

In the Aftermath - An Activist's Response

By: Alex Hundert

In December 2008, writing for Guerrillanews.com, Zoe Blunt wrote a provocative essay in which she challenged the 2010 Olympic Resistance movement to envision what will come "after the 2010 riots." She speculates about mass protests coming to head against aggressively repressive police tactics unheard of in this country, and she declared that we will have our victory. She predicts that in 2010 we will come together "to get a message to the world and speak to the conscience of a nation against racism and brutality and homelessness and injustice."

Blunt is writing primarily for radicals—she is writing from and for the fringes of liberalism and the mainstream social and environmental justice movements. In spite of Blunt's optimism, several respected veterans of those movements have suggested that 2010 Olympic Resistance does not have the potential to draw in the less radical constituencies of the broader movement. While there is lots of time for resistance to spread and deepen, I do share a concern that we do not have the strength and momentum yet that many of us (who have been organizing around this issue for some time now) envisioned we would have by now. Indigenous activists on the West Coast have teamed up with anti-poverty activists in Vancouver to create a strong movement in that city since the Olympics were announced in 2004. Recently, that movement has started to spread across the country—it followed the Canadian Pacific Railway's Olympic Spirit Train which was met with resistance at almost every stop. Unfortunately though, the protesters tended to number only in the dozens.

I think that one of the main reasons for this has to do with the nature of grassroots activism and community organizing; people have pressing local concerns that they cannot divert their attention away from. Most of the committed activists that I know and respect are involved in and committed to engaging in the local grassroots struggles of marginalized communities and people who are resisting colonialism, racism,

poverty, ableism, gender oppression, etc. Many are tired of building resistance towards the climaxes of summits and convergences, and would rather focus on building sustainable movements and addressing immediate concerns and needs. With those concerns in mind, a crucial focus of the 2010 Resistance movement for the upcoming year has to be to tie the themes of our resistance to the Olympics to those of local struggles.

The Olympics are causing tremendous environmental destruction, are an epidemic example of the ongoing colonialism of our neoliberal times, and are resulting in uncountable violations of the human rights of indigenous peoples and the urban poor. In order to create a broad national movement, we must successfully recognize the patterns of infringement that exist in all our communities and we must fight the same injustices at home as part of our resistance to the 2010 Olympics. Zoe Blunt predicts that one of our biggest successes will be a coming together where we learn to fight national and global injustice through battles in our own communities, and at the convergence in Vancouver where we will present a diverse yet united front

against the "2010 corporate circus." Indigenous activists, anti-poverty activists, and others have called out for support, for a convergence in resistance to the Olympics "on stolen native land." It is important that activists from across the country answer this call. It is important for reasons of solidarity, but also because it provides us an opportunity to put all of our energies together at a moment in time, towards confronting ongoing colonialism and injustice in this country and beyond; to physically bring our interconnected struggles together—face to face.

The two fundamental abuses of human rights being carried out for the Olympics are the continued colonialism and land theft/destruction being perpetrated against the Indigenous peoples of the Salish Coast, and the gentrification of downtown Vancouver and its attendant criminalization of the poor. Tactics of the convergence will focus on highlighting for the global media the existence and nature of the ongoing colonialism in Canada. Activists will liberate and reclaim physical spaces, they will also do everything they can to disrupt the

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