

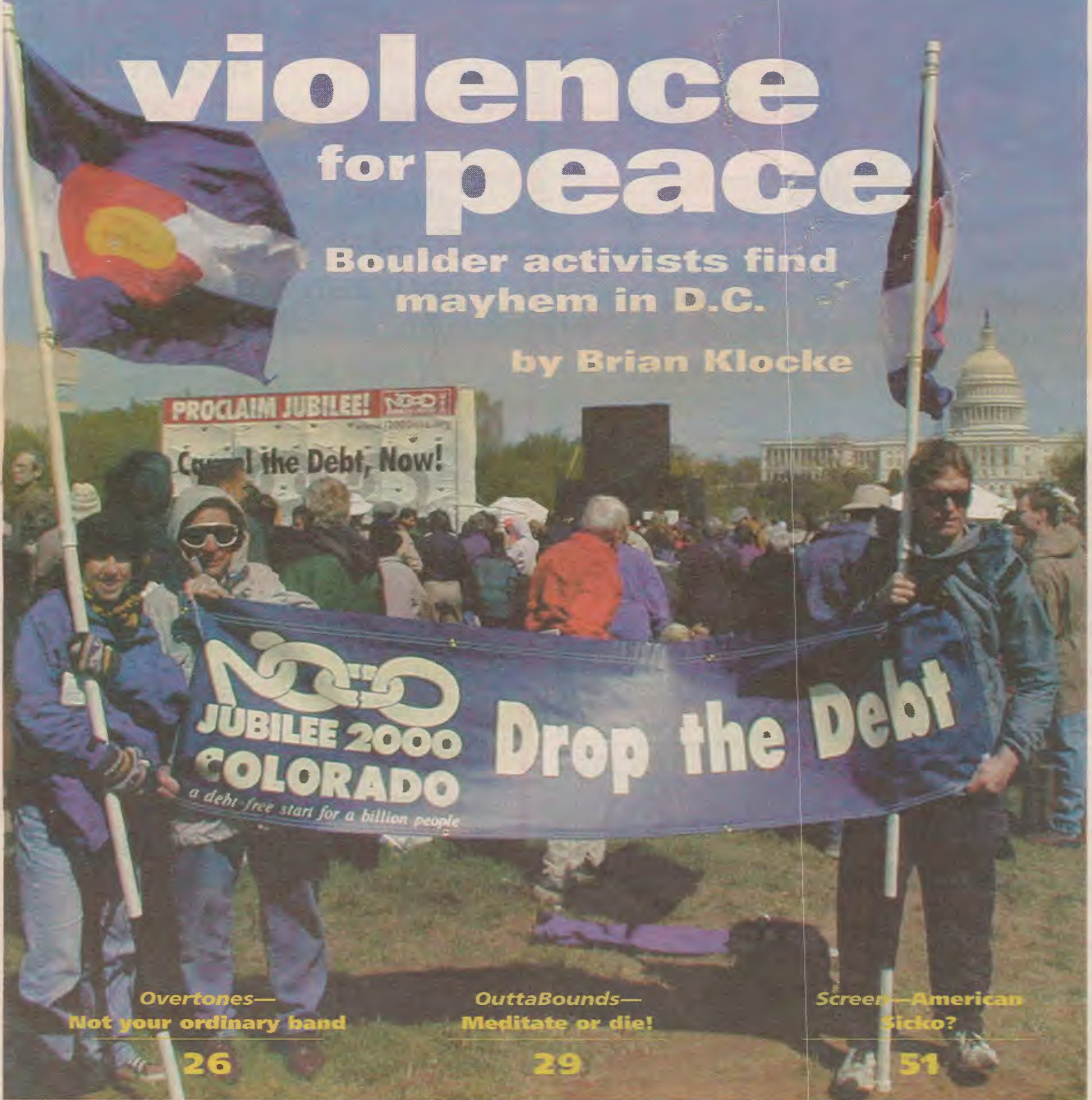
BOULDER

WEEKLY

violence for peace

Boulder activists find
mayhem in D.C.

by Brian Klocke



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violence for peace

Dozens of Boulder residents traveled to D.C. to peacefully protest the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. They were met by a hostile army of police.

Story and photos by Brian Klocke



A protester gives the peace sign to a tense officer.

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Jonis wanted world peace. So the Boulder High School student traveled to the nation's capital with other protesters "to celebrate community and help Third World countries fight against corporate oppression."



