

Cancun Journal #7: Monday, 9/1/03

Progress and Frustration

The welcome center is open! About twelve of us hold a short ritual there for protection in the morning. It is four stories high, with a radio tower on the roof, and we go through every floor we have access to, beating drums and making noise to drive away negative energies, then holding hands and chanting on the roof, invoking protection, respect, ease for our work, an open doorway for all helpful influences. We come back down, encircling each room clockwise, the direction of the sun, sprinkling waters of the world and singing, then grounding on the bottom floor and the space is open! On the bottom floor is information and art. The puppet makers have constructed a beautiful styrofoam sculptured head of one of the Mayan Gods and are covering it with tinfoil scales. The second floor is locked but on the third is a big meeting room and on the fourth, smaller rooms for meetings and trainings. By the end of the day, our Green Bloc has fixed a tarp on the roof to collect rainwater and direct it into the main water tank. This is especially useful as the water pump has broken and without water in the top tank it's hard to flush the toilets except by carrying pails of water up the stairs. By tomorrow we will have fixed tarps above the entranceway below to shelter us from the rain and catch drinking water.

After the ritual Erik and I take a taxi to the Casa de la Cultura to try and meet with the director, hop another taxi back to the office of our contact with the city, and then the afternoon is taken up with a long, meeting about the actions. In the middle of it, I get a call that Rodrigo, our permaculture ally from Mexico City, has arrived, complete with a bag of worms for compost. Rodrigo is tall and slim, with his dark hair in a pony tail and a sweet, wry smile. He simply carried the worms onto the airplane.

"What is that?" the security guard asked.

"Worms."

"Worms? You can't bring worms onto the airplane!"

Rodrigo shrugged and smiled. "They are not on the list of forbidden objects. They have no sharp edges, no chemicals, no explosives..."

The guard called his supervisor, and Rodrigo launched into a long explanation of permaculture and worm composting and the principles of ecological design, until finally the guard just shook his head and said, "Enough, enough! Take them and go."

Rodrigo joins us in our meeting with the director, which is extremely fortunate as it saves me trying to explain our projects in my halting Spanish.

I am aware that I forgot to dress up this morning and I seem to have ended up in various shades of khaki that make me look more paramilitary than professional. Abby has her massive dreadlocks pinned up in a sort of punk chignon on her head, framing her beautiful big eyes and delicate features in what I think is an elegant contrast but is definitely not the picture of respectability. Erik is looking a bit bedraggled and all of us are wet from the rain, so we aren't seeming all that impressive. But Rodrigo saves the day, listening with sympathy to the director's real worries about having thousands of people camped outside her door, her distress at having to close the Casa for a week and interrupt the programs they provide for the community--art and lectures and lessons and concerts. By the end, I think she likes us. I tell her that we want to leave something beautiful for the city, that we want to create a bit of what we are fighting for, not just protesting against. Rodrigo asks her what she thinks of the idea of a garden and she thinks it is super, but the problem is, she has no authority over the grounds outside the casa, only over the buildings and programs themselves. But I tell her that we wanted to make contact with her, that the House of Culture is in a way her house and we didn't want to do things in or around her house without her meeting us and knowing us, and she is appreciative and quite warm by the time we leave.

Then back for another action meeting. The meetings have been frustrating. We want them to be open and democratic, but that means that new people are constantly coming in and we keep having to start over again from the beginning. Some of us are impatient--that means me! And others get their feelings hurt and it takes time to process and of course that makes the

impatient ones even more frustrated. But really, it's the situation that is difficult. With the conference center out on the tip of the island, the island itself basically a strip of road with ocean on one side and a lagoon on the other which may or may not hold crocodiles but is full of black water from the sewers of Cancun, there's no simple, easy, obvious, powerful action to take. And the militarization is stepping up. There are truckloads of the PPP, the Federal Police, driving around town.

We hear they are installing video cameras everywhere. We hear there are warships in the harbor. We know, though we don't say it, that they have almost infinite resources, the ability to marshal thousands of cops and troops against us, unlimited weaponry, professionals who spend their whole working lives devising security plans and have few constraints on their use of violence. And we have an unknown number of people arriving at unknown times with only marginal means of transport once they get here, the vast majority of whom are unwilling to use violence, and not much else except our creativity, our wits, our willingness to take risks, and our solidarity with each other.

We end the meeting close to midnight, and go out for beer and food again. Another day is over in Cancun, and I'm not sure what we accomplished, but for the moment, we can still sit out under the canopy of Tacos Arabe and laugh.

-- *Starhawk*

[BACK to Cancun Journals Index Page](#)

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