

**Many activists will** tell you that the corporation is taking over from the state, and that the state needs to be strengthened in order to defend against the corporation. However the state and the corporation are separated by a revolving door, with politicians serving on boards of directors, and campaign donations securing legislation. The state is as corrupt as the corporation, in collusion together against the will of the people.

The US presidential election of 2000, a farcical charade of democracy if ever there was one, provided a perfect example of this. Five months before the election, Florida's Governor Jeb Bush (brother to George W) ordered his Secretary of State, Katherine Harris, to illegally knock 94,000 voters off the registration lists, claiming that they were felons, and therefore, ineligible to vote in Florida. Harris, who was simultaneously running Bush's presidential campaign, complied. Why was this happening in Florida? It's the US' swing state, where the vote is evenly divided. Of the 94,000, 91,000 were innocent of crimes, but half of them were 'guilty' of being African-American or Latino – in other words, Democrats. Since Florida is like South Africa under apartheid in that they list race on voter registration, the purging of black voters was no coincidence.

In addition to that, 179,855 votes were not counted, due to what was referred to as 'irregularity,' or 'spoilage.' As investigative journalist Greg Palast puts it, "People wrote in the name Al Gore because the ballot said, 'Write in candidate's name.' ... If you wrote in Al Gore, because he wasn't a write-in candidate, your ballot was void." The following month, after much hand-wringing, discussion of 'dimples' and 'chads,' and racist insinuations that African-Americans in Florida are perhaps not clever enough to use a ballot properly, George W Bush was declared the winner of the election, by a margin of 537 votes. So it was no great surprise that 20,000 people turned up in Washington to protest the swearing in of such a sore loser. They had seen the future, and the future looked scary.

## Anarchists Can Fly

by Sophia Delaney

"If someone had told my dad he'd one day be friends with the President of the United States, he wouldn't have believed it." Fucking moron. I would have smacked her if she had been three-dimensional.

In the library, waiting for the internet terminal, I picked up the latest issue of *TeenPeople*, the glossy-paged teen celebrity magazine. I didn't start reading to "scope some mega-cute skater sweeties!" or dig some lip-gloss likely to get me tongue-kissed after class. Nope – it was lying open where I sat down, and the page facing up was a photo spread of George W Bush's inauguration.

I had been in Washington DC when the President was sworn in. I was curious to see how a magazine that touted shopping and good grades as the answer to every teen-age problem would write up an event like our corrupt system reaching new heights of unscrupulousness, and how their coverage measured up to my memory of it. Not very well. The girl writing the photo captions was the daughter of a friend of Dubya. She got to go celebrate the presidential coup Republican-style, with ball gowns ("I spent about two hours getting ready!"), and Ricky Martin shaking his bon-bon and Bush calling out "T-Bone!" to her daddy, "That's good ol' Bushie's nickname for him!" from the stage right before his speech. Wow, I thought. Ain't no inauguration I went to.

My memories of 20 January are strikingly different, but no less memorable. I was there as a protester, one of the

20,000 who came to deride Bush, not dance at the ball. I was a member of the Revolutionary Anti-Authoritarian Bloc. We were the anarchist Black Bloc, the window-smashing flag-burning mask-wearing 'bad' demonstrators.

There's a photo in my journal – a black and white taken at 14th and K, where police scuffled with protesters – that shows nothing but lights and shadows distorted into a haze of action. Nothing entirely clear, everything moving too fast. I saved the print because that was the way it had felt. This was my first big protest, and there was just too much happening – too many chants, too many conflicting reports on the streets, too many cops, too much rain and hunger and exhaustion. I was new to this and a total wimp, and I ran on autopilot.

There was one moment, though, that seared itself into my memory, seizing a handful of brain cells so tightly it will never escape my mind. It was after hundreds of protesters had bypassed the unconstitutional security checks – goodbye, chain link fences – and got all the way up to the parade route we were supposed to be four blocks away from. The Black Bloc had converged near a small plaza full of flagpoles. We'd met there for protection – the National

Organization for Women had staked a claim to some of that space, and while police would charge and beat the anarchists, they might not do that to a crowd of feminist ladies. The crowd was thin and we would be close to the street when the motorcade passed, a good thing.

We anarchists milled about, anxious. The flagpoles – about 30 feet high, set in seven-foot concrete pedestals – were the Navy Memorial. Each of them was strung with three long ropes of ship flags waving in the cold wind. I looked around anxiously, feeling as though my momentary quietude was about to be disrupted.

I was right. A Black Bloc-er, his face covered with sweatshirt hood and black bandana, ran up to the pole and scrambled up the cement base. Three others quickly joined him, and the crowd began to cheer. They struggled to unravel the ropes holding the flags in place, tearing down the monument. As each length of cloth fell the crowd let out a collective yell of joy, happy to see the symbols of the system they wanted so badly to change hit the mud puddles below. I hollered, "Hell yeah!" up to the overcast sky, thrilled with the spectacle.



2002

>> **January 1** >> Zimbabwean public workers go on strike to protest against the government's 15 per cent wage increment. With inflation at 70 per cent, the workers argue that the rise is insufficient and leaves them unable to meet the costs of living.

>> **January 8** >> Angolan public sector workers go on general strike for four days in most provinces in

reaction to government proposals to lower the minimum monthly salary. The state-owned media refuse to report the events.

>> **January 20** >> Thousands line the streets of Washington DC, US to protest the inauguration of unelected President George W Bush.

>> **January 21** >> Ecuador erupts as indigenous groups are joined by farmers, students, and labour unionists