The FTAA Goes to Miami
and SAGE shows up to crash the party!

Inside:

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Between 1994, when Mexico was opened up for "free trade," and 2000, NAFTA had cost U.S. workers 766,000 jobs. (Economic Policy Institute)

While U.S. jobs moved to Mexico, the average wage and living standard of Mexican workers actually decreased. The FTAA will expand NAFTA to 31 additional countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. “Free Trade” is bad for all workers of the Americas.
James Moorby ‘04

“Down on the Ground, GET DOWN, Everybody Down.” I hit the sidewalk within seconds of seeing the pack of angry officers jumping off their bicycles and aiming their automatic guns at our heads, I know they are loaded with rubber bullets and pepper spray filled plastic marbles designed to explode on contact. I look over at the other two members of my affinity group; one is sprawled out beside me with her hands far above her head after the officers yelled “put you hands where we can see them.” The other is in the same position, just ahead of me with her feet near my head. I had seen scenes like this in the movies, but I never thought it would happen to me.

I was in downtown Miami and the day before had attended a permitted march organized by the AFL/CIO labor unions. Within minutes of the permits four PM expiration, the police had rushed the peaceful demonstrators and shot a wide array of rubber and plastic ammunition, as well as numerous types of chemical weapons into the peaceful group. Clad in my twenty-five dollar painting respirator to filter the Tear Gas and el-cheapo swim goggles, I was initially prepared to hold my ground. However, within minutes I saw one too many people helped away from the front line, limping or being carried, often bloody and blinded by the chemicals which filled the air. I soon left the area, fearing mass arrest and avoiding police brutality.

Fridays plan was to be low-key, just spend a few hours in Miami, and maybe visit the convergence center (a building downtown set up as an information sharing base for activists in the area). Five of us ended up outside the courthouse, where protesters were being held who had been arrested on imaginary felony charges the day before. None of us had even the slightest plans of violence, or even any direct action or civil disobedience. We were simply showing our solidarity and support for those who had been arrested and falsely charged the previous day.

The numbers of police clad in military style riot gear, hefty wooden batons, and automatic weapons increased quickly, but the 250 or 300 protesters just sang, drummed and danced. We turned our backs on the police pointing at them chanting “This Is What a Police State Looks Like” and then pointing at ourselves and replying “This Is What a Democracy Looks Like.” I was standing front and center with a large banner reading “We, The People, Demand Democracy,” and can’t count the number of times my picture was taken. As the chant “There Ain’t No Riot Here, so Put Down That Ugly Gear,” echoed through the streets, the police moved in and declared it an “Unlawful Assembly.” We were given three minutes to disperse, and about 50 seconds later they charged and opened fire. My affinity group took off with the masses, trying desperately to escape pepper spray, the raining rubber bullets, and imminent arrest. Two got out a nearby side street just before it was blocked off, and myself and the other two I was with looked for an alternate escape route. We were on the sidewalk but the officers were blocking traffic. We paused at an intersection to watch in horror first as the police turned away an ambulance trying to get through, and then as they herded a group of protesters into a pig-pile, hosed them down with pepper spray, beat them with their clubs, and then arrested them. I later learned many had bad burns from the pepper spray, which was not washed off until hours later. We narrowly escaped this group, and as we evacuated the area the police blocked off street after street. Finally, three or four blocks away, I thought we were out safe. This is when they hunted us down like animals, and how I came to be lying face down on a Miami sidewalk, with plastic, zip-tie handcuffs digging deep into the flesh around my wrists.

Before being loaded into the Paddy Wagon, a U-Haul style truck with three compartments in the back, we overheard police saying, “maybe now we’ve finally met our quota,” and asking their superior officer what they should charge us with. One simply replied “oh just leave that blank for now.” I guess they needed time to make up a false charge. Hours later we learned they came up with “Unlawful Assembly,” a misdemeanor.

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From Quebec to Hepburn to Miami, SAGE was there.
The next thirty hours are a blur, but at the same time I remember every moment clear as day. My backpack straps were cut at the beginning of my six-hour wait handcuffed behind my back. I soon was separated from the other two members of my affinity group, and found myself being admitted to the TGK Correctional Facility, at which point my cuffs were moved in front of me for another seven hours of processing. At hour nine we got “Breakfast,” which was half of a soggy ham sandwich, and forty-five minutes later, a single sip of water. We were arrested at 5:15 on Friday evening, and at 6:15 Saturday morning I was put into solitary confinement, a small concrete cell all to myself. I had a leaky sink, a dirty toilet, a playboy centerfold glued to the floor, and a large urine stain in the middle of my plastic mattress. After an hour or so they finally agreed to bring me a sheet, which was full of holes and covered with stains. Should I thank them?

“Lunch” came at an hour and a half later, at which point I was let out of my cell to get my tray of food, only I couldn’t bring the tray back with me, I had to carry the three slices of stale bread, and two slices of slimy turkey, back in my hand. I also got a small cookie, and a green orange. Sometime around 11 I was once again taken from my cell, this time shackled with five other prisoners with a heavy metal chain. We were led to a room in the basement where we would have a videoconference bond hearing with a Judge at the Court House. My bail was initially set at $500, but I was the first to see a fresh judge and was asked “how much Bail can you afford?” I knew I had $80 in my wallet, so I offered her half of that. She agreed and set me a new hearing for nine the next morning. A few more lucky protesters got off with reasonable bails, but I then was scolded and everyone else got $100 or more.

Knowing I had the money to bail myself out and not being able to do so was very frustrating. I waited until eight thirty that night before I got my first phone call, more than 27 hours after my arrest. I was told all afternoon they would bring me my stuff soon so I could bail myself out, but they never did. A few hours after calling my grandmother and having her call my friends, I was bailed out and finally made it back to the hotel at 10:30 Saturday night. Seeing my friends and the large crowd of supporters at the gates upon my release, and hearing them clap and cheer, bringing me a plate of warm food, was the best feeling I’d had all weekend.

Overall the trip to Miami was rewarding and educationally valuable, truly opening my eyes to the reality of our failed democracy and the shift that is rapidly occurring, replacing our constitutional rights, with the reality of life in a police state. Many guards asked me if I had learned my lesson and would stop protesting, an option that had not even crossed my mind. Incidents like this should be used to wake up the American people, we need to stand up and fight for our rights before they are gone from sight completely. If they take away our first amendment rights of Free Speech, our only option is to exercise our second amendment rights, and begin to bear arms.

