

A Year After Seattle

Seattle was the most powerful spell I've ever been part of, changing global consciousness, awakening thousands of people to their collective power

OF ALL THE FILMS I've ever seen, the one that has had the deepest impact on my spiritual life is *The Titanic*. I see it as the perfect metaphor for our times. Today, the back pages of the newspaper are filled with stories about how the U.S. and other rich countries are undercutting the global warming negotiations at Den Hague, while forty per cent of the Arctic ice and seventy per

cent of the ocean plankton are already gone. The ship has hit the iceberg, but the passengers are still dancing unawares, and the officers in charge of its direction are still maintaining that it cannot sink.

It's in this context that we need to understand what happened in Seattle a year ago, and what has been happening ever since. Seattle was a revolt among

the passengers, an attempt to force the Captain to turn on the damn lights and change direction. It joined the full force revolt that has already been underway for years in the third class steerage compartments below decks. And it was probably the most significant single action I've ever been involved with, in thirty-five years of activism.

Many Reclaiming Witches were in Seattle. We created ritual and did magical activist trainings. Some of us also did nonviolent direct action trainings, facilitated meetings, helped the medical team, cooked, provided moral support and healing for traumatized blockaders, drummed in the streets, and went to jail. In fact, the "Seattle model" of organizing of affinity groups, spokescouncils, trainings, a convergence center, drums, puppets, color, joy and imagination brought to protest, was in some ways a legacy of ideas and practices Reclaiming has both been rooted in and contributed to. Reclaiming takes much of our form and structure from the culture of direct action in the Bay Area in the eighties,



**Photos from Seattle 1999,
by Ben Read**

when we were beginning. And over the years we've brought magic, ritual, theater and drumming to actions. Several of the main organizers in Seattle were Bay Area folks who directly inherited that tradition, and consciously tried to organize a protest that was visionary, creative, and fun.

When you take action as a Witch, you move through the streets as a sort of multidimensional convoy of spirits, ancestors, and parallel realities. What you do in the physical world becomes a spell, letting loose forces in other realms. You can draw on those forces to open up possibilities in the physical world. Magic and activism are both "the art of changing consciousness at will." Seattle was the most powerful spell I've ever been part of, changing global consciousness, awakening thousands of people to their collective power.

Seattle also sparked a new upsurge in Reclaiming and broader Pagan activism. Many of us went to Washington DC last April to blockade the World Bank and the IMF. Reclaiming folks were at the Republican and Democratic conventions. My partner David and I went to Prague in August to do early trainings for the September actions there. Several of us were at Vandenberg Airforce Base in October to protest the militarization of



space. Our friends and allies were at the School of the Americas. We're in the forests, we're out there supporting the U'wa and protecting the Ichetucknee and doing endless smaller demonstrations and countless hours of organizing in our own communities.

What do Witches bring to an action? In Washington, we also offered magical activism workshops and rituals. The night before the action, we charged balls of yarn for people to take to the blockade. Six months later, a young

woman came up to me at a conference. "I was at that thing you did in Washington," she said. "You know, where we were throwing yarn around."

"Oh, the ritual?" I asked.

"Yeah, that's right." She went on to tell me how terrifying that day had been for her. The morning had begun with a raid on the Convergence Center, which had been shut down just when we were expecting thousands of people to arrive for nonviolence trainings. People's homes had been raided, and other activists had been arrested in their van with lock-down equipment. Police had filled the streets all day, and the rising tension was palpable.

"I was so scared, I didn't think I was going to be able to do the action," she said. "But after the ritual, I felt calm and strong. I could get up the next morning and go to the blockade, and it was all right."

At a meeting, another young woman comes up to me. "I need to find people I can work with who want to do action from a place of spirit," she says. "If I don't, I'm going to self-destruct."

Magic teaches us how not to self-destruct. Grounding, centering, staying calm in crises, calling forth our allies on every level, sensing and shifting energy are the skills of political action as well as



continued on next page

continued from previous page

magical ritual. The inner discipline I've cultivated in order to guide a cone of power in a spiral dance is exactly what I need to stop a charge of horses by sitting down in front of them together with a large contingent of the young anarchists in the black bloc. The skills of reading and shaping energy are as vital for facilitating meetings as for priestessing. And to sustain our activism, we absolutely need the ability to witness and transform profound emotions of grief, rage, fear and despair.

Of course, when we say that magic is about changing consciousness, we must acknowledge that the consciousness most likely to change is our own. In Seattle, around the third or fourth day in jail the younger women around me all agreed that they had been radicalized by the experience, that their lives would never be the same. "Yes, but I already was a radical!" I said. "What's going to happen to me?"

What happened to me was that the political struggle took center stage. The balance shifted. Before Seattle, I had a sane, reasonable life that let me do good spiritual and political work while still spending long hours walking in the woods and supporting myself and my family. Now I've let go of almost all my usual teaching in order to focus my



Ben Reed

major energies on building a movement that can turn this ship around.

I'm not alone in this transformation. A growing number of the most psychically sensitive and wise Witches I know are feeling the same thing: not a sense of panic but a calm, dead sure knowing that the iceberg looms, and that nothing else matters as much as changing the collective course we're on.

That change won't come easy. For it's not just a matter of replacing the helmsman ballrooms on the top and

stifling steerage pens below. It means reconceiving the whole notion of captains and chains of command. It means spinning and weaving and hoisting sails to replace the smokestacks.

