

Sabrina Qureshi, April 15, 2009

In answer to Kate Hudson's blog of April 4, on-line at:

http://www.cnduk.org/index.php?option=com_myblog&Itemid=122&lang=en&show=The-Battle-of-Strasbourg.html

I agree with what you write about what took place but I appeal to those who joined the 'black block' to use the anger you feel to empower the peace movement. Lay down your choice to use physical violence as a means to gain peace and stop letting the power intent on spreading fear and violence to capture your hearts. I feel your rage but give peace a chance and believe in your energy enough that you can protect and fight without laying a finger. Love is the toughest lesson and a true belief in it will bring peace.

The personal is political and if you cannot feel peace in your soul or in your hearts how can you manifest it for the world? We are interconnected and we need you now more than ever. You too were infiltrated and exploited. Don't let violence destroy your grandchildren's future. It was great that you prepared yourselves for the onslaught of tear gas that choked the unprepared, uncovered civilian peace protestors. You were like an army, just like any other. You and the police must have felt very hard with all that gear on. I just couldn't get the image out of my head. Ninja turtles to the left. Balaclaverd ninjas to the right. Peace stuck in the middle giving birth. Under extreme pressure and provocation we made friends and allies. Black is the colour of the void where dreams are manifested. Don't use it to create violence and perpetuate the already existing myth that black causes violence and is destruction and honour black as the all powerful life-giver, peaceful and forgiving. Enough is Enough. Black and white must unite not fight. Men, I implore you to step up and take your real role in ending violence against women in the home, through the media, through education and through war. Stop ignoring women's human rights be she in France, Italy, Germany, London, Greece, Afganistan Saudi Arabia, Ireland, Pakistan or the Congo. I won't go on but men in Afghanistan -- stop. Men in France -- stop. Nato -- stop. Black Block -- stop and the small minority of women who support them stop because you have done enough damage.

I was there with a young woman from Million Women Rise London wanting to join the thousands of peaceful protesters in particular a women's block made up of the Women in Black, World March of Women and many other peaceful women's groups against war from Europe but was sabotaged by violence from both the police and the 'black block'. Public transport to the rally and meeting points for the peaceful march were suspended and road blocks erected. Myself and four other women walked miles and for hours for peace with our purple and white World March of Women flags to be part of a movement of peace for everyone. We were tear gassed within half hour of reaching the rally as Bianca Jagger was trying to speak. Everyone was distracted by the fumes and smoke from the blazing fires. Thick, black smoke. I felt like I was in a war zone. Helicopters, which seemed to be letting off tear gas, started flying above us. And at the same time, there were bright colours,

rainbow flags and flags with the CND symbols for peace of doves. There were elderly people and children. It was my first time at a demonstration like this. What happened was an attempt to discredit the peace movement. People had come in their droves from all over Europe for PEACE. We are strong together and we live to learn from the experience. I for one feel empowered by the experience and believe more than ever that peaceful resistance is the answer. We have to peacefully resist the police, black block and Nato. My deepest respect goes to the Women in Black and WILPF and all those who came to demonstrate for peace.

To the French President I want to say that you lied to the public when you stated that the demonstration was over and those who remained were intent on fighting the police. That was not true. I was there with men and women, peaceful protestors who had been tear gassed and hit by shrapnel, including one woman from Women in Black who was 78 years old. The truth is that the police imprisoned us in the middle of nowhere and we were denied our right to peaceful protest. As Gandhi said when he was asked about western democracy 'That would be a good idea'.

one love

In sisterhood and solidarity

sabrina qureshi

Founder Million Women Rise and member of World March of Women.

Inspired by Women In Black

06/04/2009