For his trouble, police trampled Jonis with horses and broke his finger.

"We were down by the White House and saw a van of treasurers (IMF/World Bank delegates) coming at us and we decide to block it," Jonis said.

In good Boulder-style protest fashion, Jonis and his friend Arth Spengler sat in front of the van so it couldn't proceed. The two teens believed their message about starving kids outweighed the need for bureaucrats in the van to be on time.

But the cops weren't impressed, and were in no mood for peaceable expressions of civil disobedience. To police, Jonis and Arth

were obstacles to be moved before the work day could end.

"What they did is the cops would stand in front of the van and beat us with their batons, push us, shove us around," Jonis said. "They started using horses and the horses would trample on us. We were sitting there peacefully. A horse trampled on my finger and it's broken."

It could have been worse, Arth said. At one point, the boys' lives were in danger as the van refused to stop for them.

"The van started to run over me and all of the protesters got really pissed off because they didn't want to see some kid get run over," Arth said. "Then the cops started beating us and repeatedly hitting me in the knee and saying, 'Get back.' I said, 'I'm trying.' They kept hitting me in the knees."

When adult protesters tried to help the boys, police acted swiftly to keep them away.

"A woman was pepper sprayed in the eyes and was beaten," Jonis said. "She was unconscious and kept being pushed into the pile. I was dragged out of the crowd and right away some street medics came up to me and treated my finger."

Similar altercations were common. Volunteer street medics like Doc Rosen

kept peace protesters patched up. Rosen of the Colorado Medical Community for Human Rights, is a veteran activist and street medic from Denver. Rosen calls the IMF, the World Bank and the WTO "the three largest health hazards on the planet."

Rosen's organization sent a group of 16 Colorado medics to make sure that protesters would be safe. They trained 200 more volunteers. The Colorado team alone treated more than 300 protesters on Monday and Sunday. Head traumas from batons were common among an array of conditions resulting from police throwing protesters against concrete sidewalks and asphalt streets. Adverse reactions to tear gas and pepper spray were also treated.

Despite the abuse, Rosen remained inspired by the protesters, especially the youth. Rosen believes that today's young people are much more aware than older generations give them credit for. "The youth of America rock!" he said.

The conflict

An estimated 30,000 protesters of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, from more than 50 countries, convened on Washington April 16. Most shared a common desire to end corporate domination of people and the planet—a goal to achieve global justice.

Known as "A16" and "A17," the two days of protest were the culmination of more than a week-long series of demonstrations, teach-ins, movies, forums, debates and planning meetings by activists. A day-long forum on the negative effects of globalization offered a who's who of notable scholars, activists and writers, including: Vandana Shiva, activist and author of *Biopiracy*; economist Herman Daly; Kevin Danaher, activist and editor of *Corporations are Gonna Get Your Mama*; Jerry Mander, editor of *The Case Against the Global Economy*; Kenyan Njoki Njehi, author of *Fifty Years is Enough*; David Korten, author of *The Post Corporate World*; Ralph Nader of Public Citizen and candidate for U.S. President; and many others.

People were so energized by the passion of the speakers that most of the 1,000 who attended the conference stayed until it ended—more than 12

hours after it began.

On Saturday, there was a debate between IMF/World Bank officials and Vandana Shiva and Walden Bello of Focus on the Global South. Like the debate and teach-ins in Seattle, corporate media mostly ignored these important educational events.

Continuing in the spirit of the "Battle in Seattle"—and in the tradition of Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr.—the A16 protesters were committed to creative non-violence and civil disobedience. They came from a variety of religious, social, political and professional backgrounds. The many spirited chants, dances, puppet creations and street performances created a festival like atmosphere on Sunday, despite routine altercations with police.

The whole affair represents a renewed energy in social protest and a global revolution that "affirms life over money," says Kevin Danaher, co-founder of Global Exchange.

World Bank 101

The IMF and World Bank are the two major global institutions that manage the global capitalist economy, founded in 1944 and based in Washington D.C. They are mostly influenced by corporate and governmental elites in the United States. Like the World Trade Organization, the institutions are funded by public tax dollars. Yet they're often accused of operating secretly and not being accountable to the people they profess to serve—the poor. Activists accuse the Bank and the IMF of furthering environmental destruction, displacing indigenous populations, and increasing global economic inequality among individuals and nations.