Whatever it takes, we will fight the system, and we will end the oppression.
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Cleveland, Ohio (local US Steelworkers unions) to Madison, Wisconsin (from the International Workers of the World, or Wobblies) to local Ft. Lauderdale and Miami representatives (including the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades and SEIU, the Service Employees International Union). Also present were hundreds of migrant farmworkers who, three days prior, had participated in a thirty-mile march from Ft. Lauderdale to Miami. In short, the vast majority of people present at this demonstration were working-class, since the negative relationship between free trade agreements and domestic job security has become so evident since NAFTA was ratified in 1994. The remainder of the people present on Thursday included student activists such as the St. Lawrence contingent, peace advocates, immigrants, anarchists, libertarians, Green Party representatives, retired workers and senior citizens, among many others.

Following the hour-long rally within the amphitheater, different unions mobilized and prepared to march throughout the downtown area, waving signs and banners and chanting various songs and slogans to vocalize their opposition to the FTAA in particular and nontransparent corporate domination in general. Perhaps fifteen-thousand people participated in this march, which despite being smaller than originally envisioned, was nevertheless an energetic and successful event. While the police remained peaceful and compliant with the demands of the police, downtown Miami looked more like a war zone than the financial district of a relatively large city. In preparation for the protests, tens of millions of dollars were expended by local, regional, and state-wide police agencies to ensure that by no means whatsoever were the meetings disrupted. An entire eight million dollars alone for security in Miami came from the Iraqi Reconstruction bill that passed in Congress last month. The net effect of these excessive and unnecessary security measures was the virtual presence of a full military force around the city, with thousands of riot cops armed with top-of-the-line crowd control weapons and chemical agents, including tanks, helicopters, water cannons, electrical tasers and stun guns, concussion grenades, rubber bullets, high-velocity foam projectiles, tear gas, smoke bombs, and pepper spray, as well as the ordinary repertoire of horses, German shepherds, batons, and shields.

Needless to say, in such a repressive environment the message of the protesters was heavily damaged and virtually lost upon the corporate media, which hardly covered the event to begin with. The impact of the march and rally on Thursday, November 20th is certainly difficult to assess, but to be sure, the fact the several tens of thousands of people were willing and committed to travel long distances and stand up against the elitist and inequitable trade policies of George W. Bush, the US Government, and Corporate America clearly indicates that the Anti-Corporate Globalization Movement is still alive. The best thing that can be said about the outcomes of the meetings and the protests is that nothing concrete about the FTAA was actually determined inside the Intercontinental, besides that trade ministers agreed to meet again sometime next year. What happened in Miami also revealed that while this ACG Movement clearly represents a broad swath of different issues and perspectives and attracts constituents from different regions, backgrounds, and social classes, it is, first and foremost, a movement of, by, and for working people.

By and large, most of the protesters who attended the march and rally on Thursday stayed within the guidelines and parameters of legitimate protest as defined by the Miami police. However, smaller affinity groups perceived a neces-
sity for engaging in more direct-action tactics and strategies that might hopefully disrupt the ability of the trade ministers to meet in peace and comfort. Essentially, these protesters sought to re-create the scenarios of Seattle in 1999 and Quebec City in 2001, when activists at least slightly threatened the comfort levels of trade delegates and momentarily, though not altogether, delayed the pre-arranged time schedules for the trade meetings. Interestingly enough, such elements of the ACG Movement are portrayed within the corporate media as radicals, anarchists, and subversives, who are apparently hell-bent on violent conflict and property destruction. During coverage of these protest events, the label “violent” is usually attached to any person even remotely involved in any kind of activity that does not conform to the supposedly preordained authority and command of the police. This applies equally to someone who hurls a brick through a Starbucks window and someone who chooses to sit down in the middle of an intersection in order to block traffic. Even peaceful, non-violent civil disobedience usually assumes the qualities of so-called violent action. Given the numerous examples of protest and the rich legacy of civil disobedience throughout American history, it is truly strange that ACG protesters are so easily and often vilified in this manner. No one could seriously argue that the Boston Tea Party or the lunch-counter sit-ins to end segregation throughout the South were violent actions committed by radical anarchists, yet apparently this logic is authentic in the context of Anti-Corporate Globalization protests. In any case, the Miami police had an absolute zero level of tolerance for anyone who marched where they weren’t supposed to, disobeyed any order, or engaged in direct action and civil disobedience. Those who fit any of these categories experienced violent repression and arrest. Moreover, once the so-called permitted march and rally on Thursday afternoon expired, even innocent bystanders, who included union members and senior citizens, were subjected to severe physical abuse and the inhalation of dangerous CS tear gas chemical agents. As Jamie Moorby ’04 describes, “As one of the students traveling to Miami the week before Thanksgiving, I did not exactly know what to expect. I had done a fair amount of research beforehand but no amount of preparation could have prepared me for the level of militarization of the Miami police force as I witnessed. On Thursday police took every chance they got to beat protesters with their clubs, shoot them with rubber bullets, and hose them down with pepper spray and tear gas. I saw many non-violent protesters carried away bloody, a result of blatant police brutality. Their attacks were preemptive, unprovoked, and certainly unnecessary.” Although the main event at the anti-FTAA demonstrations was finished after Thursday, and despite the fact that the trade meetings ended earlier than initially planned, protesters remained in Miami on Friday, largely to support the people who had been arrested during the preceding days. Typically at large-scale protests such as these, a jail solidarity rally takes place outside the local courthouse or prison after large numbers of people have been arrested. In Mi...
ami, however, the jail solidarity event did not go according to plan. As Jamie Moorby recalls the event outside the courthouse on Friday, November 21st, “I was at a small solidarity rally outside a prison where protesters arrested the day before were being held, when police gave us three minutes to disperse and started shooting rubber bullets and pepper spray at us in less than one [minute]. We dispersed as quickly as possible, but were still hunted down, many blocks away, by cops on bicycles who yelled ‘GET DOWN ON THE GROUND’ and arrested us for “unlawful assembly.” We overheard officers congratulating themselves on finally meeting their quota, and asking each other what they should charge us with. One officer said, ‘just leave that blank for now.’ I was handcuffed for 13 hours, and now a week later still have numbness and tingling in my hands due to the tightness of my plastic zip tie cuffs. It was 9 hours before I got food or water, and 27 hours before I got my phone call. Overall we were treated like animals and outrightdenied our constitutional rights. We were given a copy of the inmate handbook but when I pointed out rules in it that had been broken, the guard replied, ‘those rules don’t apply to you.’ I guess even the constitution is void in Miami.”

Moorby was arrested along with fellow SLU student Nicole Armbuster ’05, along with hundreds of other activists.

