
Supplementary Reading for
Chapter 6
Lessons for Europe from the Quebec Trade Summit

(1)

Why I Didn't Go to Miami

by Stephanie Guilloud

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As one of the lead organizers of the 1999 Seattle direct action protests against the World Trade Organization (WTO), I am invested in the direction of the global justice movement. As a white person, I am invested in how white people align themselves (or don't align themselves) with people of color and those directly affected by policies and practices of globalization. As an organizer, I am invested in using limited time and resources to our greatest advantage and to the greatest effectiveness. I was moved by my experience in Seattle. I saw massive numbers of people respond to a call for justice. I saw people trusting each other and trusting themselves. I saw spontaneity and creative organizing tactics. I also saw overt and covert oppression dynamics play out among the leadership and participants. I watched the potential of building something from the momentum of a successful event crumble in our hands. Since then, I have been disappointed in the actions of the movement I helped create. I have been disappointed in the lack of reflection and the lack of strategy. I made a decision about attending the protests in Miami from this perspective.

Protesting the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) in Miami in November 2003 was an event. Events gather people together. Events educate, politicize, and enlighten. Events are exciting and emotional. But events are just events if they are not connected to a larger strategy. I see a danger in planning and participating in another event that is not a step of a clear plan to get us closer to a shared vision of a new economy, a new power relation, a new world. The local and regional organizers (like Root Cause) who saw an opportunity to further educate their constituencies about the direct effects of globalization on their communities might have furthered such a plan. From conversations with participants, it sounds like direct action protesters worked harder to connect to

local issues and include local context in the education and organizing efforts. From these same conversations, I heard that racism within the organizing efforts undermined the process (again). Like in Seattle, people who protested in Miami were inspired, made connections, and were confronted with massive police violence.

I want to write to the white folks who feel passionate enough to travel to these events and take a stand. I could critique the predominantly white action-hopping framework of the current US anti-globalization protests. I could remind us in urgent and indignant tones that we live in a highly militarized regime, complete with media blackouts, mass arrests, and millions of dollars worth of federally-bought urban weaponry. I could praise the fact that thousands continue to gather to resist the process of corporate globalization. But I want to ask deeper questions, ones that haven't been asked yet. I want to write to who I was five years ago, a determined white woman working within her community to mobilize thousands of people to challenge something they'd never heard of. I want to ask questions I could not have answered: How is this moment of resistance connected to a larger strategy? What is the most effective position for white people in a global movement? How do we act in solidarity? How do we use our leverage as North Americans with a distinct kind of power to build a movement for global justice? Can we articulate a vision of a new world so that we know when we've achieved it?

Strategy to Win

In Seattle, we said we were going to shut down the WTO. We mobilized thousands to do that. We shut down the meeting. That was a success. But it was not a win. Maybe we could have sparked a movement to achieve the win (with goals, strategy, and real coalitions), but we dropped the ball. We turned their elite meetings into an activist touring machine. These meetings and ministerials have been happening for a long time (before and after Seattle). Sometimes in view of the public and sometimes in secret. My question: How does protesting their meetings advance our goals? Do we have well-articulated goals? How do we know when we win?

Winning is not getting beat up. Police lines are not a front of struggle. Police lines are a visual (and sometimes physical) representation of a larger system. Resisting the mean and expensive violence

of the cops is not the most effective position we can take. Most people, particularly people of color, are not surprised by police violence or by heavy militarization of our cities. If we are organizing to build power from below, we will face police repression. More accurately, people of color will face the brunt of it. After the five days of protests, Miami police are keeping their toys.

Evaluation

I believe we need to establish clear goals for our actions so we can be prepared for unintended consequences. When goals are articulated, we can initiate a reflective process. Evaluation and follow-up is essential to developing better strategy. Even with all this time and privilege to pick and choose what issues we focus on, how many direct action activists from Seattle have tracked the direction of the WTO? How many know who the current director is, what their policies are, what effect these protests have truly had? Unfortunately, we rarely do the homework beyond the moment of engagement. We need to examine the information of scholars and the experiences of people who have organized in similar ways. Our work is to translate that information into action on the ground to defeat corporate globalization and create sustainable alternatives to capitalism. If we don't evaluate our work and our commitment to real change then we are as flimsy and temporary as the paper mache puppets we build.

Building on Success

One success from the Seattle protests was popularizing the reality of corporate globalization for more folk (in the U.S.) than anytime before. Building on that success would look like meeting people where they're at. Facilitating a process that encourages local organizing on globalization issues. Using globalization as a framework to talk to anyone and everyone about the real dangers facing them as teachers (privatization of testing and curriculum); farmers (agri-business destroying small farms); workers (losing jobs to technological advances and cheaper labor in developing countries); youth (increasingly inaccessible higher education avenues); local governments (losing the rights to determine wage levels and school funding).

