remove their masks; to their surprise, unmasked demonstrators defended masked ones. A melee ensued in which one officer began to pull his gun in the chaos—an absurd and cowardly impulse that could have ended in tragedy. They managed to arrest one demonstrator, but the sight of flailing, outmaneuvered officers made it clear that the police were not able to enforce their authority by their customary violence. It may also have confused them that they could not single out masked demonstrators without the entire crowd responding.

Surrounded and outnumbered, police were forced back as demonstrators surrounded the statue and began to erect the massive banners. Clashes continued as people zip-tied the bamboo poles together and set up guy lines bracing the poles, creating a freestanding piece of art that concealed the statue from view in all directions. One white supremacist attempted to intervene, tearing a banner from one of its poles before demonstrators compelled him to retreat; other demonstrators climbed onto the statue to repair the banner. (Reportedly, after these scuffles, police were instructed to keep "a safe distance" from the demonstrators.) Soon, the crowd of hundreds surrounded the statue, chanting triumphantly and holding the police and white supremacists at bay. As night fell, protesters spoke and led chants through a megaphone and music played over a PA system.

The police and their white supremacist colleagues watched from a distance. Throughout the night, fierce anti-police chants resounded throughout campus and downtown:

"No cops! No Klan! Get rid of Silent Sam!"
"No justice, no peace! No racist police!"
"1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 fuck 12!"

Eventually, without a formal decision being made, a part of the crowd set out for Franklin Street, the main thoroughfare of downtown Chapel Hill. Others filtered after them, linking arms to block the entire street and marching until they reached the intersection at the center of downtown. Marchers fanned out to form a perimeter, blocking the intersection in all four directions, as students of color led chants over the megaphone. Soon after, word reached the demonstrators that the small number of people who had remained at the statue were surrounded by police. Chanting "Whose streets? *Our streets!",* demonstrators pushed past police vehicles and defended themselves from white supremacists as they retraced their steps down Franklin Street.

The march returned to the statue to find that police had forced the remaining demonstrators away from the statue and surrounded it with a line of officers. The crowd surrounded the police line and advanced on them. After a tense standoff, the officers were forced to withdraw, not wishing to end up in another brawl. A couple fights broke out with white supremacists, most likely of the organization "ACTBAC."

This time, someone had a rope. It was affixed to the statue behind the screen of the banners, and the crowd began to pull. At first, most people assumed that this would be fruitless, as it was rumored that the statue was better constructed than the one that people had pulled down in Durham a year earlier. But after a few seconds, a great grinding sound rang out, inspiring wild cheering and renewed efforts—and finally the statue came ripping through the banners, toppling to the ground.