

Miami Journal #4: Saturday, 11/15/03

They're out!
By Starhawk

First, the good news: Charles, Pablito, Ryan, Sarah, and Henry are out of jail, released on a citation after about eight hours in custody. They will have to return, facing a charge of obstructing a sidewalk, but no date has been set yet. Thanks to all of you who made calls! I have a sneaking suspicion this may not be the last time in this mobilization I ask you for support, so be forewarned.

Since I'm sending this out, I'll include today's update.

My day went like this:

I wake up early, after about four hours of sleep, to finish some email and pack up as today we move into the houses we've rented for the Pagan Cluster. But I am flying off to St. Petersburg, to speak at a rally. Ruby and Brenda drive me to the airport, and I actually have time to sit down and eat breakfast there. I don't think I've had a sit down breakfast since I arrived here!

Diane picks me up at the Tampa airport, drives me to her lovely wooden bungalow with a yard full of birds in St. Petersburg. She points out the ospreys and cormorants on the light poles as we drive across the causeway over Tampa Bay. She is French Canadian, part of the local Women in Black group that is sponsoring me here, has done years of work in Haiti, tells me that the banyan trees are the home of loa, or the spirits/Gods of Voudoun. She has tamed jays to eat out of her hand, once nearly tamed a woodpecker but didn't like its long snakey tongue. We sit and drink tea and role up newspaper batons for the training. Then we go downtown, eat a quick lunch at a Greek restaurant, and go to the rally where I will be speaking. I'm going two for two now--my second actual meal of the day.

The rally is in a small park, and the glaring hot lawn in front of the stage is empty but quite a lot of people are gathered in the shade. Women in Black, the Green Party, Southeast Friends of Reclaiming and a few other groups have tables set up. I meet John, who has organized the rally--his very first effort at such a thing, and he has done a great job. I wander around, listen to speakers, sit and talk to people. Then I get a call from Lisa-- Charles, Pablito, Ryan, Sara and Henry have been arrested. She isn't too sure of the details but thinks they were passing out flyers. The news is upsetting. I know they are all strong and experienced and they'll be fine, but I'm feeling a pang of loss, and worry. Charles has been bottom-lining so many responsibilities, he'll leave a big hole if he is in jail for a couple of days. Pablito just arrived yesterday. I call Mer who is a great support person for these actions and has access to my home computer and ask her to post a call out on my lists.

It's been so sweet at the Convergence Center the last days that I'd been able to put aside that uneasy sense of hostile forces surrounding us. Now the pit of my stomach and I have a bit of a dialogue about the upcoming actions. There have been many times when the police used harassment and intimidation techniques in the lead-up to the actions and then let us have space on the day itself, when our numbers are strong. That could happen here. And a lot of really worse things could happen, as well. But none of them scare me like the thought of what will happen if we don't show up, don't contest this ministerial, don't challenge this grim vision for the world.

Finally it's my turn to speak. The rally is running late, and time is tight on the other end so I decide not to do what I'd planned, which was to take ten or fifteen minutes for people to talk to each other. Actually, people have been talking to each other all day, in between and during speakers. The microphone is out in the hot sun, and I don't have a hat, so there are moments in the talk when I feel like I might pass out, but I don't. Fortunately, the speakers before me have thoroughly covered what's wrong with the FTAA, so I am freed to talk about the whole system of global corporate capitalism and the soulless values it represents, and to articulate our vision of a world that honors the interconnectedness of all things. I talk about the words that can so easily control us, words like "Witch" and "Anarchy," and why I use them deliberately to help us step out of the frame society constructs for the world and to think freely. I describe the scene at the Convergence Center the day before, with everyone working at their own projects, the artists making art, the gardeners setting up the greywater, Food Not Bombs

setting up food, no one "in charge," no one telling people what to do, but lots of people stepping up and asking, "What needs to be done?" That's anarchy in action. And I talk about power, how systems of control can't stand if they have to use force to make sure their every rule is obeyed. But in standing up to them, we need to face our fear, and move beyond it. And when we do, we feel good. We ally ourselves with the great creative, transformative powers of the living world, the resilient healing forces of the earth, and we become invincible.

The rally has started late and runs late, so immediately after I run off for the nonviolent direct action training that's been scheduled. There are more than sixty people--it seems that half the rally has come here, to yet another Unitarian Church to add to my collection. If the Unitarian Church did not exist, I honestly don't know how we would do this mobilization, where we would ever meet for talks or trainings.

I set people talking to each other about what they truly value, and what the world might look like if society supported those values. I always like to begin with something to kindle our vision. Then I run the group through a fast-paced training, aimed at sharing skills of grounding and staying calm in tense situations, assessing a situation and making conscious choices. The group includes many experienced people, and two young sisters, a beautiful teenager named Moonfire and an elfin twelve-year-old girl named Silverfire who makes very astute comments. A strong contingent is coming to Miami, and we do some quick affinity group formation--affinity groups being the small groups who will go into action together.

But the training has started late and ends with just enough time for me to get to the airport. There's a group of Pagans waiting for me in a nice restaurant somewhere in town but there's no way I'm going to make it. Two of my friends drive me to the airport and we eat together there. As rushed as the day has been, it's the first one in a long time when I've actually sat down for three meals. I call Lisa, and hear the good news--that our friends are out of jail.

Back in Miami, we go to one of the houses the Pagan Cluster has rented. Our numbers have grown to around twenty, many new people that I haven't met and some old friends. I hug Charles and Pablito, hear their story. They were walking down the street, saw the cops hassling someone, and went over to witness and take pictures. The cops arrested them, erased the pictures on Pablito's digital camera. They were in custody for several hours, but Charles says it gave him time to meditate.

Now the newly expanded cluster is just finishing a visioning circle, and we pass the Tarot cards around and do a reading. Strength is covering us, Justice reversed is in our near future, the outcome is Death. Looks like we have a somewhat intense period of time coming up.

But I've had three meals today, and for the moment, at least, I've lucked out and have a bedroom to myself where I can write without ten people having conversations all around me. Tomorrow we have a press conference at the Convergence Center and a training there, and masses of people pouring in, so now to bed.

These updates are posted at:

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