

Brigid in New York -- outside the World Economic Forum

It's 8 AM on Saturday. The march starts at noon: already we can hear helicopters circling. For days, every McDonald's and Starbucks in the city has had an honor guard of three cops. The streets around the Waldorf are blocked and guarded.

Last night we had our ritual in the park. I missed the setup because I was speaking at the students' CounterSummit, and by the time I got down there were already hundreds of people gathered and more cops than I could believe, long city blocks full of vans crammed with police, a helicopter circling overhead, police on the street and forming their own sort of welcoming committee at every entrance to the park.

We also had more media than I had ever seen at a ritual. ABC, Fox, the BBC, every IndyMedia reporter in New York, every graduate student doing a video project, they were all there and all wanting to talk and interview and photograph and record.

Ruby had done a tremendous job actually organizing the ritual and the complex art making, and people were setting up the shrines of grief, healing, rage, vision, and the forge, which included a huge cardboard cauldron filled with flames and a cardboard anvil and hammer. I hope someone else will describe them all more fully, because I only got, at best, a quick glimpse between the crowds and the reporters. Rosemary had done a spectacular, simple, elegant stature of liberty out of wheat. We had a wonderful Brigid's well with waters of the world, and the GAPatistas brought a triptych of the vision of the future. A friend of Harvest contributed a voodoo altar. Considering we couldn't have tables, wood, posts, poles, or living flames on any of them, we created some very powerful and beautiful images.

Lisa and Charles were negotiating with the police, who originally were saying we couldn't have any drums because we had no sound permit. They got permission for one drum: we gathered a circle, and explained the ritual -- as much to the media as to the participants. We called in the elements very simply: "Repeat after me: Air." "AIR!" "Fire!" "FIRE!" Then we sent people off to visit the shrines. That was the signal for every media person in the world to come up and ask me how I spell my name, and what the Pagan Cluster was. Meanwhile, the Revolutionary Communist Party set up below us and started screaming and haranguing the crowd, people wandered among

the shrines, and the Rhythm Workers' Union, our drummer friends, just set up and began drumming.

In spite of, or because of, the chaos and the sheer absurdity of police overkill, I was having a good time. At one point, Ruby and I just looked at each other and laughed. The level of noise, distraction, interruption, and physical threat was so over the top it just became meaningless. As Juniper said afterwards, your usual standards for ritual just disappeared.

Microphones in your face during an invocation -- no problem. Flashbulbs going off during the cone of power -- why not? Poor Lisa was still stuck negotiating with the police -- we were trying to figure out how to move the crowd down from our permitted space to a larger area for the dance, and between the cops and the RCP it was a challenge. There were probably a couple of thousand people there. We finally decided to just do the spiral where we were. We got the drummers to quiet, opened a space in the center of the crowd, and Indigo stepped in, lit her fire chains, and began a dance of invocation with living fire swinging in beautiful circles and spirals around her. Lisa valiantly kept the cops from barging in: she finished the dance, let the fire sit for a moment in the center of the circle, and then Ruby taught the chant, call and response style:

"We will never..."

"WE WILL NEVER..."

"Never lose our way..."

"NEVER LOSE OUR WAY..."

"To the well..."

"TO THE WELL".....

"Of Liberty!"

"OF LIBERTY!"

"And the power..."

"AND THE POWER!"

"Of her living flame..."

"OF HER LIVING FLAME!"

"It will rise...."

"IT WILL RISE!"

"It will rise again..."

"IT WILL RISE AGAIN!"

With the help of the entire cluster, we managed to get everyone into the spiral relatively seamlessly, and navigate it around trees, cops, cameras and passersby. We wound it up, and raised power -- first a roar of energy and then a sweet, sustained tone to feed the forces of liberation, in spite of

nonstop flashing cameras. When we ended, everyone looked happy. We sang "This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine..."

And then we opened the circle, just as our permit was running out. In its own odd way, it was a wonderful event and, I think, great magic -- weaving the coherence and connection we were able to weave in the midst of all of it bodes well for today's actions, which essentially have no plan except to do the legal march and then trust to creative chaos. May Brigid spread her cloak over this city, so that all the actions work toward transformation.

Love, Starhawk -- February 2, 2002

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