

RNC Update Number 6: A Great Beginning!!

by Starhawk

Today the DNC to RNC march arrived in New York, after walking 258 miles from the Democratic National Convention in Boston to here. They had planned for people to meet them at Columbus Circle, and I arrived after a pleasant afternoon in the Bronx at the community garden the Green Bloc is supporting.

Hundreds of people were gathered on the grass at the entrance to Central Park, under a column with a golden Goddess statue on top who was rising nobly up from three galloping horses. And it was like a wonderful family reunion. I was seeing friends from the march and friends from back home and from other actions. There were masses of media and quite a lot of police but the police were not hassling people and the march negotiated with them for a lane of the street all the way down to Union Square. It took a good two hours before we set off, with a contingent of the march wearing red bandanas to represent a Zapatista insurgency. Wearing masks is illegal in New York, and many of us had feared the cops would just arrest them, but they had carefully framed it as a street theater piece and the police let them alone. Behind them the Bay Area Cluster had yellow flags and birds on sticks and suns, and we followed behind with drummers and a mass of at least five hundred people, maybe more. The police lined the street, escorting us but not bothering anyone, even occasionally smiling and joking with people.

It felt really, really great, to set off and march through the city with such spirit.

Everyone felt joyful—celebrating the great accomplishment of the marchers to have come so far, and the ease with which the police had ceded us space. We were chanting “We love New York: We just hate Bush!” and the Zapatista insurgency led the way. All along the route, people were watching and smiling and giving us the thumbs up sign.

New York is such a dramatic backdrop, with the skyscrapers looming above us and, as dusk fell, all the lights of Broadway coming on. We marched by the theaters, urging people to forget their tickets and come join us. Broadway is glamorous again, reclaimed from the era of tacky sex shows, and we were our own moving theater piece.

At one moment, across the street I saw three African American women dressed up for a night on the town. We were supposed to be silent at that point, so we weren't chanting but they began chanting “No justice, no peace!” and dancing between the parked cars and we couldn't resist their urging to take up the chant. People came out and joined us. At one point, I was walking beside a Latina mother and her three children, at another, a woman with flowing hair and a son with braces who were speaking Arabic and quite joyfully amused at the radical cheerleader with the beard and short red skirt. When we passed 38th St., the whole staff of United for Peace and Justice had come down to the corner to wave flags and cheer us on.

The march ended in Union Square, and everyone dispersed peacefully. Many of us went

back to St. Mark's to hang out and eat food cooked by Seeds of Peace.

It was the first sally, and it went so well and so easily that hopefully it will dispel some of the fear. To be honest, had anyone on the march asked my opinion, I would have told them I thought it was a bad idea. But no one did, and so I kept my mouth shut because it wasn't my action or my decision—even though I did a lot of private soul searching about whether or not I should voice my concerns. But I would have been wrong, anyway—it turned out to be a wonderful event, and in spite of the ongoing propaganda wars about anarchists and terrorists, the masks didn't seem to scare anyone. And it makes me realize how much the fear had crept into me, in spite of all the advice I've been putting out about not being afraid, and how powerful it is when someone just stands forth in spite of all the fear and does something beautiful and brave.

The New York Daily News has a full front page scare article today, a giant headline "Anarchy Inc.", and another whole spread of scare stories and outright lies.

Nevertheless, all the actual people we encounter seem delighted we are here. The busdriver late last night wouldn't let me pay. Tonight Lisa and I went into a store, admitted we were protestors and the shopkeeper brought out his pack with anti-Bush buttons on it and wouldn't let me pay for my candy.

And I think back to a meeting last spring, where Cory and Adam brought the idea of the march to some of us in the Bay Area, asking for feedback and support. And now they've done it, a huge feat of organizing and endurance. At the end, at Union Square, all the marcher grabbed each other in a big group hug, just so, so happy. I begin to have a sense that something wonderful could happen here!

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