

RNC Update Number 7: Bikes and Bones

by Starhawk

Last night the police broke bones. They surrounded and arrested hundreds in Critical Mass, the giant mass bicycle ride, that took off from Union Square with five thousand bicycles. I wish I'd seen them leave—I was at a book party and teach-in for David Solnit's book *Globalize Resistance*, in which I have a piece on feminism and globalization. The book is an anthology of writings about the movement, and many of us who wrote for it were there to speak about our pieces.

The book party took place in a community garden in the Lower East Side that was an idyllic little spot among the brownstones and refurbished tenements. It was full of winding paths and raised beds of small trees and flowers blooming in purples and lavenders and pale yellow. We all crowded onto a small lawn and spoke as loudly as we could after the police turned off the sound system. There was a good crowd there in spite of half a dozen competing events, and I would have liked to stay but I had to dash off to a Pagan Cluster meeting.

This was the end of a long day of long subway rides, snatched sandwiches, meetings and trainings that began with dashing off to Brooklyn early in the morning for a nine-AM meeting with the rest of True Security cluster, most of whom didn't show up. We turned the meeting into a Pagan Cluster art party. Then I did two trainings on the Upper West Side at the 4th UU church, which went well and actually had good numbers of people attending. The hardest part of training people is getting them to come to trainings, to know when they are amidst this overwhelming wealth of actions and events, to understand why they might be valuable, and to make time for them. The first training was for the Legion of Crones—our older women's (and men's) affinity group which has volunteered to do security for some of the spaces. The second was Street Magic, our basic training in using a knowledge of energy working and expanded states of awareness on the street. The UU space is a big, beautiful sanctuary with a high, arched ceiling and stained glass windows, and Deborah who does full moon circles there has organized a full roster of healers to be available there and on alternate days at the Community Church on 35th St. as well as at St. Mark's. I would have liked to stay and get some massage but I had to dash off to the book party, and so it goes.

I rode downtown with Nadine, an old friend and organizer from Washington DC, and with Bowen and Lyra, two of my Goddess-kids who are now just grown up enough to come to this action. They are the children of my friends Ross and Anne Hill, the kids mentioned often in the book *Ann and I* wrote together with Diane Baker, *Circle Round: Raising Children in Goddess Tradition*. Now Bowen is eighteen, Lyra seventeen, and they do credit to their upbringing. They are having a great time running around New York together, not at all intimidated by the city and the subways and the general level of tension. Some part of me is terrified at the thought of them being on the streets in the

midst of an action. I want to protect them, and surely they are far too young for this. I have to remind myself that Bowen is old enough to be sent to Iraq to sit on top of an armored personnel carrier and kill people and get shot himself. And at Lyra's age, I was hitchhiking alone up and down the coast of California, and living with my boyfriend.

By the time I get to the Cluster Meeting, I 'm tired. We have a good meeting. More people have come, and some of them are old friends I'm delighted to see. But every few moments I' get a beep from our new text messaging system, telling what 's happening with the Critical Mass. Riots cops forming up on 7th ave. Surrounded at 7th and 13th. Arrests have begun. Safe place at St. Mark's, at 10th and 2nd Ave. Arrests at 14th and 2nd Ave. Streets blocked off very close to St. Mark's.

We try sending some energy to our friends getting arrested, but finally a group of us can't ignore the tension any longer, so we close the meeting quickly and head down to St. Mark's. The streets around are lined with vans and cops, but they are walking away, helmets off, chilling out. The park in front of the church is packed with people, the street is lined with cops. Apparently the mass arrests began when the police just appeared out of nowhere and formed a line in front of one group of cyclists. Then another line of cops appeared behind. There is another group trapped up at 35th and Park. Here at St Mark's, one activist got his bike pushed up against a police moped and the wheels got caught. The cop started beating him pretty brutally and a group moved in to protect him—then the cops let loose and began beating them badly. We're hearing reports of compound fractures, bones sticking out of the skin.

The crowd around the church is energized, but neither panicked nor frenzied. Things have cooled down, and mostly people are walking around and greeting old friends and sharing information. I'm buddying up with Delyla, a street medic from Montana who is another old friend and who likes to move through a crowd in the same way I do, slowly, scanning the energy. We each know too many people in this crowd, get pulled into side conversations. I run into Tom Hayden, who tells me the TV coverage of the ride was great, great interviews and stories. "Why don't the police object when the street gets too full of cars?" one of the riders had asked.

And indeed, why don't they? Why arrest and beat people for riding bicycles?