The anti-FTAA protests in Miami, Florida was certainly the furthest that St. Lawrence students have ever traveled before for this type of event. The planning and organizing that went into making the trip possible was arguably the most difficult and arduous work that SLU student activists have ever had to deal with. Overall, a tremendous amount of resources and funding were secured from various departments and sources, for which the participants are no doubt highly appreciative. As an indication of how controversial this particular trip to Miami was, however, the St. Lawrence Thelomathesian Society refused to provide funding for hotel accommodation during the second approval process, after initially saying that such funding would be made available. This decision came only five hours after the group of student activists had checked into their hotel in Miami, and while the Thelmo rejection will certainly be contested, it was particularly disheartening at the time. Knowing that our student body is comfortable providing funding for a racist, homophobic bigot in the form of Daniel Flynn to come into our community and spew anti-intellectual hate speech last spring, while at the same time refusing to support students interested in participating in the democratic process by voicing their opinions on the street is merely one example of what a disgusting environment St. Lawrence can be at times. Nevertheless, all controversies, complications, and set-backs aside, the trip to Miami was a highly successful academic and social experience for everyone involved, and most importantly, everyone returned to campus without serious injury. As Jamie Moorby concluded about the event, “While the twenty-nine hours in a Miami correctional facility was far from pleasant, overall my experience in Miami was valuable. If I had a chance to do it again, I would in a second. I did nothing illegal, the only people breaking the law were the police.” The sacrifices and dedication of all eleven students that took part in this trip should be highly commended.

For anyone interested in learning more about the Free Trade Area of the Americas and the Miami protests, Patrice LeClerc’s and Ken Gould’s Strategies of Social Protest sociology course will be holding an event this Friday, December 5th, in Carnegie 10 throughout the afternoon. The events and activities of the afternoon will include a political puppet show, guest speakers on the FTAA, corporations, and the global economy, and a multimedia video presentation from the protests themselves. Whether you support or oppose free trade in general and the FTAA in particular, or are ambiguous about it and would like more information, this promises to be an enjoyable event open to everyone on campus.

It’s not just the FTAA, it’s capitalism.

Sarah Post ’04

One of the most important issues to keep in mind when talking about the FTAA, or any other Free Trade agreements is that they are at base issues with capitalism and without that analysis, critiques of the FTAA will both ring hollow and be ineffectual. They will ring hollow because otherwise they are based upon superficial critiques of lowering of wages through jobs going to countries with lower wages or increased environmental destruction caused by loose environmental standards instead of recognizing these as issues with the capitalist system and market imperatives which forces corporations to constantly lower profits and thus seek out the proverbial bottom. These nefarious byproducts are the product of advanced capitalism and not any particular trade agreement; let us not confuse the expedient for the cause.

It is also not an case that the central problem is that it is large transnational corporations who are monopolizing the global economy, again we would be confusing a manifestation for the cause. For, as so eloquently put by G. Greenfield “(what) is important to remember is that corporations are not the problem but instead the particular way that capitalist chose to structure their wealth…It is often assumed that corporations are a power in themselves, rather than a particular way in which capitalists organize their wealth.” In fact, irregardless of the actors shaping the trade agreements, the fact

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is they are shaped by and for the imperatives of a capitalist system constantly in search of further profits and protection from the limits imposed upon it by civic society.

The former of these issues, that of seeking foreign markets and resources are again, not a result of any specific trade agreement but the capitalist system in itself and as such the advent of the FTAA would not be as important as any other day in which capitalism wrecks havoc upon the world. Of course it is important symbolically and is a good jumping off point to discuss free trade, neo-liberalism and, at root, capitalism. Also, the FTAA is important to draw parallels and alliances between labor across boarders and across issues, such as alliances between labor and environmentalists. But, the FTAA is not merely and opportune or symbolic moment for highlighting the multifarious effects of capitalism; thinking this would be to ignore what seems to me to be the most important point of all and what is most at issue with the creation of the FTAA. The significance of the FTAA is not just the individual agreements that go into making the free trade area but the creation in total and how it effectively inaugurates the reign of capitalist imperatives above that of civil society and democratic principles. After the passage of FTAA there is a transnational system which trumps democratic imperatives in favor of those of capital and ensures that this is the case in all nations throughout the western hemisphere. No, you can’t pass that bill, we signed the FTAA; we can’t pull out, there is no alternative. The principles of common good, social services or civil society are all subservient to the interests of capital and the FTAA promises that. Furthermore, it is not merely that the imperatives of capital are introduced throughout this hemisphere, which has obviously already been accomplished, but also that they are unequivocally positioned above all else and above the reach of democratic, civil society.

And this is why free trade areas and resisting them are so important. It is because the trade agreements are created so as to disenfranchise us as civic members and our ability to limit the power of capital. This is why there needs to be resistance, why we can’t allow a few members of the elite fashion the structure of the world, effectively excluding democratic initiatives and civil society. It’s purpose, as an agreement by nation states is to disempower the nation state itself and our ability to collectively choose the structures of our society. If there is to be any effective resistance to capital in require an active civil society and the common recognition that there is an alternative, that we have the right and responsibility to speak truth and goodness and humanity in the face of capital. And most importantly that the laws of the market and of capital are not eternal but in fact socially constructed and contingent and we as a society can change them or even...gasp...decide not to order our societies based upon them. But it requires a resistance to and changing of the types of agreements which place economic and capitalist imperatives above collective, democratic power.

“Arrest all the white kids.”

John Turner ‘06

Arrest all the white kids.

The cop’s voice crackles over the loud speaker on the top of his cruiser. He is the twelfth police vehicle in a line of thirty that speeds past us, in a scheme of chaos, dividing and intimidating the activists.

The march had ended but the streets are still ours. We are not ready to give them back to the police. In a demonstration of solidarity we mobilize and the police respond with tear gas, with pepper spray, with rubber and wooden bullets. The police meet us with violent intentions. The most violent action an activist takes is simply standing up to their oppression.

They have armor of fiberglass and fear.

Our armor is our spirit.

They have weapons to inflict physical pain.

Our weapons are our minds, and we are prepared for battle.

As we disperse from the streets, the cops are out for blood. In our attempt to avoid the law they push us into Overtown.

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For those not from the metro area of southern Florida, Overtown is to Miami as South Central is to Los Angeles. It’s where “disadvantaged” communities of Miami are found. But thanks to the Miami PD, I am able to seek the true meaning of disadvantaged.

They only way to avoid police confrontation is to get off the streets. We had demonstrated. We had dispersed. Now it is time to get the fuck out of here. Our only option is a bus. We can not afford to wait for the shotty Miami Public Transportation System. The next best option is the local corner market. At least we will be off the pavement.

As soon as we approach the store, it is obvious we ain’t local. I expect, to put it nicely, an uncomfortable situation. But within seconds my expectations fail me. I feel like a friend coming home, being warmly welcomed. They do not look at our clothing or our skin. They look into our eyes. They do not hear our funny accents. They hear what we have to say. They want to know why we were being chased. They want to know what the Free Trade Area of the Americas is. They want to know how it will affect them. They have a genuine interest, a genuine concern and a genuine understanding. If they can not oppose the trade ministers who debate our economic fate then they will help us, the activists, in our battle. They march us out to the street to the closest bus stop. They tell us how to get to our friends and to get to safety. They protect us from the streets, standing with us to hide us from the police, until the number 7 bus shows up.

