

## **At the Crossroads:**

### **Come to New York to Oppose the Republican National Convention**

**by Starhawk**

This is a letter for anyone who is swearing at your TV every night, sickened by the images of torture in the newspaper, disgusted by the lies, fuming after viewing Fahrenheit 911, and waking up in a cold sweat in the middle of the night feeling helpless and wondering what the hell you can do about it all:

Come to New York. Come at the end of August to join the marches, demonstrations, and nonviolent direct actions protesting the Republican National Convention.

There are strong moral and strategic reasons to come, to mount a powerful and big opposition to the policies of the Bush administration. And although one progressive magazine recently suggested we confine ourselves to candlelight vigils, there are important reasons for taking stronger actions, that directly, nonviolently, confront the institutions and architects of that power, including the corporations that fund and direct it, the agencies that enforce it's policies, and the media that colludes in the lies.

Our country stands at a crossroads. Democracy in the United States has always been an imperfect experiment, leaving out many, many groups, conducted on stolen land.

It's never lived up to the ideals we pledged allegiance to as kids in school, of liberty and justice for all. But those ideals are still worth striving for. Now we must decide whether we will continue the struggle to broaden and extend democracy, or whether we will abandon it entirely to the rule of lies, brute force and fear.

Democracy has never been extended through timidity. It has been carried forward only when individuals and movements have risked themselves to actively confront abusive power, withdraw consent from its functioning, and challenge the legitimacy of abusive institutions.

The Bush forces have maintained power because the legitimacy of their policies has been tacitly accepted even by those who disagree with them. They have set the framework of discussion, and the Democrats, the media, the groups who are supposed to function as counterforces have accepted their frame.

We must form a counterforce on the streets, the only place where social movements that challenge power have ever been carried forward. We will act nonviolently, to embody the values we stand for of compassion and liberation, and to make clear where the violence in society stems from: those same policies of lies, brute force and fear and their enforcement on those unwilling to collude with them.

In taking action in New York, we join that tradition of nonviolent direct action and civil disobedience, that has carried forward every social movement in this country that has sought to broaden the base of democracy, from the abolition of slavery to suffrage for women to the rights of labor to the civil rights movement. We set a new frame. We make clear that Bush's power does not rest on the consent of the governed. He was not elected legitimately. His pre-emptive war, are justified by lies, and his assaults on civil liberties are not legitimate.

Our actions will send a strong message out to five key groups:

### **The Republicans**

We need to make it clear that the current policies do not have popular support, and that the people of this country will not stand by passively and let another coup take place.

### **The Other Politicians, Democrats, Miscellaneous Media, etc.**

We need to make it clear that we want more than a choice between Republicans and the republican elite, that if Kerry and the Democrats will not challenge Bush's framework, we will. We are a force to be reckoned with, and they need to start tuning their policies to us.

### **The World**

We need to show all those international allies that Bush has offended or jettisoned, all those former friends he has alienated, all the threatened nations on his enemy list and all the victims of his policies that vast numbers of us oppose his actions and everything he stands for.

### **Ourselves.**

You'll feel good about yourself if you come. You'll have done something. You'll have refused to be merely a passive victim, and asserted your right to be an active shaper of the future. You'll be able to look at yourself in the mirror with pride.

### **Each other.**

We need to know we're not alone in this. We need to see each other, to see the masses and crowds of us who say that this country and the world deserve something better.

We need to look each other in the face and hear our voices joined in thunderous chants and feel the linked rhythm of our marching feet shake the fortresses of power.

If we don't take action, if we limit ourselves to mild expressions of discontent, we will undoubtedly be safer in the moment. But we will have moved further into a huge, longterm danger, of continuing the slide into tacit acceptance that we are not the people we thought we were, not the liberators of the world but its jailors, not the defenders of human rights but the torturers of Abu Ghraib.

If we do take action, we can win **three** key vitally important strategic goals:

We can set a new frame, taking the media focus away from the coronation ceremonies inside the convention and out onto the streets, to our opposition and our demands and our alternative vision.

