

Spirals

How to Conjure Justice

"Wake Up Muggles! Conjure Justice!"

— The Revel Alliance sticker for the A16 action against the World Bank/IMF.

THIS IS HOW IT WORKS: someone has a vision. Donald goes to the Bear Mounds and is told, "Make spirals. Make them of impermanent materials, on the steps of institutions, governments, banks." We are in Washington, DC, on the second day of actions against the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. We join a march that takes over the downtown streets. We are drumming,

chanting, singing. Giant puppets march with us and above our heads float beautiful banners emblazoned with ears of corn and slogans of justice. I am with Culebra, Evergreen, and Lea, who is eighty-three years old. A cold, drenching rain falls and our voices echo off the walls of stores and corporations. I am warily keeping my eye on the police who line each intersection as we pass. I don't

want Lea to get trapped and arrested. But she does not want to leave. With every step, she seems to shine with a brighter inner glow. The march swells and grows. A fierce joy rises from our chanting, and I see it reflected in Lea's eyes. And then we are trapped, in a massive intersection where many streets come together. The police that guard the streets have on their riot gear. They have covered their badges. "Go with Evergreen," we say to Lea. "Tell them you're eighty-three years old, they'll probably let you out." "But I don't want to leave," Lea says. I don't blame her. I don't want to leave, either. I want to stay in the midst of these thousands of brave and crazy people willing to face tear gas or arrest in order to stand up for justice. So we wait. We bring reporters over to talk to Lea. We borrow a cell phone and call the rest of our cluster. We wait some more. The rain pours down. At last Lea begins to get cold. Reluctantly, she decides to go, and Evergreen goes with her. We have heard that there is a way out further down the street. Culebra and



PHOTOS FROM A17, WASHINGTON, DC
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lower left, upper right — ©2000 Berta A. Daniels

lower center — ©2000 Barbara Walker

I move deeper into the crowd. "Sit down! Sit down!" someone is calling, and we do, although the street is wet. We sing, as the rain pours down. "Hold on, hold on, hold the vision that's being born." We hear voices chanting in Spanish behind us, and shift to "Si, se puede!" Someone brings a small sound system over and Culebra stands up and teaches the Spanish chant to the crowd. "It means, 'Yes, it's possible. It can be done!'" she tells them. "Cesar Chavez used it in the farmworkers' struggle, and many, many people have used it." The small affinity group of Latinos behind us join in with vigor. The Spanish language media come over and interview all of us. The police put on their gas masks. We put on ours. Dan, from our cluster, has joined us. The rain falls in cold sheets. We sit down, waiting for some form of violence to begin. I find chalk in my pocket, and draw a spiral on the street. I write "Justice." Next to me is a young man in black, masked and hooded. I hand him the chalk. He studies it for a long moment, then draws a Circle A and writes, "Resist!" I find another piece of chalk and begin passing it around. The rest of our cluster joins us, with boxes of chalk. It circulates through the crowd. We draw spirals, and the rain dissolves our marks almost as soon as we make them. We do not know this at the time,

but up at the front of the line, the police chief is negotiating with what the media later describe as "a woman dressed as a tree." Mary Bull, wearing a foam redwood, works out a deal. The police uncover their badges. They take off their gas masks. They call for anyone who wants to get arrested to move forward. Someone hands the Chief of police a bouquet of roses. The tension eases. Jugglers appear, and fire eaters dancing with flames, and radical cheerleaders, and drum circles. We stand up, hovering together as the cold rain falls. Under our feet is a labyrinth someone has drawn, which the rain does not wash away.

THIS IS HOW IT WORKS: the Police Chief, who two days before had illegally arrested six hundred people, goes on



T.V. holding his roses and talks about democracy. Meanwhile those who volunteered to get arrested in order to make a statement about justice are kept in handcuffs for many, many hours. They are hit in the face for smiling, or for asking to see a lawyer. They are kept in wet clothes shivering with hypothermia. They are not given food, or water, for so long that some end up drinking from the jail toilets. They are brutalized, intimidated, lied to. In one holding cell deep in the underworld, Cullet leaves a spiral torn from scraps of a dollar bill.

