

RNC Update Number 8: The Web

by Starhawk

Oddly enough, I went shopping this morning. I'd come to a point where every piece of clothing I owned was either torn, stained, or lost, and I was down to one pair of jeans which were really going to have to get washed someday, and there was nothing left to do but whip out the credit card, close my eyes to the "Made in a Madagascar Sweat Shop" labels, and find at least one other pair that would fit. It's what I need to face the prospect of riot cops and jail: a good pair of jeans with deep pockets, and a good haircut.

Then I was faced with a painful choice between the women's march across the Brooklyn Bridge and the garden actions in the Bronx. I went up to the Bronx, just in case the Green Bloc needed support from someone else with experience organizing garden work parties. They were transforming a small, overgrown lot owned by a church, cutting some of the trees and vines to open it to the sun, laying out curving beds and sheet mulching with cardboard to create a garden. In a second lot a few blocks away, they were sheet mulching a vacant lot with a sheer rock ledge that will become another garden, and in a third lot which is already planted and graced with a giant tree house, Mia from Sebastopol and Scotty from Austin were leading a workshop on bioremediation with mushrooms. It was sweet. I spent an hour or two pruning trees, not thinking about cops at all, or solidarity demands or action logistics or even magic, just about which branch should come off and where to make the cut and how each cut affects the flow of energy through the tree. In every action now since Sacramento, we've left a garden behind. The media never cover it, and most people don't know it, but I feel good about it, and good about supporting the struggles of people in the South Bronx and the Lower East Side to keep some green spaces in their neighborhood, some possibility of growing food and flowers and self-reliance. Each tiny garden amidst the concrete is like a glimpse of a beautiful otherworld, a more relaxed place where people sit among trees and visit and barbecue food and eat together in the open air.

My own garden, I'm told, has been ravaged by the deer who have eaten all the squash and tomatoes.

I'm also told the Women's March was wonderful, spirited and beautiful with women chanting, "This is what a feminist looks like!"

Then the Pagan Cluster, more than fifty of us, met at Enchantments, an occult store a block from St. Mark's that kindly loaned us the use of their garden—s. We started by teaching the songs for the evening full moon ritual, and we filled the garden with energy. We shared information and then tried to form people up into affinity groups. We ended up with seven or eight affinity group—if they stick.

The Full Moon Ritual was in St Mark's yard, which is the de facto convergence center, It was crammed full of people and I was wondering how we were ever going to clear it out, when the clouds burst and gave us a sudden flurry of rain. The weather reminded me of Cancun, hot and sultry with occasional cloudbursts that clear the air. We set up the space, rolled up balls of yarn, and eventually began.

I was having trouble 'seeing' or even feeling the ritual, but I felt like the top of my head was about to pop off from the energy of it all.

I was somehow prevented from being at either ritual planning meeting, and kept my strong opinions to myself except for saying I would like to do one piece. Some of the other Pagans formed a gate for people to walk through and be sprinkled with sacred water and smudged with incense for purification. We called in the elements very simply, with just a word or two for each and because there was so much noise and it was so hard to hear, people began doing 'repeat after me' with everything each person invoking said: "We call the ai." "WE CALL THE AIR!" a thundering chorus would echo. "Welcome fire!" "WELCOME FIRE!"

When it came my turn, everything I tried to do to explain what our ritual intent had to be repeated by the Chorus of All and the whole thing began to feel like a religious service of responsive reading. The oddest phrases would be echoed and re-echoed and turned into little fragments of chants. We had lots of balls of yarn and I was encouraging people to begin weaving them into a web. People were calling out things they wanted to weave into the web, "Truth". "Justice". "Clean air." "Health care" Somehow a fragment of the explanation took hold as a chant: "The weaving is the center of the magic of the web." "THE WEAVING IS THE CENTER OF THE MAGIC OF THE WEB." "THE WEAVING IS THE CENTER OF THE MAGIC OF THE WEB." "THE WEAVING IS THE CENTER OF THE MAGIC OF THE WEB."

I would have liked to explain a lot of things: to talk about all the web rituals we've done over the years, to talk about the web as a model of connectedness, the web of life, the web of roots and micorrhizal fungi that holds the soil and grows the trees, the web of connections we'd woven and would continue to weave. But I couldn't be heard well enough to say anything beyond the simplest of instructions. It was a strangely perfect model of power. I as the leader of the moment was utterly powerless to be heard, unless everyone chose to help me by echoing what I said. And when they did, a different creative process came into play, one that was not mine but the collective's, making poems out of phrases, chants out of snatches of words.

Everyone began weaving and several moved into the circle to help move balls of yarn along and then suddenly everyone was in the web, dancing and weaving yarn around each other and above each other's heads. I moved back to join the drummers and just watched. I've done many web rituals but never seen one like this. Everyone was weaving so intently, so seriously, as if they really were weaving the web to link us all, the web of connection and protection, the web to bring the Empire down. And it had to be tight, and knotted well. The web grew in intricacy, somehow lifted above people's heads and it appeared to me to be truly a silver, gleaming spiderweb, shimmering in the moonlight and the streetlights, with people's heads poking out like seals scanning the air above the sea.

I was drumming and just let myself go into the energy, letting it move through my hands and my body and pumping it into the web. The chant wove and shifted and changed and grew until finally it swelled into a huge, roaring cone of power that became an echoing, strong chord. We held the web above our heads, suspended, and charged it with power. Then we brought it down, and carefully cut pieces from it to tie onto each others' wrists for protection and energy, tying the cut threads back together so the web itself would remain intact.

At the very end of the ritual, Seth Tobocman who is a New York artist, a genius of graphics and cartoons and visuals, brought eight huge banners on big poles of cardboard tubes (the NYPD won't allow poles in marches) and presented them to us.

They were made for the life after capitalism conference and four show the world as it is, four as we want it to be. They are stark, strong images: a pyramid with an evil eye, people with linked arms in a heart, a dam with water breaking through. He said they were a gift from the Revolutionary Artists' collective (and forgive me, I probably have that name wrong but will get it right for whatever permanent form this ends up in), the group of awesome local artists who are supporting the actions. He said they wanted to welcome us to New York City, a city that is said to be ugly but that they believed was a revolutionary city. It was one of the sweetest, most beautiful gestures, an act of healing for whatever tensions might still linger about New Yorkers and outsiders coming in.

And it gave us something stunning to carry in today's march, for which I've got to stop writing and get going. Today is the big one, and we'll find out if the campaigns of intimidation worked, or not.

Donations for the action can be sent to:

RANT
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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.

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