Much of the criticism is leveled at "structural adjustment programs," known as SAPs. SAPs force developing nations to sell off public services and government-owned enterprises to foreign investors.



Ralph Nader at the podium. In the foreground, one of the many puppets used by demonstrators.

They force foreign governments to cut spending on social service programs, and to develop export-oriented economies. Such mandates weaken Third World economies and promote social decay, while increasing the profits of transnational corporations that provide cheap goods for consumers in the developed world.

Police gear up

Many of the local papers reported that the D.C. Metro Police recently bought \$1 million worth of new riot gear. They received months of training and studied tapes of last year's Seattle protests. They also established a "security perimeter"—a 90-block area that kept vehicles and pedestrians from getting anywhere near the IMF and World Bank buildings. All mailboxes within the militarized police perimeter were removed. George Washington University was closed to outside guests. Several subway stops were also closed. Protest organizers were often followed, and their communications were monitored. More

than 2,000 officers were assigned to the protests, from agencies including ATF, FBI, Secret Service, DC Metro Police, U.S. Marshalls and the National Guard.

Protest organizers offered activists training for nonviolence, medical treatment and consensus decision-making techniques. Activists were linked up with affinity groups, which each agreed to the following guidelines: 1) We will use no violence, physical or verbal, towards any person. 2) We will carry no weapons. 3) We will not bring nor use alcohol or illegal drugs. 4) We will not destroy property.

The fourth category, however, came with an asterisk. Cop barricades, after all, are "property." And they were everywhere. So the exception to the fourth rule was that barricades could be destroyed if erected to prevent activists from exercising their First Amendment right to free speech. That exception, essential to peaceable assembly, was one ingredient for angering police. When barricades came down, police reacted with force and violence ensued.

Raid and seize

Early on, police made it perfectly clear they would be in charge. Early Saturday morning, the police staged an unprovoked 'pre-emptive strike' against the protests by raiding and closing the organizing hub of the protesters, as well as seizing all supplies that were stored there.

"The police department came with about 75 officers and members of the fire department to conduct an emergency fire code inspection Saturday morning," said an attorney with the Midnight Special Law Collective. "There is a reason it was on Saturday morning. Any fire inspection could have taken place any day of the week. They waited for Saturday morning when the courts were closed and the judges were not available and the lawyers were out of their offices, which means that anyone that wanted to seek a legal remedy for the seizure of all this stuff was barred from that."

In their "fire inspection," police seized protest props, puppets and banners, and much-needed medical supplies. Police told the media they seized all supplies that could be used by protesters to start fires or build Molotov cocktails.

"The D.C. police have now showed that Washington is safe from puppets," the Midnight Special attorney said. "The police claimed that on the convergence property we also had supplies for Molotov cocktails. Yes they really found bins of bottles because activists recycle everything. They found rags, and they found paint thinner. The only Molotov cocktail that was in there was in the minds of the police."

After the seizure of the convergence center, local churches and other institutions around the area opened their doors to the activists.

Also on Saturday, more than 600 protesters at a demonstration against the prison industrial complex were arrested—

Boulder girl lands in D.C. jail

Peaceable assembly under siege in U.S. capital

It's not common for Boulder teens to wind up in Washington D.C.'s inner city jail. But that's exactly what happened to Nell Geiser.

As a student at New Vista High School, Geiser knows all about the Bill of Rights. She knows that America values free speech and the right to peaceable assembly more than safety, security and civil order.

Yet for some reason, Geiser was arrested in Washington for peacefully marching in support of Mumia Abu Jamal. The prominent African American prisoner and prize-winning journalist sits on death row, convicted of murdering a police officer in Philadelphia despite legal improprieties by the police and the judge in his case.

Geiser was also marching in opposition to what she calls America's prison industrial complex, which is surpassed only by Communist China for its per-capita rate of incarceration of the public. And like everyone else in the



Despite abusive cops, protesters were determined to have fun.

International Monetary Fund.

Trouble began at 3 pm Saturday, when Geiser decided to join a demonstration with three of her friends.

"The police were blocking the streets, so we couldn't get through, and we were marching on the sidewalks," Geiser said. "Eventually the police blocked us and turned us around, so we started marching the other direction. We were marching through this alley and once we got to the end, a police line blocked us there and when we turned around to try and go out the other way, another police line blocked us there, so we were barricaded in."