We can delegitimize Bush and his policies by showing the breadth and depth of our opposition.

We can offer an alternative: embodying in our organizing and our actions the values we stand for: compassion, diversity, nonviolence, freedom, creativity and love, embodying a vision of a society based on real democracy, on liberty and justice, not for a privileged few, but for all.

In short, we can turn away from the road to Abu Ghraib and set our country on a new direction. I think that's worth the risk, and I invite you to join the joyful and courageous company of those who will march, demonstrate, and take nonviolent direct action in New York City during the Republican National Convention this August.

### **A Very Rough Schedule of Events;**

August 29 United for Peace and Justice March

August 30 Poor Peoples' March

August 31 Day of Nonviolent Direct Action!

September 1 Labor March

For a full schedule of events and links to all the groups organizing, see:

<http://www.counterconvention.org>

### **What the Day of Action Will Look Like:**

4 PM: Coordinated nonviolent direct actions focused on oppressive aspects of Bush's policies, both interfering and making visible our alternatives. Specifics are being decided by clusters and spokescouncils.

7 PM Converge on the Republican National Convention to reclaim our public spaces and take back democracy.

### **How to Get Involved in Direct Action:**

Nonviolent direct action needs people who will stand on the front lines and take risks—but for every person who does, five to ten others are needed to take on safe and legal support roles: helping to staff the convergence center, staying by the phone to relay messages, helping provide food, water, childcare, medical care, legal support, emotional support and healing. Whatever your age, physical condition, level of experience or ability to take risks, you can make a contribution.

To participate in nonviolent direct action, you can: Form an affinity group: a small group of friends who can come to the action together, provide support at home (feed the cat, calm down the relatives, etc.), comfort and nurturing when you come back, and support each other at the action.

Attend a nonviolent direct action training. Trainings will be offered in New York city regularly leading up to the action, many are scheduled in other communities. If you

would like to organize one in your own community, contact: For trainings in your community contact Ruby at [rubyruth@surglobal.net](mailto:rubyruth@surglobal.net) Or contact the NY Trainers Collective at 206 333-6448 or [trainings-nornc@riseup.net](mailto:trainings-nornc@riseup.net)

Spokescouncils take place every Tuesday night in New York City. You can attend or send a representative from your group. For schedules and information, see: [www.shoutheardroundtheworld.org](http://www.shoutheardroundtheworld.org)

If you can't come with a group, affinity groups will be formed at trainings and at spokescouncils leading up to the action. Try to at least bring a buddy, or plan to make a new friend. Or join up with one of the clusters already forming.

And if you really can't come, please donate to help others get there. Check the websites below, or find a young activist in your community and help her or him get there! And be prepared to support the actions with calls, emails, faxes, letters to the editor, etc.

To get Starhawk's daily updates, check [www.starhawk.org](http://www.starhawk.org) or get on the mailing list by emailing [Starhawk-subscribe@lists.riseup.net](mailto:Starhawk-subscribe@lists.riseup.net) and putting 'subscribe' in the subject line.

For an overview of all groups and events, see: [www.counterconvention.org](http://www.counterconvention.org)

For the August 31 Day of Action, see: [www.shoutheardroundtheworld.com/](http://www.shoutheardroundtheworld.com/)

Some clusters organizing actions:

West Coast Cluster  
[www.actagainstwar.org](http://www.actagainstwar.org)

Pagan Cluster  
[www.pagancluster.org](http://www.pagancluster.org)

School of the Americas  
[www.soa.org](http://www.soa.org)

War Resisters League  
[www.warresisters.org/](http://www.warresisters.org/)

For August 29 march and rally, housing board, and much general info, see: [www.unitedforpeace.org](http://www.unitedforpeace.org)

For information on training for direct action, see: [www.rantcollective.org](http://www.rantcollective.org)

Other related websites:

<http://www.rncnotwelcome.org>

<http://www.rncwatch.org>

<http://www/norc.org>

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