

Code Pink: Women's Pre-Emptive Strike for Peace Call to Action

We call on women around the world to rise up and oppose the war in Iraq. We call on mothers, grandmothers, sisters and daughters, on workers, students, teachers, healers, artists, writers, singers, poets, and every ordinary outraged woman willing to be outrageous for peace.

Women have been the guardians of life—not because we are better or purer or more innately nurturing than men, but because the men have busied themselves making war. Because of our responsibility to the next generation, because of our own love for our families and communities and this country that we are a part of, we understand the love of a mother in Iraq for her children, and the driving desire of that child for life.

Our leaders tell us we that we can easily afford hundreds of billions of dollars for this war. But in the United States of America, many of our elders who have worked hard all their lives now must choose whether to buy their prescription drugs, or food. Our children's education is eroded. The air they breathe and the water they drink are polluted. Vast numbers of women and children live in poverty.

If we cannot afford health care, quality education and quality of life, how can we afford to squander our resources in attacking a country that is no proven immediate threat to us? We face real threats every day: the illness or ordinary accident that could plunge us into poverty, the violence on our own streets, the corporate corruption that can result in the loss of our jobs, our pensions, our security.

In Iraq today, a child with cancer cannot get pain relief or medication because of sanctions. Childhood diarrhea has again become a major killer. 500,000 children have already died from inadequate health care, water and food supplies due to sanctions. How many more will die if bombs fall on Baghdad, or a ground war begins?

We cannot morally consent to war while paths of peace and negotiation have not been pursued to their fullest. We who cherish children will not consent to their murder. Nor do we consent to the murder of their mothers, grandmothers, fathers, grandfathers, or to the deaths of our own sons and daughters in a war for oil.

We love our country, but we will never wrap ourselves in red, white and blue. Instead, we announce a Code Pink alert: signifying extreme danger to all the values of nurturing, caring, and compassion that women and loving men have held. We choose pink, the color of roses, the beauty that like bread is food for life; the color of the dawn of a new era when cooperation and negotiation prevail over force.

We call on all outraged women to join us in taking a stand, now. And we call upon our brothers to join with us and support us. These actions will be initiated by women, but

not limited to women. Stand in the streets and marketplaces of your towns with banners and signs of dissent, and talk to your neighbors. Stand before your elected representatives: and if they will not listen, sit in their offices, refusing to leave until they do. Withdraw consent from the warmongers. Engage in outrageous acts of dissent. We encourage all actions, from public education and free speech to nonviolent civil disobedience that can disrupt the progress toward war.

<http://www.codepink4peace.org>

(NOTE: the above page will open in a new browser window.)

A Code Pink Diary

-- By Starhawk

Tuesday, October 1, 2002

I am mostly thinking about how to perhaps take in a museum and go to the airport when I drive over to meet with Medea Benjamin of Global Exchange, to talk about organizing around the war in Iraq. I'm in Washington DC, staying on for a day or two after the actions around the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. The war vote is coming up in Congress in the coming week. Medea is hanging out with Diane Wilson, who has been organizing in her home state of Texas against major toxic polluters, Mary Bull, who spearheads Save the Redwoods/Boycott the Gap, Margo Bielecki who is a climber and activist from California. We're joined later by Jodi Evans and Carolyn Casey, astrologer, writer and host of the Visionary Activist radio show.

I was thinking in terms of a leisurely breakfast conversation about long term organizing. I was definitely not thinking about doing an action—I'd spent Friday morning on the streets with the Pagan cluster marching as part of the Anti-Capitalist Convergence actions to shut down DC. By nine AM, we were in jail—where we'd remained for thirty-six hours, missing the events of Saturday. On Sunday, we'd marched for peace. On Monday, we'd done press conferences and media work. I was ready to go home.

But by the end of the afternoon, I'd postponed my flight, helped to dream up a series of actions for the next day, written a call to action, scouted at least one of our action sites, helped to make signs and banners, and recruited the remaining Pagan cluster men as our support team.

Wednesday, October 2

We wake up too early, once again. Dear Goddess, why can't we do midday actions? But we troop downtown in organized fashion to the White House gates, where Senate leaders are supposed to pass through to meet with the President. We are wearing pink T-shirts or pink sashes that say 'NO WAR!' We unfurl anti-war banners against the fence. Diane Wilson, an amazingly brave and athletic woman older than me, leaps lightly up onto one of the gate posts and unfurls a banner. She gets arrested, but also gets on major news media.

After checking what is going to happen with her, we move out, regroup, have coffee. We go on to the Capitol steps. This is the site we have not scouted—to our deep regret, because just where we've called a press conference, the entire side is under construction and blocked. However, we gather our supporters on the House side, and some media does indeed turn up. We march up to the steps, unfurl a banner. Several members of our team strip down to dove-covered bras and underwear, and we begin our radical cheer:

"We're putting our bodies on the line,
You Congresspeople better get some spine,
We say Stand Back,
Don't attack,
Innocent children in Iraq!
We say Stand Back,
Don't attack,
Innocent children in Iraq!
We say No!
To war!
We say No!
To War!
We say No!
To War!
Peace is what we're calling for!

And a little call and response at the end:

We don't want to bomb Iraq,
We want to take our country back!

We don't want your oil war,
Peace is what we're calling for!

Osama Bin Laden we hear you say,
'Bomb Iraq and make my day!'

We hand out flyers to Congresspeople coming through, and astound and possibly horrify an entire civics class from a high school in North Carolina. Again, we get media. No one gets arrested.

4 PM.

I have to leave, to catch my already postponed flight. But Medea and the others get into the hearing that will mark up the bill in the House to open debate on the war. At an opportune moment, they strip off their blouses, reveal their T-shirts, and start chanting our No War in Iraq chants, disrupting the hearing. Medea does get arrested—possibly because this is the second hearing she's disrupted in two weeks, but the others are simply escorted out.

Conclusion:

The war vote has happened, but the war has not yet begun. The half dozen of us involved in planning the actions and putting out this call are, indeed, wild, unreasonable, awesome and outrageous women. But we are not alone! We know that there are thousands, hundreds of thousands like us out there, in cities and small towns and farms all across the US.

Imagine if we all rose up, if we all committed a few outrageous acts of rebellion against this forced march to war. If we kept our opposition visible, creative, nonviolent but still right in the face of power. Imagine a blast of pink in your town council meeting, a pink attack on your local oil company or gas station, a pink witness in the downtown shopping mall. Last week, a group of youth erupted from the audience of a live show on MTV with an antiwar message. Think of all those women's talk shows....pink T-shirts under that long sleeved blouse, anyone?

This is a Code Pink Alert: meaning an immanent threat to peace, and to the values of compassion, nurturing and tolerance that caring women (and men!) hold dear.

Code Pink—it's a movement you can start yourself. All it takes is a scrap of pink cloth, a little paint, and an outrageous refusal to be silenced.

-- *Starhawk*

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