THIS IS HOW IT WORKS: there are twelve of us and the rattlesnake makes thirteen. We are in the redwoods, next to the river we have been fighting to defend, among the trees that will be cut if the Timber Harvest Plan goes through. The snake is in a bucket: she appeared on the driveway as one of our friends was leaving to come to the ritual. We have with us a pile of letters that have been

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of what is stated in press conferences or political campaigns, injustice is embedded in the very structure of these bodies, in the procedures that must be followed, in the questions that can and cannot be asked, in how the debate is framed. If we want justice, we have to conjure it up from another framework. We have to step outside the institutions, walk out into the streets and the forests, drawing impermanent spirals in the face of fear. So we gather in the woods to claim this forest as sacred space, to charge our letters, our petition, our phone calls, with magic, that extra something that may shift the structures just a bit, and create an opening for something new. We sing, we chant, we make offerings, we claim this land as sacred space. We dare to call upon the ancestors although we recognize ourselves as the inheritors of stolen lands. Out of these contradictions, out of our willingness to listen, to guard the soil and the trees and the rivers, to cherish each other and the love that arises from our history of everyday work and quarrels and our common song, we intend to conjure back the salmon, the ancient groves, the community of those indigenous to this place. We draw spirals in the dirt. We leave feathers, yarn, a shell: our altar. We release the snake from her bucket. She is beautiful, the scales on her back glistening in diamond shape, her tale crowned with many rattles. She leans her chin on the shell filled with waters of the world and listens as we sing to her. When we go, she will coil her body into a spiral and remain, a fitting guardian for this land.

THIS IS HOW IT WORKS: someone has a vision that arises from a fierce and passionate love. To make it real, we must love every moment of what we do. Impermanent spirals embed themselves in asphalt, in concrete, in dust. Slowly, slowly, they eat into the foundations of the structures of power. Deep transformations take time. Regeneration arises from decay. Si se puede! It can be done.

Starhawk is the author of many published books on Goddess religion, from "The Spiral Dance" to "Circle Round: Raising Children in Goddess Tradition." She is a feminist, activist, teacher, Witch, gardener, drummer and one of Reclaiming's founders.

Book: Legacy of Luna

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places, which are the holiest of any temples, housing more spirituality than any church, were being turned into clear-cuts and mud slides. I had to do something. I didn't know what that something was, but I knew I couldn't turn my back and walk away."

The opportunity to do something soon presented itself. Hill returned to Arcata, and within a week or so, found herself in Luna for the first time, for a five-day stay. After a second five-day stay, she volunteer to stay in Luna longer, to minimize the time spent getting people to and from the tree to rotate in. That commitment to stay for a month or so became two years.

What is striking about the story she tells from that point on is that it traces her journey from someone with passion and good intentions to an educated and capable activist. She readily admits in the book that she didn't have a lot of knowledge about the forest or logging when she first went up in Luna. But as she came to realize the potential in her presence there, she got the information she needed and presented it whenever the opportunity arose. It's an interesting paradox of this age that she was speaking for an ancient natural order of things, but only able to do so via cell phone.

It is also important to note, as she often does in the book, the importance of spirituality in sustaining such a lengthy action. She is often in touch with spirit — asking for help, trying to overcome anger, frustration and fear, thankful — and it is clear that her relationship to spirit is at the core of what she accomplished in Luna. That relationship is crucial for overcoming the frustrations and feelings of despair which are part of the territory of social action. And perhaps the greatest gift of *Legacy of Luna* is that it illuminates this relationship and what it can accomplish. It is an inspirational story for anyone who wants to work toward making a better world.

Published by Harper San Francisco.

Spiral Dance — November 4, San Francisco

The 2000 Spiral Dance will be held on Saturday, November 4 in San Francisco. Watch the Fall issue for ticket information and calls for volunteers. If you are interested in helping coordinate this annual community ritual, call the Events Line, (415) 339-8150 or visit the website, www.reclaiming.org later in the Summer for information.



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