We do not ask for their help, but we need it. They understand struggle, and police oppression. In the eyes of the cops, “underprivileged” are trouble. In the eyes of the cops, protesters are trouble, too.

And they give it to us.

We arrive as strangers but leave as friends. In the matter of minutes, the fastest friends I ever make.

Supposedly I am a Student of Sociology. Or at least that is what some slip of paper in my University’s Registrar Office says. But I cannot study society on my college campus. It is nowhere to be found. Instead, I can only observe the children of the elite class frolic while the token minorities are used in a game of make-believe, while the administration pretends that this is a diverse institution. The administration needs to open its eyes.

It is on the streets of Overtown where my lesson begin. It is the opportunity I have to leave behind my elite community, and leave behind the judgmental faces that have been trained to view the world through the stream of advertisements in between cuts of the Bachelor and CNN. It is my opportunity to leave behind a disadvantaged community and enter into a community that really knows the value of helping someone in need, a community that has moved beyond the preoccupation with such labels as class and race an holds more advantages than this institution will ever have.
Rick Davis ’04

Right now in this country we find our selves, the people, at the mercy of the corporate elite. It works on all levels of our daily lives and affects us all. In the past this reality seemed far off and unthreatening, but in this current age it has all come true. The problem is capital, money. We have a system that is solely based on money and for this reason we as individuals are given a worth. After this monetary value is determined our lives and subsequent-ly our thoughts and views are no longer needed. The system can carry on without us. If people or workers ever stand up to improve the quality of life, the capital that allows them to live can take flight and set up shop elsewhere. This is the problem we face today. Because we have let the “free market” enter every faction of our lives it has become more difficult to escape it. As technology becomes more advanced and the system becomes more efficient, after all this is the goal, it needs everyday people less and less.

Right now we are living outside our means. Basically, if we were ever forced to operate strictly within our borders the “free market” would collapse. The reason we are operating outside of our means is because for Capitalism to succeed it always needs to be growing. This is where the phrase “you’re either growing or your dieing” is derived from. This concept leads to a system that is not anywhere near sustainable. It is a situation that is created when all the interested parties, i.e. corporations, are only looking for quarterly profits. The goal of the financial leaders is to grow. This allows for no long term forward looking. It all becomes about making more stuff at a cheaper price. Due to the fact that the system doesn’t need everyone, but everyone needs the system, it leads to a globalized race to the bottom. Human beings undercut other human beings for ability to live, all in the name of “pure competition”. The FTAA and other trade agreements like it are policies that are being driven by the private sector. Robert Zoellick, the US trade representative when discussing, on C-SPAN, the trade talks stated, “It’s not a zero sum, government to government negotiation. Its bringing in the private sector so they lead the government and say ‘Yeah, this is good for us’”. This points out something inherently wrong with the system. When publicly elected government officials are no longer concerned with what the governing body of the people thinks, but rather they target the financial elites to sway the government. If they took the time to ask the people, they would hear what the unions think, what the students think, what the everyday person thinks. These thoughts would certainly not coincide with those of the “private sector”. The reason is that one group is looking out for the stock market and the other is looking out for peoples’ well being.

Nicole Armbruster ’05

Helicopters circle overhead. Lines of riot cops assemble. 300 sleep-deprived, stress-overloaded activists converge outside the jail to express solidarity with our imprisoned comrades. Us, armed with food, water, spirit and an occasional puppet versus the state, armed with chemical weapons, electric tazors, rubber and wooden bullets, heavy batons and the system. This is the dialectic between democracy and tyranny, between spirit and orders, between activists and the state.

3 minutes. You have 3 minutes to disperse. Ok, that gives us 2 minutes and 59 seconds to give our list of demands regarding the prisoners inside to the media and the cops and then 1 second to quickly disperse. 2 minutes. Lines of riot cops start closing in. The escape route quickly fades into rows of riot police. Emotions start flowing. Rescue Remedy, there’s no time. Affinity Group Convene. This is the movement; that is the police state, what do we do? We split up into 2 groups, 1 quickly moving out, the other hangs back a bit with our fellow activists. Still dispersing, we chant and walk backwards, always Continued on next page...
We narrowly escape. In shock by what just happened and onto the ground and spray them with chemicals warfare. We are peaceful, hands in the air, slowly, calmly walking.

Suddenly, the police start rushing us. People run, people scatter. Walk, Walk, Walk. Then the riot cops close in on a group of activists. They encircle the group, push them through a fence and onto the ground and spray them with chemicals and rubber bullets. They are arrested.

We narrowly escape. In shock by what just happened, we quickly walk to the intersection. The rest of our group is there. Regroup. One group heads left, the other continues straight ahead. We walk past a sub shop, an ice cream parlor, some stores. A man is injured, stop to help him, but then realize most of my supplies were left at the hotel. The police approach from behinds us; we mobilize. We move down the street on the sidewalk, through the university and out the back door. Now we’re at an intersection, it appears to be clear of cops except for one, standing in the middle with a radio who appeared to be directing traffic. It’s our only way out, so we take it. There is a group of 3 in front of us a little ways, and a few small autonomous groups of 3-5 separated by dozens of feet in between. We are all dispersing. We are 3 blocks away from the jail. Without heeding warning, dozens of bike cops surround us, cutting off all exit routes.

“Get on the Ground Now!” We are corralled into a group of 20-30. We are lying facedown on the ground, hands out to our sides. Minutes go by, police unload themselves from their bikes. A discussion breaks out on how to deal with us. One officer proposes cuffing our hands and ankles; he is overthrown by his superiors. Next come the plastic cuffs, applied so tightly it makes some hands turn purple and leaves ridges and bruises in nearly all wrists that are submitted to the power of the state. Still on our stomachs we are asked to get up. Unable to without the use of our arms and hands, some are dragged, leaving behind cuts and bruises.

Now we are sitting, facing traffic. Officers come by and snap pictures of us, them standing triumphantly in between. We are their catch, we are their trophy. They stole our picture, but they haven’t stolen our dignity. We sit there, waiting for what comes next. Now they search our bags, they take what they want, and they leave what they wish. We sit some more, in plain view of the streets. The officers play up the “good cop, bad cop” scenario. Some ask us how we’re doing, no response. Others wave their guns and batons around, still no response. We attempt to talk amongst ourselves, discuss demands and health concerns. “Silence!” We are caught.

Now we are getting prepared to be loaded into the police vans. We are searched again exposing parts of chests, breasts and abdomens. One officer inserts her hand into people’s bodies. Bags are removed with pruning shears, all “unnecessary” clothing is removed, destroyed and lost. Systematically they try to take our dignity and humanity away. We do not give in. We are photographed again. They still don’t have our spirit.

