

Dear friends,

I'm safely back from Quebec--tired and a bit toxic from all the tear gas, but basically great! I'm still amazed and in awe at what happened there. It was huge and I don't just mean by numbers. Organizationally and infrastructure wise, it was pretty messy. A clear plan and goal there was not. Cooperation and collaboration among groups was limited. Yet in spite of all this, tens of thousands of people rose up, took over the city, tore down the fence, danced to and from the teargas, drummed, chanted and sung up the spirits and brought a power to the streets that was overwhelming.

There was enormous respect and support for one another (no matter what their tactical flavor), the neighborhood of St. Jean Baptiste welcomed us. Homes had signs for bathrooms inside, hoses were run out of windows to wash one's face, the stores stayed open and offered goggles and masks near the front.

There were wonderful, creative initiatives everywhere including a catapult that sent teddy bears sailing over our heads to the police. Great signs and graffiti covered the area. Theater, puppets, flags were there but few. The Living River, one of the main groups with whom Iran and supported was initiated by the Pagan Cluster in an attempt to deliver the Cochabamba Water Declaration to the Delegates. Made up of mostly women in their 40's and 50's (the oldest 84) they became a powerful force in the streets, people would applaud when we entered a space and asked us not to leave when it was time to flow on. Our songs were heard repeated by others and the magic and ritual so clearly changed the dynamics and energy at crucial times. The River was probably one of the only groups who succeeded in de-escalating an intense confrontation with a line of riot police who came out to defend a hole in the wall when we sat down right in front of them.

There was a great women's action on Thursday night where hundreds of women climbed the fence, weaving a web from cloth and materials sent from women around the world. Soon after, the torch light march came through with close to 1000 in strong resistance. On Friday, the people took over. Within minutes of the CLAC march arrival, young men walking with such determination jumped and pulled and the wall came down. While the fence at Rene Leveques came down, several thousand more march with GOMM to the perimeter at cote de Abraham. Both were sites of much confrontation and resistance over the next few days.

Saturday's march was amazing even though they march away from the fence (angering many). One news station reported over 60,000. They got to the park 4 kilometers (2.4 miles) away and still, many more had yet to leave the assembly site. The trade unionists were everywhere with radical cheerleaders, LOLA- Little Old Lady Activists, black block, witches, students and more!

Determination, courage and growth were the state of the day and the nights.

While things were thrown, including molotovs, rocks, marbles and billiard balls, while some windows were broken and fires were set, it never really felt violent. Scary yes, but not violent by us. The police responded with TEAR GAS for 48 hours straight just about and when they weren't spraying it, it still hung in the air. Helicopters were everywhere. They used rubber and plastic bullets, some pepper spray and water cannons that turned out to be a disappointment because they had expected cold. It was two glorious warm and sunny days! Some people were seriously hurt, broken bones, lost fingers, puncture wounds, surgery on the trachea, hospitals treated over 100 protestors and 50 police. Hundreds more protestors were treated in the streets by an amazing team of street medics and Red

Cross volunteers.

Over 400 people were arrested. Close to 150 by Saturday morning and the rest over the course of the day and night. Saturday night several thousand were under the freeways in the Lower city in a place called Ilot de Fleurie, in the art, music, food and gathering "safe" "green space" while tear gas clouds floated above. They were drumming on every piece of metal that could be found. Starhawk who was with me said it felt like we were drumming down the foundation of the old order. Never have I heard such a sound! Later in the night the police finally came out from behind the perimeter and started arresting more in that area and pushing more and more out into the streets of the lower city.

Saturday night was one of the most intense with the medical clinic gassed, they relocated to the CMAQ indy media site just down the street on cote de Abraham. This was then attacked by police. Fires burned, window broke, arrests were made. On Sunday morning they had taken the Ilot de Fleurie space, arrested 30 people in the kitchen and then bulldozed the food area. More and more people started being snatched throughout the day. Sunday also offered smaller actions of healing, resistance and closure. A hundred or so cleaned up in celebration of Earth Day.

At the prison Sunday night, mostly young people set up camp. They built an incredible tarp "fort" where people kept warm, met and slept. Food came from everywhere, people were being released one by one very slowly and then by midnight or so they began busing them out and dropping them in various locations around the city. Drumming and chanting and singing filled the night. The stories coming out were harsh. There was no real jail solidarity plan, bails are high and for some the arraignments have begun. This piece of the action will continue to need our support!

Despite the wall, the Delegates could not escape! The meeting started late from a "breach in security". Reports came that they couldn't sleep from all the noise. By Saturday the tear gas was so strong, they had to shut off the ventilators in the Conference Center, making it incredibly hot inside. George W, even teared up and coughed while getting into his car. By Sunday night the health department made one of the Hotels throw out food from contamination. On Monday, we got into one of the hotels and went up top. They had front row seats to see the whole thing!

I'm still exhilarated and trying to learn what I've learned. I know the press told little of what really happened in the streets and when I've rested, gotten my pictures and sorted my papers, I'd love to share more!

Lisa

4/26/01

revised 4/27/01