

Plan Z builds bridges in Tennessee

MaxZine Weinstein

2002

Plan Z: A Strategy Conference for Radical Wimmin and Trannies rolled into our radical queer community, IDA, this past June. (“Tranny,” by the way, is a common, chosen term for the transgendered.) The week-long gathering brought together activists from around the country and beyond to the secluded woods of Tennessee. We were happy to open up our home and gardens to enthusiastic agents of social change.

From the beginning, there was uncertainty about what exactly to expect. The conference organizers specifically decided to make the event open by invitation only. Biological men (or “bio boys,” as we came to be called) were only invited to participate in some of the activities. Plan Z’s goals included developing and planning strategies for radical activism in an environment where wimmin and gender queers would not have to deal with dominating men (who are, unfortunately, all-too common, even in anti-authoritarian circles).

Some of the organizers arrived more than a month early and quickly created a long list of projects they intended to initiate and complete before the influx of the larger group. They wanted to dig new shitters, construct hand-washing stations, build handrails for our staircases, clear meeting spaces in the woods, and build an accessible foot bridge across our creek, among other things. They were mostly city folk, not quite prepared for the relatively slow pace in rural Tennessee, the intense Southern sun, and the multitudes of blood-sucking chiggers, no-see-ums, and other biting insects.

Some of the projects seemed do-able, while others were daunting. The bridge became a metaphor for the gaps to be crossed before and during the conference. None of the group had ever taken on such a project, which required clearing massive thorny vines, digging huge holes for concrete piers, felling large trees, and then hauling them to the site. Thrown in were lessons with a chainsaw (that nasty gas-guzzling tool that can cause serious injury if things go wrong) and numerous meetings to figure it all out. It was a scenario ripe for tensions and frustration. There was doubt, but exhaustive efforts birthed a gorgeous cedar bridge, complete with ramps on both sides.

Just as the bridge was completed, about 75 wimmin and trannies arrived with tents and ambition. We were gathered together to challenge the eternal war of Bush, Plan Colombia, and the prison-industrial complex, and to create alternatives. Some of the bio-boys in the area were upset and disappointed at being excluded from some of the conference. I felt encouraged by hosting a partially separatist gathering because of the inspiration provided by wimmin and trannies meeting together in what was a safe space for them.

Besides, I was busy helping to plot a day of cooking and cleaning in the kitchen to give the Plan Z folks a chance to have workshops without having to also cook and clean. Our goal with the meals was to shower the attendees with exquisite food (some of it from our gardens, some of it homemade—like fresh baked bagels and tempeh) and a big dose of faerie irreverence (we served each meal in different places and new outfits). Our efforts had a charming effect and we were later invited to participate in all of the conference workshops.

This included a series of performances where the conference organizers put on a production of “Bridge: The Musical” and we performed a satirical piece about the conference. Plan Z concluded with a big dance party, and there were literally dozens of otherwise butch wimmin seeking out fae [sic] men to borrow drag and, gasp, makeup from. A bridge had been gapped.

In the end, Plan Z was a great success for drawing together various activists from around the country and forging new relationships. While the world situation seems bleak indeed, gatherings of activists can fill us with hope. The most amazing result was the blending of genders and identity. While much of gender is certainly a social construct, it was heartening to bring together so many of us who have felt alienated and marginalized as cross-gender outlaws in a conformist society.

For more information about IDA Community or the revolutionary bicycle tour & dinner theater contact Maxzine at 615 597 4409 or maxzine69@yahoo.com

fifth Estate

MaxZine Weinstein
Plan Z builds bridges in Tennessee
2002

<https://www.fifthestate.org/archive/358-fall-2002/plan-z-builds-bridges-in-tennessee>
Fifth Estate #358, Fall, 2002

fifthestate.anarchistlibraries.net