We are now loaded into the vans, six people on each side. I am reunited with a member of my affinity group, the other is separated from us. The doors close, we are all in this together. Introductions ensue, the mood changes. Slowly, one person breaks out into song, tentatively people add their voices until we have a unified chorus of beautiful voices. The police drivers respond to our seemingly festive atmosphere by swerving the van and stopping short forcing us to fly into each other. Consequently, we start singing “Lean On Me,” and then “Solidarity Forever.” We run down the list of union songs, show tunes and protest songs. We teach each other chants and tell jokes.

Then we stop. The police are having a barbeque. Some of us haven’t eaten or drank all day, we are not offered a piece of their pie. It’s been hours since we were free. Sporadically the police open the back door. By now we are sweating and exhausted, but the mood does not change. They ask us where we’re from and what we do. Some people respond, while others ignore. They ask us our age, we resist. They ask us our birth date, we resist. We spend hours here, on the side of a street. Which street, they never tell us. Then we begin to drive again. The van stops and goes, the door opens and closes; it becomes routine.

Hours later, we arrive at the initial processing place, a transformed parking garage of a metro-station. The men are taken out first. Then they come for the women. One by one, we are removed from the van and searched yet again. They search our shoes, our packs and our person. One officer writes a number on my arm. “This reminds me of the concentration camps,” he says. I go numb. Now we are moved again. Everything we have is searched again. Our food and other items are thrown out, a large pile of granola bars and trail mix begins to accumulate in the garbage bins adjacent to the table. Now they move us to the next stop. They ask for Identification. None given. They ask for a name. I resist demanding they tell me my charges and where the others are. They ignore me. Into the kennel. Into the cage. A make-shift holding cell for activists designed to complement the dehumanization process.

I see a member of my group. She passes. She is processed. Decisions need to be made. Emotions run awry. “Number 847, you in the black.” I am summoned. An officer pulls me by my arm. “What is your name?” I resist. “When is your birthday?” I resist. Then, just beyond the garage periphery, I see a member of my affinity group being loaded into the van. I succumb. I am entered into the system. Now I am forcibly moved onto

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the other processing stations, the nurse comes first. “Are you injured?” she asks. Define injured. Then it is on to yet another search and the final stripping of everything on my person deemed non-essential. Out come the earrings, the bracelet they missed earlier on and the maps and newspapers in the pockets. They search my shoes again. I put them on the table. Barked at, they are tossed on the floor. Now I am recuffed, equally as tight, then put into another van. Now us girls are reunited. We drive a few minutes to the place where we will be calling home for the next day, the TKG correctional facility. We are unloaded one by one. “Head against the wall, feet out!” We are searched yet again, and they still haven’t found anything. Single file, we enter the prison and are put into a holding cell no warmer than 60 degrees. We wait. And wait and wait some more. One by one we are called for mug shots, fingerprints and finally to hear what our charges and bond is. We are recuffed into much looser, manageable plastic cuffs. Some women are even able to slip into and out of them for a period of time. Hours go by as we are transported from one holding cell to another. Occasionally we catch a glimpse of the male prisoners. Hours go by and we still have not received food, water or a phone call. Finally, we are put in the final holding cell, at least 20 of us, and bologna sandwiches are slapped onto the bench. Some of it proceeds to fall onto the floor. Within minutes, the resident cockroaches snatch the food and drag it into their hole. Some roaches crawl around the cell for a while, until they are chased back into their home by fellow prisoners. It is going on 10 hours in captivity, when some of us are permitted a phone call. We coordinate our calls, so some can make personal calls while others can give a report to the legal team. “It’s been 3 minutes” barks an officer. We are forced to hang up. We are transported back into the holding cell for a few more hours.

One by one our names are called. We line up, still in cuffs outside the holding cell. “Welcome literature” and toiletries are distributed. Most of us are transported to the FTAA wing of the facility, those that aren’t, we later find out, spent the night in the frigid, roach infested holding cell. “Get to the Right, Single File!” barks a corrections officer repeatedly. One girl tries to ask a question, she is yelled at. We all are yelled at. “Move faster!”, “Stay together!”, “Stop talking!”, the list goes on. Finally, we make it to the FTAA section. We are given bed supplies and cell numbers. By now it is 4:30 in the morning. Sleep.

A few hours later, the lights are turned on, and rolecall is announced. We haven’t gone anywhere. The lights are turned off. Back to sleep. A few hours later, around 9am, officers come in with lunch. At least a day old slab of thick turkey and cheese slapped between two slices of moist bread, a cookie and an orange. Food is taken, but not eaten. Psychological warfare ensues. An hour later, officers yell, “get into the center room!” We converge, take attendance then are handcuffed and chained together in groups of 6. Collectively, we are transported to our bond hearings in 2 separate groups. First, comes the public defender meeting. Then the bond hearing. Bonds for most are downgraded to $100 and include a hearing the following day. Frustrated the charges aren’t dropped, but relieved at the possibility of being bonded out. We are chained back together and transported back to our cells.

Lock down. Activists in solidarity outside the prison walls have converged for yet another day, only this time, we’re on the inside. The authorities are frightened by this massive display of solidarity. For hours, we cannot leave our cells. 4pm, lock down ends. Two by Two we are allowed out for 20 minutes for phone calls and showers. Most opt just for the phone calls. Then suddenly, my name is called and then my cellmate’s. “Go clean your cell and be back in 3 minutes, you’ve been bonded out!” they yell to us. Jubilant, we run back and dispose of everything. Awaiting our turn to leave, the guards inform my cellmate to go back to the cell, they had “misspoke.” Psychological warfare ensues. Disappointed, frustrated, upset, we go our separate ways. My affinity group member is also bonded out. We are cuffed together. 3 other women are released with us. Triumphant, we walk down the halls, and into the “free world.” We are free from prison, but not from the capitalist system. Our charges are not dropped, our friends are still in jail and people are oppressed every moment in this wretched world. The fight will continue until everyone is free. The battle ensues. The capitalist system thinks jail will quiet us, will stifle the movement. The capitalists are wrong. The movement continues. The movement grows. Out of the classroom, out of the fields, out of the factories, out from under the oppressive system we are united, united in our struggle.
Beyond Miami: The Future of the ACG Movement

Matt Gaines ’04

There are several ways to look at what happened in Miami recently during the anti-FTAA demonstrations that took place there from November 19th-21st, 2003. No matter how the event is interpreted, however, it must first and foremost be remembered that the FTAA has not yet been stopped. It still remains a looming possibility. Trade ministers, although they ended the meetings earlier than originally scheduled, refused to call it quits altogether, and unlike many predicted, what occurred in Miami was not another Cancun. The real significance of Miami was, more than anything else, how it revealed the true nature of this wider movement that is dedicated to opposing all forms of corporate power and achieving global social, economic, and environmental justice.