The police had been threatening to shut down Critical Mass. The arrests tonight aren't a huge surprise, but they are a disappointment after last night's beautiful march. It's hard to predict what this portends for our upcoming actions, whether it will intimidate more people from coming out to march today and Sunday and Monday, or whether people will get tired of intimidation and march anyway. We have a plan to do massive nonviolent direct action trainings during the forming up period and at the end of the march, and in Central Park where many people will head in defiance of the denial of a permit.

If you're in or around New York, we need you! We need you to come out and march on Sunday with United for Peace and Justice, if you do nothing else. Actually we need you to get on the phone today and call up ten of your friends who weren't going to come and persuade them to join you, to show that intimidation doesn't work, that instead of being paralyzed by fear, people can be roused to action. You can join the

Pagan Cluster—we'll be forming up on 20th St. between 5th and 6th Avenue, at the Green Dragon, at 10:30 AM on Sunday, August 29. Look for the spiral banners.

And if you can't come yourself, we need you to be ready to make calls and send emails and faxes and letters on our behalf, to apply that political pressure that just might prevent more broken bones.

Below is a list of useful numbers and emails; you might start by calling Bloomberg and the police and ask why they arrest bicyclists? Thanks!

In preparation for the A31 action please distribute these numbers widely.

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg

(212) 788 7418 or (212) 788 3000 or (212) 788-9711

FAX (212) 788-2460

E-MAIL: nyc.gov/html/mail/html/mayor.html

District Attorney Robert Morgenthau

(212) 335-9000

Police Commissioner Raymond W. Kelly

www.nyc.gov/html/mail/html/mailnypd.html

or call

(646)610-5410 or (646) 610-5865

or

NYC Police Switchboard

(646)610-5000

Ask for Commissioners office

Governor George E. Pataki

518-474-8390

www.state.ny.us/governor/

Manhattan City Council Members:

Gale A. Brewer: www.nyccouncil.info/constituent

[/contact_member.cfm?con_id=28](http://contact_member.cfm?con_id=28) brewer@council.nyc.ny.us

brewer@council.nyc.ny.us

Phone: (212) 873-0282 Fax: (212) 873-0279

Alan J. Gerson

www.nyccouncil.info/constituent/contact_member.cfm?con_id=7

gerson@council.nyc.ny.us

Phone: (212) 788-7722 Fax: (212) 788-7727

Robert Jackson

www.nyccouncil.info/constituent/contact_member.cfm?con_id=76

jackson@council.nyc.ny.us

Phone: (212) 234-0551 Fax: (212) 234-0552 or

Phone: (212) 928-1322 Fax: (212) 928-4177

Margarita Lopez

www.nyccouncil.info/constituent/contact_member.cfm?con_id=12
lopez@council.nyc.ny.us

Phone: (212) 614-8751 Fax: (212) 614-8813

Eva S. Moskowitz

www.nyccouncil.info/constituent/contact_member.cfm?con_id=40
moskowitz@council.nyc.ny.us

Phone: (917) 521-2616/2640

Fax: (917) 521-1293

Gifford Miller

www.nyccouncil.info/constituent/contact_member.cfm?con_id=39
miller@council.nyc.ny.us

Phone: (212) 535-5554 Fax: (212) 535-6098

Miguel Martinez

www.nyccouncil.info/constituent/contact_member.cfm?con_id=29
martinez@council.nyc.ny.us

Phone: (212) 818-0580 Fax: (212) 818-0706

Bill Perkins

www.nyccouncil.info/constituent/contact_member.cfm?con_id=42
perkins@council.nyc.ny.us

Phone: (212) 662-4440 Fax: (212) 932-1130

Christine C. Quinn

www.nyccouncil.info/constituent/contact_member.cfm?con_id=3
quinn@council.nyc.ny.us

Phone: (212) 564-7757 Fax: (212) 564-7347

Philip Reed

www.nyccouncil.info/constituent/contact_member.cfm?con_id=41
reed@council.nyc.ny.us

Phone: (212) 828-9800 Fax: (212) 722-6378

Donations for the action can be sent to:

RANT

1405 Hillmount St.

Austin, Texas

78704

U.S.A.

Copyright (c) 2004 by Starhawk. All rights reserved. This copyright protects Starhawk's right to future publication of her work. Nonprofit, activist, and educational groups may circulate this essay (forward it, reprint it, translate it, post it, or reproduce it) for nonprofit uses. Please do not change any part of it without permission.

Starhawk is an activist, organizer, and author of *Webs of Power: Notes from the Global*

Uprising and eight other books on feminism, politics and earth-based spirituality. She teaches [Earth Activist Trainings](#) that combine permaculture design and activist skills, and works with the [RANT trainer's collective](#), that offers training and support for mobilizations around global justice and peace issues.