We are likely to suffer great losses along the way. Already small Pacific Island nations are disappearing below the waves as the ocean rises. Already most of the salmon and most of the redwoods are gone. The forces of repression grow more and more willing to brutalize those who stand against them, and the power they can command sometimes seems invincible.

But I don't believe we'd feel called to do this work if it were hopeless. I smell a change in the wind.

This coming year will bring more opportunities to organize, and to act. As I write, activists are out in the woods defending the forests. Major actions are brewing to stop the April meetings of the FTAA, the extension of NAFTA throughout the Western Hemisphere. Vandenberg will be targeted again in the spring, and a thousand other demonstrations, protests, and campaigns will be organized.

What I bring to this next year of action is what I've learned from years of leading the mammoth, tangled spiral at our ever-larger Spiral Dance Ritual. There's always a moment when

continued on page 55



Anne Hill

Judy Foster

continued from page 6

readings with the depth of her selections. Her voice was unique and commanding. As my partner mentioned to her, "You read like you speak." An apt compliment.

Over New Year's almost eleven years ago, Judy was planning to cook for Pagans who held an annual tree-planting known as Forever Forests. It was being held at our old haunt, Harbin Hot springs, so I decided to go. There I met my dear consort, Tom Lux. She saw me aglow, and with a knowing smile told me that certain of her friends would chide each other when that loving feeling came along, and so called out to me, "Lucky Bitch." Intrigued but not jealous was her nature with me.

Judy was a major player in my initiation. She challenged me to read *The White Goddess*. This information was extremely obtuse to me. Usually I related to a grassroots Reclaiming training, and I have a pea-brain for memorizing and grasping esoteric text on subjects like tree alphabets. Judy, a founding member of the New Reformed Order of the Golden Dawn tradition, opened my sense of history with her poetic vein.

Judy had a lot of pride, a matter-of-fact resignation, and some nagging projects, but didn't necessarily want to talk about the short time left. In September, a gathering in her appreciation at Ashkenaz was a mutual gift that I was grateful to be able to help organize. The room was filled with over two hundred people. Judy brought carefully wrapped photos of herself, her family, her partner Charlie Foster and her daughters. In her final months, she was given time to organize many fine details about her life and spent many precious days with her daughters and loved ones. I, like so many others, was inspired by her life and her passing.

Starhawk: Seattle

continued from page 34

something seems dreadfully wrong. There's a loop we can't unravel, a knot we can't get around, and I have a dull dread in the pit of my

stomach that this time, we really are doomed. But I've learned to keep going. To just keep going, holding the pattern in my mind that I know the dance should take, and trusting in something deeper than me to make it all work out.

And it does. The spiral turns. Life regenerates.

That's the magic we can call on in desperate times. For magic teaches us to hold a vision of a world where Ruby, born on Thanksgiving Day of a romance kindled at Seattle, will have redwoods to walk among, and where her counterpart in Africa, or India, or Brazil will also know forests, abundance, freedom.

And the iron ship transforms to a living vessel we all have a hand in steering.

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: To Follow the Moon

continued from page 36

England with Marion, Basuba's thirteen-year-old niece.

However, sailing for an unknown world does not free them from the intolerance that caused them to leave. Reverend Denton, a Christian minister who is sailing to the new country to "save" the evil heathen there, is also aboard the ship. He is as hostile to these women as he is to the native people of the new continent. He does not hesitate to take credit for the weather work that Fiona does to call the winds so the ship can

go on its way.

To Follow the Moon deals with complex issues, including the tricking of men into becoming indentured servants and, in the character of Madam Dora, a fortune teller, the using of magic to harm others in a clear and intriguing manner.

Fiona's commitment to protect the trees and thus the Earth in which they are rooted is clearly her strength. It gets her into trouble with those that believe the Earth is theirs to exploit. Basuba's rituals to celebrate the turning points of the seasons are an anchor point for her spirituality. Her courage is shown by her wish to be open about what she does.

While we know that the persecution of women for their Earth-loving ways will not disappear in the New World, we are given an engaging picture of how these women support each other as they resist the hostility directed at them. The reader is left with confidence that their resourcefulness will be equal to whatever they face in this unknown land.

I highly recommend this book to adults interested in the European-American past and to young adults in your life to whom you wish to present different options for how life can be lived.

Published by Galde Press, PO Box 460, Lakeville, MN 55044.

Reviewed by Antiga.



The Internet's
Gatekeeper
to
Minds, Body & Spirit

Alternative Market Place

From astrology and holistic health to lifestyle issues and shopping, Alternative Market Place is your internet resource for alternative living.

Visit Our Search Engine & Find

- Alternative Health
- Books
- Clothing
- Crystals & Gemstones
- Divination
- Shopping
- Plus Much More...

<http://alternativemarketplace.com>
Email: market1@ameritech.net

Phone: 810-997-9619
Fax: 810-323-3679
Toll Free: 1-866-813-2200

<http://alternativemarketplace.com>

- List In Our Search Engine & We can help your online business increase sales with targeted web site promotions, internet marketing consulting, strategies and banner advertising.
- Build Traffic To Your Site
 - Provide Direct Marketing
 - Announce a New Product or Service

We are the only professional Targeted Marketing service that binds the mutual interests of Alternative healers, Metaphysical suppliers & New Age Products & Services.

The Sacred Grove

Worker Owned Collective IWW Union Shop

MAGICKAL & SPIRITUAL SUPPLIES

Reference Library-Over 60 Magickal Herbs-Classes-Special Services

924 SOQUEL AVENUE SANTA CRUZ, CA 95062-(831)423-1949