To begin with, the physical number of protesters in Miami was extremely low. For an event with such enormous potential, the turnout was quite dismal. Months in advance, organizations within the movement were claiming that over 100,000 people would show up to Miami. Inflating protest numbers after an event is understandable, and sometimes strategic, but to do so beforehand is just plain odd. Given that local police forces will always prepare for several times the number of people they actually expect, the movement’s overenthusiastic emphasis on numbers before anything even happened was disastrous. It basically ensured that there would be a complete military force of riot cops waiting for us in Miami. Had the Miami police known that only 15,000 (generous) or 20,000 (really generous) people were going to be at the protests, no where near the amount of money, resources, or manpower would have been expended. So the down-town area was completely militarized - overhead surveillance systems and all - and the police squads were fully equipped with every single top-of-the-line crowd control weapon or agent available. This scenario basically ensured that any kind of direct-action attempt to breach the perimeter fence and storm the Intercontinental Hotel (where the meetings were being held) to disrupt the meeting was entirely out of the question. There was to be no repeat of what happened in Quebec City in April, 2001. The fence would hardly be touched, let alone torn down. To paraphrase one Chinese philosopher, the Battle of Miami was won by the corporate elite and the police long before it was even fought.

So the movement now finds itself at an interesting crossroads, faced with numerous questions that it must fundamentally address in order to proceed in any coherent and organized fashion. What makes the Anti-Corporate Globalization Movement unique and distinct from most other social movements is its nonhierarchical, autonomous structure, wherein small affinity groups function as isolated, mobile units of approximately four to ten people with their own decision-making processes at large-scale political mobilizations like the recent Miami protests. Any kind of overarching leadership structure to control and direct the movements and actions of demonstrators is entirely lacking, which, of course, has an entire spectrum of related costs and benefits. To be sure, there are large national and international labor, environmental, human rights, and other organizations which are recognized as providing the main impetus behind organizing these events, and, in addition, prominent spokespersons are also associated with the movement. But on the streets, though we like to chant slogans like “The People/United/Will Never Be Defeated!”, we are one large disorganized mass of people. Up against a tremendously well-disciplined, authoritarian, hierarchical military regiment of repressive state agents, who by their very nature are armed with an array of both lethal and non-lethal weapons that could easily overpower numerous small nations, we are doomed to failure. Until this basic fact is acknowledged, the dynamics and outcomes of every future battle will be dictated by the terms of the police, and we will remained trapped in a state of paralysis and immobility. In part, the ineptitude of the movement at this particular level of engaging in conflict with the state stems from an adherence to liberalism, holding positivist outlooks about the world, and main

Continued on next page...
taining a firm belief in the principles of non-violence and morality as bases for achieving social change. What these perspectives fail to recognize is that an economic system organized around private property and an ever-increasing profit imperative is fundamentally nonresponsive to moral persuasion in any way, shape, or form. So the future options available to the ACG Movement are in reality quite straightforward. Either the movement adopts tactically innovative and creative forms of protest that have some actual potential of disrupting the ability of trade representatives to hold their nondemocratic meetings in secret, or we should pursue a strategy that moves away from the summit/ministerial approach to following the elite across the globe and trying to organize around their schedules.

What this latter scenario would exactly look like is hard to say, for although the global economy is largely run by nameless, faceless, and placeless corporate executives, the financial institutions and trade agreements that facilitate production expansion and capital accumulation often have physical locations. For instance, the WTO is based in Geneva, Switzerland; the IMF and World Bank are located in Washington, DC; if successfully implemented, FTAA headquarters will most likely be placed in Miami, Florida. Consequently, community organizing efforts on the part of Steelworkers in Cleveland, Ohio or Longshoremen on the West Coast to oppose the Miami FTAA ministerial will have a limited overall effect. Though not to deny to the importance of local community organizing, the transnational nature of the current capitalist system necessitates that mobilizations and resistance against corporate domination likewise assume an international character. For if capital is transnational, effective opposition must also transcend national boundaries; additionally, because the interests behind private capital are for the most part unified, seemingly distinct and unrelated interest groups that are all affected by processes of globalization and free trade must coalesce in a much stronger fashion than has occurred during past events and demonstrations.

To return to an earlier point about the true nature of the ACG Movement, which it should be remembered is still in its early stages of development, the composition of the protesters in Miami on November 20th was predominantly working class. Both organized labor, including a massive AFL-CIO presence, as well as a strong turn-out from unions like the US Steelworkers, the IBEW, UNITE, and SEIU, and unorganized labor, which consisted primarily of immigrant workers and migrant farmworkers, were out in full force on the streets of Miami. Though typically the American working class is the most politically unaware and less class conscious than any other working class population around the world, the analyses of workers at the Miami demonstrations were better articulated and more complex than within virtually any other segment of the movement, due to the direct impact of free trade agreements on job security and the stability of the economy at home. Therefore, while the transnational nature of this movement cannot and should not be abandoned or forgotten, the analysis of the movement needs to be applied much more directly to domestic issues than has traditionally been the case. In this respect, this is not simply a movement against free trade and the FTAA. It is a movement with much broader objectives of removing Bush from office, given his utterly dismal approach to handling the US economy and success in creating some of the highest levels of domestic unemployment since the Great Depression, and ultimately addressing how fundamentally detrimental capitalism is to the experiences and lives of workers, their families, and their communities.

Without this larger structural critique, the movement will encounter the same patterns of paralysis in organizing large-scale political mobilizations, and will remain without any sensible political strategy for removing the real corporate evil-doers from their positions of power and privilege, and eventually being capable of dismantling the inequitable economic system of capitalism that benefits only a handful of elites at the expense of the rest of humanity.

It was the eyes of the people that touched me the most; the eyes of the focused and passionate demonstrators filled me with an energy I’ve never experienced before. The eyes of the individual police men and women, who stood like an army with their batons ready to inflict wounds on our movement, filled me with a deep frustration of the way things operate in our society. I marched and sang and held my banner high with the message of “Conscience Not Commerce” shouting to the cameras of the police as they snapped my picture for the FBI. And next came the tear gas, the rubber bullets, the pepper spray, and the militant police force pushing, attempting to break our spirit.

WALK! WALK! WALK! As we were treated as criminals, even terrorists, we walked together, bandanas over faces, holding hands. “What’s so great ‘bout the power of the people? The power of the people don’t s t o p!”

