

11-25-03 Preface:

At last hearing, everyone is out of jail. Many have had their charges dropped, others will need to return and be involved in lengthy court battles. Money can still be donated at www.unitedforpeace.org. The political battle is now shifting to pressure for a congressional investigation. Check www.unitedforpeace.org or www.ftaaindymedia.org for updates on how to help. Thanks to all who have called, written, donated, and offered support, -- *Starhawk*

Miami Journal #11: Sunday thru Tuesday, November 23-25, 2003

Last Update

I'm in the state of post-action rage that I recognize and still don't know quite what to do with, in spite of being 52 years old, and having decades of experience transmuted rage and anger to creativity, in spite of my considerable ability to ground and stay calm and centered in crisis. I really want to just hit something. I'm at the School of the Americas protest, which has been linked this year to the Miami actions, with people encouraged to come to both. The School of the Americas is the enforcement arm of global corporate capitalism, the U.S. military school that trains Latin Americans and others in "counterinsurgency" techniques--read torture and assassination. The death squads of Colombia, the torturers and kidnapers and political terror squads of Nicaragua and El Salvador, all originated here.

A long procession has formed up, thousands of people carrying crosses, each with the name of a victim of graduates of the school. And the names are being sung, from the stage, in a beautiful, soaring litany. After each name, the crowd sings back, "Presente!" "Present." Dead, but not forgotten, not disappeared, not made into nothingness. Still here. Each one as precious to someone as my friend Abby is to me, Abby who was jumped on and surrounded and beaten by cops. Or Kori,

the chocolate brown, innocent-eyed young woman from Sonoma county who was in my training. I'd "snatched" her, pretending to be an undercover cop arresting her, to demonstrate that people of color may be at greater risk. I think she was with Abby, and is out of jail and on her way home now--but I hear rumors that someone named Kori was arrested and I am terrified to think of what could be happening to her.

The litany of names is so intertwined with my own litany of the arrested and the disappeared. I know at least two friends who are immigrants are rumored to be in jail--I can't name them until they are released. "Presente." The procession moves forward like a slow river of grief, poignant and unassuageable.

We are busying ourselves around the edges, collecting bail money, urging people to call the Mayor of Miami and complain.

At one o'clock, there's a meeting of those who have been in Miami behind the hospitality house, to connect and share stories and organize.

The procession continues behind us, hours and hours of victims, of names, sad and beautiful in its solemn power. After the Christian groups, delegations of nuns and priests and students from Jesuit colleges and Catholic schools, will come space for others--Pagans and puppets and drums. My friends in the Pagan Cluster tell me they are forming up. I am torn: I recognize a certain internal state endemic to actions and stress and the aftermath of violence, a feeling of needing to be in two places at once, that wherever you are not is where you should have been. The month and a half I spent in Palestine was infused with that restlessness and I did spend much of it chasing up and down that most difficult-to-travel-in country, and it's been a rare week that I've spent in one place ever since. It's as if exposure to violence fragments some energetic membrane that creates containment and coherence and continuity. Mine is already full of scar tissue and now it's been ruptured again.

Zot Lynn suggests I stay where I am, and I nod. I've already been up to the front, seen the groups laying down their crosses, seen the brave few climbing over the fence and the barbed wire to enter the base in an act of completely nonviolent civil disobedience that has been yielding prison sentences of three months to a year. It's a different kind of courage, a different witness, than we offered in Miami, but very, very powerful in its own way.

The Pagan Cluster goes up without me, lays down candles and ties on ribbons we've charged in the ritual we did the night

before. They do a silent spiral at the gate. The puppets process up with drums and noise and pageantry, a giant dragon, a huge bird, staging a pageant of liberation that brings back some joy and raucous power after the river of grief.

Meanwhile the Miami people circle, talk, meet, share stories of horror and joy. In truth the river of grief is too much for us right now--we're still too raw and wide open, our friends are still currently in jail and we don't know what's happening to them; or our friends are missing and we don't know where they are; and we haven't emotionally left Miami although we're here in body to support this action. We need to do what people do to heal trauma: talk, tell our stories, talk to others who have been through the same thing and understand, make sense and meaning from what we've experienced. We talk about what people suffered in jail and on the street, we name how strong and courageous we were, how we didn't panic when the police attacked, how some always went to the front and faced them down and slowed their onslaught, how we held together in retreat and took care of each other. We tell stories of the support we got from local people when we were driven deep into the black ghetto, how people took us in, offered to shelter the puppets in their back yards, gave us smiles and thumbs-up signs, and how, too, a few people were accosted or robbed. A young man from Canada tells us he came down to support us because so many of us went up to Quebec City, and how important it is for the world to know that there is a resistance movement in the U.S., and how impressed he was with the courage he saw on the streets. And we remind each other that we have, indeed, had a victory, however grim. The FTAA that we were protesting in Quebec City two-and-half-years ago is dead now, no longer even on the table. All they have done, in this summit, is to refer every substantive issue back to committee, and to reveal the extent of the repression which backs their regime.

We make plans for fundraising, jail support, ongoing political pressure. The meeting breaks up. I go back up to the fence, to see it covered with crosses, ribbons, utterly transformed.

And then it is time to leave, to fly back home at last.

Monday noon we hold a small vigil at the Federal building in San Francisco. A few more survivors meet, tell our tales. We hold signs, hand out flyers. Across the street, a union group from the SEIU is picketing the State building, protesting the privatization of their security services. We join them, exchanging flyers, joining in their chants and drumming. It seems symbolic of the real victory of Miami--that glimpse we

had of the movement we can build when we do unite, across the divisions of class and race and issue, when we hold each others' backs: the unions and the direct action folks and the local community organizers and the NGOs and the ordinary people on the street. Under the barrage of rubber bullets and media lies, we can still meet on the common ground of truth.

The strength of the assault against us reveals how imperative it is that we find that ground and hold it.

And now I go down to the beach with Willow to find rocks to bring to Aboriginal elders I will meet with in Australia, where I'm going tonight. It seems far too soon to be going so far away, but that's how it is. A red-tailed hawk circles three times above my head. The bushes are full of song sparrows who do not flee from our approach. A hummingbird hovers and looks me in the eye. Back in Miami, our friends are out of jail. I can breathe again, let the ocean air and the spray from the waves wash me clean. The steelworkers are calling for a congressional investigation. We will join them. The inherent violence of the FTAA has been revealed, but whether this will work for or against greater liberation still remains to be seen. We will need your help to raise an uproar, to unite more voices in saying, "No!" This is not what democracy looks like. This looks like everything we say we are against--bullying, arbitrary abuses of power, repression of dissent, blatant racism, oppressive power.

And democracy looks like what we experienced together, in the Convergence Center, on the streets, in the garden we planted, the meetings we held, the Really, Really Free Market, the dances, the joy, the thumbs-up signs, the linked arms and solid, grounded lines holding back the onslaughts of violence.

If nothing else, Miami posed a clear choice. Another world is possible. Which world do we want?

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