

Reclaim the Commons: Daily Update

The Really, Really Free Market

by Starhawk

Sunday, June 6, 2004

We began yesterday at the Justice for Palestine Coalition's demo outside SBC Park, where pro-Israel supporters were holding an "Israel in the Ballpark" celebration. We held signs and banners, chanted "Free, Free Palestine" and "Long live intifada!," and the coalition did street theater as people who looked like my aunts and uncles and the kids I went to Hebrew School with filed past. I could see them steeling themselves to walk through the crowd and I could so easily imagine the dialogue going on about it before and after. Everyone was fairly mellow, no one was attacking or arguing, but there was not much dialogue going on, either, and probably can't be in that situation. I'm not sure, really, where it can go with the mainstream Jewish community here. There is more dialogue and overt dissent within Israel itself, where the peace movement is small but vocal and unashamed.

The Coalition's sound system was not working, so we loaned them ours for a very short program that allowed us to express our solidarity and then go on the march we had long planned for this morning, to culminate in the Really, Really Free Market. Our original plan was for this Sunday to be our big day of legal, permitted actions. But then ANSWER, without any consultation with us, planned its [antiwar] march on Saturday and we decided to shift and be a contingent in theirs instead, as we couldn't see trying to bring people out for two big marches in two days. But it has left us without a centerpiece, a big draw to build for the direct action on Tuesday.

We manage to extricate our group from the rally, after some hurried consultation with coms--communications--about the locations of police along the route. We march up 3rd Street, a small but spirited contingent, joined along the way by some giant puppets. Along the march, I start to feel good. We take a lane of the street. A line of motorcycle cops accompany us, but they are doing what I thought they'd do: letting us march and just guarding the space. We pass by Moscone Center, where the conference will begin, chant outside the Museum of Modern Art, amusing and we hope enlightening the tourists at the sidewalk cafe, and negotiate with the cops to let us march past the Marriott where a jobs fair is being held. They want us to march on the sidewalk, which is okay by me--all that much closer to the people inside whom we want to hear us.

I make up two new chants:

Reclaim the commons!
Take it back!

Seeds will grow
When the Empire cracks!

And

Biotech medicine,
I'm not sure,
First they give you cancer
Then they profit from the cure!

The second one, I feel with some pride, encapsulates our key argument against much of the medical biotech--that the companies who are funding it and thereby choosing its direction, like Bayer, are also key manufacturers of pesticides and toxins that cause cancer, and are therefore directing it away from investigating environmental causes and prevention.

Finally we march up to the Really, Really Free Market, which is a little piece of heaven. In Union Square, surrounded by Macy's and Nieman Marcus and all the big department stores, we have blankets filled with clothing to give away, booths for massage and Tarot readings, smiling young women with baskets of lavender and flowers, an open mike for poetry and music, and a big stage full of plants people have brought to give away--squashes and tomatoes and eggplants. Maybe at the end of this all I'll have time to plant my own garden. It's full of a joyful, beautiful spirit and everyone is really, really happy. Except me. I'm obsessing about the fact that we have utterly run out of postcards and flyers and anything explaining what this is all about--a factor of too few people bottomlining too many things, and the free food is still there but no bowls to eat it with, and my blood sugar is dropping. And, I think, I'm still dealing with such a complex mix of emotions stirred up by the Palestine demonstration, emotions I don't have time to sift through. And the ongoing, underlying worry about our friends in Mexico. My housemate Bill and I have a small fight--which is nothing new, we've been losing our tempers at each other periodically for twenty years and always end up laughing and making up. Which we do, later, after I go and buy a corporate sandwich and rehydrate. The mood and the beauty of the event are so sweet--who could cling to a bad mood? And we end with a beautiful spiral dance. I am starting to lead it, drumming and we're singing the Reclaim the Commons chant which I realize works perfectly to Standard Pagan Chant Tune C, and I'm thinking that I'm tired, wondering if I really have the energy to drum up a cone of power at the end all by myself--when out of the corner of my eye I see Alphonsus Mooney, my old friend and my absolute favorite person to drum with in the entire world, come striding up with a jimbe around his waist. Somewhere the gods are looking after this mobilization, after all! Another drummer joins us in the middle, and I'm having a good time, loving the energy and loving having someone else pick it up and push it farther, as we let the chant lose its words, swell and rise and fall, charging us up with the power of plants pushing through cracks in the concrete, cracks in the Empire.

After that, we go off to greet the busses of delegates on their way to a gala at Fort Mason, where the East Bay Green Bloc stages a food fight between the US and Africa in the midst of a key intersection. It's a great moment, watching the food fly (it's all stuff that is on its way to the compost pile--we don't want to waste good food or to buy bad

stuff to throw.)

And then it's meetings until midnight. And now off for another day of it.

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