Beautiful, colorful, creative banners surrounded me as the beat of drums match up with my own heart beat. All of a sudden a stranger’s hand slaps mine five and I feel a deep connection with the environment surrounding me. You see, it was my first time being in the masses of human beings coming together in solidarity to stand tall and strong against corporate domination, against the CEOs who put their filthy money above the lives of children, women,
“schematics” by jonny
my heart is full up like a landfill
& in this attic which is desire
with looped voices & winged creatures
that is to say respective of their military tactics
i no longer have control over my mind
respective to their military tactics
a bar code on my neck shuffle on the burning deck like a buffalo
where appropriate
i did what i had to do to bring down the roman empire
the networking ikemans
reading quarterly reports, under IKEA lampshades of human skin
pushing paper inside the ministry of truth’s twin towers
seeing notheing but the ways & means
like pig babies, better off drowned at birth
destroying these schematic words
used to understand the world
while i’m striving to connect the events & emotions
to rationally understand the narrative of the world
w/ language constructed inside a repressive regime
like a meandering flag, a tired placard,
a nonchalant dualism
beaten about like a lunchtime tetherball
by a retarded fortunate son fuhrer,
by a phalanx of silverscreen goebbels,
by mein fuhrer’s jackbooted market forces
    beaten about by their bloody hands
i grow tired of working the book furnaces
& owing nothing to the locked down
prisonhouse of thought that is my motherland
doors locked as they are
where i am having visions of death
unto the very end of my motherland
put it down like a rabid coydog
as if i had the courage of brother malcolm
as if in this grid of dis-information & propaganda films
i could put together words to connect the events & emotions
respective to their military tactics
to rationally understand the world
to do what i have to do
respective to their military tactics

“Star-Spangled Blindfold” & Untitled by Andrea
Not PROUD to be an
American -- privileged am
I to pretend I’m not
Exploited, that I live in a
Democracy, that my vote
Counts because I am
White and I don’t live in
Florida.

Privileged to feel
Guilty over crimes I don’t
Commit but with each
Penny I
Assist. My
Conscience is making me
Sick.

The Liberty tree’s
Leaves are wilting my
Comrades -- It’s time to
Decide whether to
Chop it down or
Get up and
Preserve its
Preciousness.

What do you hold dear?
Your Life; your
Liberty, your
Pursuit of happiness;
Or the right to live in
Ignorant bliss,
MIAMI, Nov. 24 - We were loading our video equipment into the trunk of our car when a fleet of bicycle cops sped up and formed a semi-circle around us. The lead cop was none other than Miami Police Chief John Timoney. The former Police Commissioner of Philadelphia Timoney has a reputation for brutality and hatred of protesters of any kind. He calls them punks,” “knuckleheads” and a whole slew of expletives. He coordinated the brutal police response to the mass-protests at the Republican National Convention in Philadelphia in 2000. After a brief stint in the private sector, Timoney took the post of Miami police chief as part of Mayor Manny Diaz’s efforts to “clean up the department.”

We had watched him the night before on the local news in Miami praising his men for the restraint they had shown in the face of violent anarchists intent on destroying the city. In reality, the tens of thousands who gathered in Miami to protest the ministerial meetings of the Free Trade Area of the Americas summit were seeking to peacefully demonstrate against what they consider to be a deadly expansion of NAFTA and US-led policies of free trade. There were environmental groups, labor unions, indigenous activists from across the hemisphere, church groups, grassroots organizations, students and many others in the streets. What they encountered as they assembled outside the gates to the building housing the FTAA talks was nothing short of a police riot. It only took a few hours last Thursday before downtown Miami looked like a city under martial law.

On the news, Chief Timoney spoke in sober tones about the tear gas that demonstrators fired at his officers. No, that is not a typo. Timoney said the protesters were the ones launching the tear gas. He also said the demonstrators had hurled “missiles” at the police. “I got a lot of tear gas,” Timoney said. “We all got gassed. They were loaded to the hilt. A lot of missiles, bottles, rocks, tear gas from the radicals.”

Seeing Timoney up close and personal evokes this image of Mayor Daley at the ’68 Democratic Convention ordering his men to shot protesters on sight. He is that kind of guy.

Back at our car, Timoney hopped off his bike as a police camera man recorded his every move. It all had the feel of being on an episode of COPS. He demanded the license and registration for the car. Our colleague Norm Stockwell of community radio station WORT in Madison, Wisconsin gave him his license. We informed him we were journalists. One of his men grabbed Norm’s press pass, looking it over as though it was a fake. They looked at all of us with nasty snarls before getting back on their bikes and preparing to continue on to further protect Miami. Timoney gave us this look that said, you got away this time but I’ll be back. You could tell he was pissed off that we weren’t anarchists (as far as he knew).

As Timoney was talking with his men, one of the guys on the bikes approached us with a notepad. “Can I have your names?” he asked.

I thought he was a police officer preparing a report. He had on a Miami police polo shirt, just like Timoney’s. He had a Miami police bike helmet, just like Timoney’s. He had a bike, just like Timoney’s. In fact there was only one small detail that separated him from Timoney: a small badge around his neck identifying him as a reporter with the Miami Herald. He was embedded with Chief Timoney.* That reporter was one of dozens who were embedded with the Miami Police force (it’s hard to call them police), deployed to protect the FTAA ministerial meetings from thousands of unarmed protesters.

In another incident, we saw a Miami Herald photographer who had somehow gotten pushed onto the “protesters side” of a standoff with the police. He was behind a line of young kids who had locked arms to try and prevent the police from advancing and attacking the crowds outside of the Inter-Continental Hotel. He was shouting at the kids to move so he could get back to the safe side. The protesters ignored him and continued with their blockade.

The photographer grew angrier and angrier before he began hitting one of the young kids on the line. He punched him in the back of the head before other journalists grabbed him and calmed him down. His colleagues seemed shocked at the conduct. He was a big, big guy and was wearing a bulletproof vest and a police issued riot helmet, but I really think he was scared of the skinny, dreadlocked bandana clad protesters. He had this look of panic on his face, like he had been in a scuffle with the Viet Cong.

Watching the embedded journalists on Miami TV was quite entertaining. They spoke of venturing into Protesterland as though they were entering a secret al Qaeda headquarters in the mountains of Afghanistan. Interviews with protest leaders were sort of like the secret bin Laden tapes. There was something risqué, even sexy about having the courage to venture over to the convergence space (the epicenter of protest organizing at the FTAA) and the Independent Media Center. Several reporters told of brushes they had with “the protesters.” One reporter was quite shaken after a group of “anarchists” slashed her news van’s tires and wrote the word “propaganda” across the side door. She feared for the life of her cameraman, she somberly told the anchor back in the studio. The anchor warned her to be careful out there.

So dangerous was the scene that the overwhelming majority of the images of the protests on TV were from helicopter shots, where very little could be seen except that there was a confrontation between police and “the protesters.” This gave cover for Timoney and other officials to make their outrageous and false statements over and over.

Timoney spun his tales of “hard-core anarchists” rampaging through the streets of Miami; “outsiders coming to terrorize and vandalize our city.” He painted a picture of friendly restrained police enduring constant attacks from rocks, paint, gas canisters, smoke bombs and fruit. “We are very proud of the police officers and their restraint. Lots of objects were thrown at the police officers,” Timoney said.

