

Cancun Journal #11: Friday, 9/5/03

I wake up determined not to spend the day in meetings but to actually do something. I finish writing up some of the explanations for our permaculture project and emailing them to Rodrigo to translate, then head down there for the morning meeting. Everyone has already scattered for work. Most are off getting supplies. Abby is directing Cole and Rio who are putting in the lines for the sink, made out of simple drip tubing. Without tools or materials, there's not much else to do so I decide to go work on creating display materials. I could panic--we're two days away from opening and not much looks done, but I won't. I will trust my teammates, the process, and the universe, I tell myself firmly, and go away.

Delight and I go shop for art materials, start laying out photos, and then she takes it all to go look for color xerox options while I succumb to our collective addiction and drop into the direct action meeting, which starts an hour late, and goes in detail over all the pros and cons of all our options. More cons than pros for each, but hey, we didn't choose this site, the WTO did.

At any rate, I'm starting to think of this as a very intensive Spanish immersion program. Hearing the same discussions over and over again in both languages, I'm really getting the vocabulary down. And the intensity of the situation, the potential consequences of our decisions, the heat and humidity, make for a whole new language-learning environment. Spanish 3 was never quite like this!

After the meeting Delight comes back with beautiful enlargements and we start to design displays. Then I join Scotty who is carrying pipe and a metal bin back to the eco-village site in a taxi. And at last! Progress has been made! The sinks for handwashing, made of orange funnels, are up.

The bio-filter cells, made of the metal barrels which will be filled with gravel, are installed in a descending curve down the slope behind the washing station. Erik is on a ladder fitting a gutter to the edge of the canopy to collect rainwater. The punks have arrived and are explaining the whole system to some young

boys who have gathered. Rodrigo is talking to the press. It's happening! I am incredibly excited and relieved and moved, to see this vision start to come to life, and to see how interested and excited people are by it.

The city has thoroughly sprayed the whole area against mosquitos, nevertheless there are more mosquitos biting us than I have yet encountered in Cancun. A group of us hop another taxi to go meet with the Pagans. On the way, I get caught by a journalist for a short interview and realize that I can barely speak English any more, let alone think of snappy ways to express why we don't like the WTO. I'm about ready to settle for: "It's really bad, they do bad things, we don't like them." But I am able to dredge up some actual facts and statistics about lost jobs and agricultural subsidies, and even a moment of rather sweat-soaked, sodden, exhausted inspiration about the actions.

The group is eating at the local restaurant, and there's a whole lot of us, with Pagans and Green Bloc and Australians altogether. A local vendor comes by making an unearthly noise, as if a giant cat or parrot or monkey were screaming at the top of their lungs. It turns out he is selling little plastic instruments you put in your mouth and blow through, kind of like a kazoo.

Lisa gets all excited, jumps up and starts bargaining for a whole lot of them to use in actions. We share them around, adding to the general noise level. Erik and some of the Green Bloc are eating inside, exhausted but happy, and very pleased with the press the eco-village has already received. We've moved the media here from calling us "globofobicos/globophobics", to "globocriticos" to "globopropositos"--those proposing a new globalization. "They want a world in which people control their own water, food supplies, and energy," one article says. The eco-village has already been a great achievement --instead of articles focusing only on security arrangements and broken windows, we've given them a positive vision to talk about, and a vista of gringos and Mexicans, punks and local citizens, all working together.

Finally our restaurant group decides to just hang out and meet later for a ritual in one of the side parks to the Parque Palapas.

About fifteen of us gather in a circle, including a couple of our Mexican friends who have joined us. We breathe together and ground and sink our roots down, and sing in the elements in Spanish: "Tierra mi cuerpo, Agua mi sangre, Aire mi aliento, y fuego mi espiritu." We share songs and visions and emotions, and I'm really glad to just have a little space for calm and quiet and nurturing in the midst of the gathering chaos. In the ritual,

I sense huge forces pushing on us in this action. The puppetistas have made giant Mayan gods as images, each angry about a particular aspect of globalization--and they are more than symbols. They represent real powers, and any of us who are sensitive feel them like deep, internal pressure that bursts out from time to time in a moment of anger. By rights we should be sequestered in quiet meditation for the next few days before the actions, but we don't have that option as the most sensitive among us are in many cases the same ones who have the most down-to-earth, technical and tactical responsibilities. It's a whole new kind of spiritual discipline, holding the energy and the details all at the same time.

Afterwards, four of us decide to try to go out to the island, to check out the Conference Center and visit the sacred Ceiba tree that stands on display. We drive out past many police and military of different sorts waiting by the roadside, but no one stops us as we return to the beach near the Conference Center to stand for a moment in the healing waters. Then we circle the tree. An informative sign says, "Touch a sacred tree!" and tells us it is a ceiba. We lay our hands on her smooth, green-veined trunk, closing our eyes and feeling her distress at the noise and fumes and cement all around her. Half her top is dead, and she is not happy planted here, but through her moves an energy of green leaves and real, calling birds and chattering monkeys, of ocean winds laden with rain, of scented orchids and massive, wild green nature. Through her moves all that we are fighting for, our birthright. Federal police hover around us, but no one disturbs our communion. We leave with sadness, as if leaving a friend in prison.

-- *Starhawk*

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