The Georgia Citizen's Coalition on Hunger, Project South, and 100 organizations have been

organizing for an Atlanta living wage for over three years. The City Council is poised to pass the ordinance that would require the city and all businesses who receive city contracts or tax breaks to pay workers \$10.50 an hour with benefits or \$12.50 an hour without benefits. In the last month, business interests and state representatives have circumvented the process and dropped a state bill that would prevent local, city or county, governments from determining wages for private businesses. House Bill 1258 is good old-fashioned globalization right here in Atlanta. Within this current struggle there lie opportunities to draw connections between global economics and local effects. Or to rally folks who are concerned about globalization to take a stand in solidarity with low-income people of color. If we don't meet people where they're at and make globalization an accessible issue, the "movement" will remain dominated by white folks who are invested in the rush of a good protest rather than the long-haul of community organizing.

Vision

I work in a community in Nicaragua through a fifteen year-old sister city organization based in Olympia WA. I visited after the Seattle protests and engaged in a conversation with a good friend my age. Pablo grew up in the Revolution, and his mother is a dedicated community organizer. Now he struggles to keep good paying work and hide his Sandinista identity in a time when Nicaragua is the second poorest country in this hemisphere. He said, "Global finance institutions like the International Monetary Fund and the WTO are killing us. But without them, we would die. What do you propose to replace them?" I felt a profound shift in my understanding, and I appreciate his challenge. Corporate globalization, as a new mechanism of an old institution, is complicated. I want to be part of building a vision that replaces it and answers his question with integrity and real-world solutions.

I challenge the people who are invested in making our passion useful to reflect on these questions and engage with this struggle in creative and original ways. History is helpful in that work. Organizing models in the labor, civil rights, and global movements are incredible blueprints. Integrating anti-oppressive practices into our organizing work, whether with people of color or white people, is essential. I don't believe that any of us in the streets that week in Seattle or Miami want to see the spark completely die out. We have to learn our lessons and move forward. We have to

challenge ourselves and see beyond the line of police to our actual and more relevant opponent.

Stephanie edited *Voices from the WTO*, 1999. She contributed an original essay "Sparks, Fire, and Burning Coals: An Organizer's History of Seattle" to *Battle of Seattle; A Challenge to Capitalist Globalization*, 2002. She moved to Atlanta in January 2003 and works as the Grassroots Development Director at Project South.

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Peasant leader vows to end WTO summits

By David Rennie and Robert Uhlig in Cancun

(09/09/2003)

The leader of the world's largest peasant protest movement vowed yesterday to make this week's meeting of the World Trade Organisation its last.

As thousands of anti-capitalist protesters converged on the Caribbean beach resort, now converted into a virtual fortress, Rafael Alegria said the meeting of global trade ministers would be shut down or cut short by marches, human blockades and other forms of "direct action", as happened in Seattle in 1999.

"We pursue these international organisations wherever they meet," Mr Alegria - the head of the Via Campesina movement, which claims 60 million members - told *The Telegraph* at a protest encampment near Cancun's commercial district.

"Before, Seattle was known for manufacturing Boeing aeroplanes. Now it is known as the site of that huge global day of action. Cancun's image is now set to be transformed, from a tourist city, into a place of global struggle," said Mr Alegria.

Behind multiple road blocks and barbed-wire topped fences 20,000 police and troops, backed by helicopters, warships and fast inshore patrol boats, were waiting to prove him wrong.

Mexican authorities have chosen the meeting site carefully. Delegates will be sealed in luxury

hotels lining a narrow 17-mile ribbon of land beside the Caribbean accessible by only two roads. A large, swampy lagoon separates the city from the hotel strip and is patrolled by high-speed navy inflatables.

"Authorities will not act in a repressive manner, but their objective is to protect the security of the meeting ... I am going to say clearly, they are going to defend it if necessary," said Gen Francisco Arellano, commander of federal security forces assembled for the meeting.

About 5,000 ordinary police have been joined by foreign officers, and plain clothes military intelligence agents. Ministers and delegates from the 146 member countries of the World Trade Organisation meet tomorrow to try to rescue floundering talks on agriculture and trade.

The main sticking point of the meeting will be agriculture, as ministers seek some way of reforming global farming that protects Third World peasants without losing the support of the world's richest farmers in Europe and America.

Any hope of a breakthrough is becoming less likely as secondary issues are added, including proposals to protect the geographical names of foods and drinks that would outlaw the sale of America's leading beer because Budweiser should come only from the Czech town of Budejovice.

Though central Cancun is filling with dreadlocked American students, South Korean trade unionists sporting anti-WTO headbands, and lorry-loads of landless peasants, none would admit to planning violent protests, yet all predicted that some would occur.

A first demonstration, on Sunday, protested at the arrival of 30 dolphins at a Cancun water park, where tourists and WTO delegates may pay to swim with them. Mr Alegria said his movement was peaceful, but "respected" those planning to fight.

"Those directly responsible for any violence will be governments, the WTO, World Bank and IMF, because they have created a barbaric economic system that has killed millions worldwide," he said.



British protesters have largely stayed away, dissuaded by the high cost of travel and the [lure of a large arms fair in London](#), said Dave Timms of the British-based World Development Movement.

Cancun is an artificial city. Its hotel strip resembles a long shopping centre, with its fibreglass renderings of Mayan temples, pyramid shaped hotels, and - in a final post-modern touch - fake Mexican theme restaurants, in Mexico.

"The WTO has done us a favour, providing a fantastic visual example of what is wrong with corporate globalisation. Cancun is environmentally destructive and is based on extreme inequality between the workers and rich North American visitors," Mr Timms said.