“If we didn’t act when we did, it would have been much worse.” It was much worse.

Timoney’s Paramilitaries

After last week, no one should call what Timoney runs in Miami a police force. It’s a paramilitary group. Thousands of soldiers, dressed in khaki uniforms with full black body armor and gas masks, marching in unison through the streets, banging batons against their shields, chanting, “back... back... back.” There were armored personnel carriers and helicopters. The forces fired indiscriminately into crowds of unarmed protesters. Scores of people were hit with skin-piercing rubber bullets; thousands were gassed with an array of chemicals. On several occasions, police fired loud concussion grenades into the crowds. Police shocked people with electric tazers. Demonstrators were shot in the back as they retreated. One young guy’s apparent crime was holding his fingers in a peace sign in front of the troops. They shot him multiple times, including once in the stomach at point blank range.

My colleagues and I spent several days in the...
streets, going from conflict to conflict. We saw no attempts by any protesters to attack a business or corporation. With the exception of some graffiti and an occasional garbage can set on fire, there was very little in the way of action not aimed directly at the site of the FTAA meetings. Even the Black Bloc kids, who generally have a rep for wanting to smash everything up, were incredibly restrained and focussed.

There was no need for any demonstrator to hurl anything at the forces to spark police violence. It was clear from the jump that Timoney’s men came prepared to crack heads. And they did that over and over. After receiving $8.5 million in federal funds from the $87 billion Iraq spending bill, Miami needed to have a major combat operation. It didn’t matter if it was warranted.

Timoney’s men came prepared to crack heads. And they did that over and over. After receiving $8.5 million in federal funds, there was no need for any demonstrator to hurl anything at the forces to spark police violence. It was clear from the jump that Timoney’s forces ordered the protesters to clear the area in front of the Inter-Continental. Some of the demonstrators shouted back that they had a right to peaceably protest the FTAA. Boom. The concussion grenades started flying.

The real crime seems to be “failure to embed.”

In the times in which we live, this is what democracy looks like. Thousands of soldiers, calling themselves police, deployed in US cities to protect the power brokers from the masses. Posse Comitatus is just a Latin phrase. Vigilantes like John Timoney roam from city to city, orga

Continued from previous page...
nizing militias to hunt the dangerous radicals who threaten the good order. And damned be the journalist who dares to say it - or film it - like it is.

Jeremy Scahill is a producer and correspondent for the nationally syndicated radio and TV program Democracy Now! He can be reached at jeremy@democracynow.org. For more reports on the FTAA protests, go to: http://www.democracynow.org

*NOTE: The Miami Herald reporter embedded with Police Chief John Timoney wrote to say that he was not wearing a police-issued bike helmet or police polo shirt. He wrote, “At no point did I wear a single piece of equipment issued by police or marked with any police insignias.” We have no video or photos of our interaction with Timoney and the reporter and are therefore printing this in fairness to the Herald journalist.

Miami Vice: In-Bedded Media @ the FTAA

Nicole Armbruster ’05

Perhaps the most impressive display of a unified and diverse front against empire and capitalist globalization was not on the main day of action, but rather on the streets between Ft. Lauderdale and Downtown Miami. The Root Cause People’s March for global and social justice spanned 3 days, 34 miles, one mile for each of the countries involved in the FTAA, and at its peak numbered upwards of 1,000 people; although despite its breadth and diversity the march received the least amount of attention from the national corporate media.

Instead, the media chose to turn its attention away from the imminently peaceful events, thereby blinding the public to the immense grassroots campaigns of working class peoples, and onto the police riots. In a strategic move by the state apparatus, the corporate media became embedded within the police lines. Media included in the embedded process are the Associated Press, NBC, Reuters, The Miami Herald, The South Florida Sun-Sentinel, CNN, Fox and several TV stations. The state issued each embedded reporter their own gas mask and police helmet to protect against the unarmed protesters. Further, the reporters were kept almost exclusively behind the police lines, and yet, despite the seemingly obvious bias inherent in the state treatment of the corporate media, the media proceeded to “report” on the events.

A classic example of the bias in media can be seen by examining the circumstances surrounding some of the initial FTAA arrests. On the morning of the 19th, police arrested 7 activists, sleeping in an abandoned mansion, on the trumped up charge of burglary. In an attempt to frame the entire movement as violent, the corporate media then proceeded to romanticize the events by displaying the “evidence” found in the abandoned mansion. Included in these reports was shots of “incendiary devices”, gas masks, makeshift “slingshots”, paint cans, chains with locks, walkie-talkies and a crowbar. Most items found at nearly every squat, although the public never learned this information because the corporate media chose to spin the images for their own sensational gain by extrapolating their own story surrounding the arrests. The media reported stories of “molotov cocktail” making materials by the “anarchist types.” Media lies aside, the items, respectively, were actually used for cooking, protection from the state-sponsored chemical warfare, bike tubes, painting, communication, and entering the squat. The false claims and sensational story-telling engaged in by the corporate media only helps build the false illusion of protesters as violent.

In addition to the tremendous bias that penetrates the air waves and print media, the state was also instrumental in an in-depth mis-information campaign surrounding the days of action. Beginning in early Summer and continuing to this day, members of the police force and federal agents leafleted and released false documents about the November mobilizations. Included in the documents released to local businesses was promises of property destruction, vandalism and thievery by the notorious black-clad anarchists. Admittedly, some spray-painting did occur, however it was quantitatively less than any other anti-capitalist mobilization in the US and quite possibly global history. As the protesters fell short on the property destruction and violent tactics anticipated, the state was forced to justify its $8.5 million expenditure on “security measures” for the meetings. Thus the state turned to mass arrests, media story-telling and preemptive strikes as evident in the arrests of 7 sleeping activists and also the arrests of dozens of resident homeless-people in downtown Miami.

The paramilitary police presence that shut-down downtown Miami and the selective and farcical media coverage of the events, confirms the growing discontent with global capitalism. The state requires the use of force and ideological persuasion as a means of maintaining neoliberalism as a system. Further, the ruling notions regarding free trade and capitalism are solely those illustrative of the ruling classes, and thus are defended by any means necessary. Subsequently the working class resistance embodied in the Root Cause March and the contention of all others to the current mode of capitalism are cast aside, ignored or spun in such a way as to reify the misguided and irreverent notions of the ruling party.
Publication of this journal was made possible by:

Editors:
Daniel Peyser
Nicole Armbruster

Contributing Writers:
Matt Gaines
Nicole Armbruster
James Moorby
John Turner
Sarah Post
Andrea
Johnathan Leavitt
Rick Davis
Rheanna Cote

Contributing Photographers:
Christine Birong
Victor Schmidt

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Additional Resources
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