"No one was prepared for arrest, because it was a peaceful, legal protest. They kept pushing us into a smaller and smaller space (by closing in on both ends of the block). Then they started arresting people."

Adults were loaded into dozens of school buses. Geiser, along with about 30 other minors, were loaded into paddy wagons. At the jail, males and females were separated and

protest, she was marching in opposition to practices of the World Bank and

put into single cages. They were charged with unlawful assembly and parading without a permit.

In D.C., however, minors don't need permits to march on sidewalks. Nell was in jail for six hours before charges were dropped, but more than 600 adults were charged as criminals. Nell said that the police kept giving everybody different answers to their questions.

Police rejected comment on the dozens of occasions *Boulder Weekly* approached them.

Some of the 600 adults were forced to sit handcuffed on buses "for 14 hours, without food, without water, without the ability to go to the bathroom," said an attorney with Midnight Special Legal Collective of the Mobilization for Global Justice. "These folks were also denied the right to legal counsel. We could hear them chanting outside the buses and behind the police stations, and we heard them calling out through the cells, 'we want our lawyers, we want our lawyers.' Lawyers were not admitted. The police would not let us in to see our clients. We sat in the rain hour after hour asking the sergeant, the commander, to let us in to see the people who asked to talk to us to get legal advice before they were dragged into court, and we were not allowed to speak to them."

Lawsuits are pending. The American Civil Liberties Union, the National Lawyer's Guild, the Public Defender's Service and the National Congress of Black Lawyers are all considering their options.

Activists speculated that this protest, in particular, was targeted because of its support for Jamal. ❧

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including a student of New Vista High School in Boulder.

The United States currently imprisons more than two million of its citizens. A report released by the Eisenhower foundation, titled *Millennium Breach*, reveals that states spend more per year on prisons than on higher education. It also reports that the rate of incarceration of African American men in the U.S. is four times higher than in South Africa under apartheid.

Fighting back

By 5:30 Sunday morning, protesters had found a new convergence hub. They built more puppets, invented some chants and found their way downtown. By 7 am, some 15 intersections had been blocked off by activists.

Carolyn Bninski, of Boulder's Rocky Mountain Peace and Justice Center, helped block a major intersection with the help of other Boulder residents. They chanted "Corporate greed, we say no! IMF has got to go!"

Bninski was locked arm and arm with other protesters who reinforced the human chain with tubing that's tough to break or cut through.

"We're here to protest the exploitation of the poorest people on the planet," Bninski said. "My hope is to build a new international system of cooperation where every country has the ability to determine its own economy, its own future. One where the developed countries are no longer allowed to exploit and use the resources of the Third World." Bninski was arrested Monday, along with 700 other protesters.

Mark Thompson, a Boulder resident, took to the D.C. streets in protest with his wife Diana, a teacher.

"I am hoping in the long term that we will get people who remain in the so-called mainstream to start analyzing our economic structures, our political structures, and realize that the institutions we have created in the United States and throughout the world are not benefiting the many. They're benefiting the few," Thompson said.



Protesters declare victory as police retreat at one blocked intersection.

Provoked by police

At least two near-lethal weapons—tear gas and pepper spray—were used on nonviolent protesters early Sunday morning. As in Seattle, the police became more violent after the big day of protests. Throughout Monday, police used tear gas, pepper spray and rubber bullets against activists. They beat protesters harshly with batons. The public, seeing only soundbites on the evening news, had little information about the volume of violence inflicted by police during the protests.

The mainstream press

Many of the protesters I spoke with were upset by the distorted nature of the mainstream press coverage. "I was listening to the radio and the TV, and the spin that the corporate media is putting on this is so ridiculous," said Joan Flynn of Environmental Video. "They actually had the police chief saying that we had to go into the convergence house (the protest resource hub) because they had 'implements' that they could use to make pepper spray. And those 'implements' were garlic, onions and cayenne pepper. Now, I'm a cook and I know what they use those things for. They said they could use them for the purpose of criminal activity. How many guns are in people's homes? Are the police going to walk into every home and say we want your guns because they could be used for criminal activity? This is absurd, totally absurd.

"They're saying that they can use the paint thinner that they're using to make their lovely puppets, for Molotov cocktails," Flynn continued. "The commercial media is just sucking this up. It's hideous, absolutely hideous. They ran a PR piece produced by the World Bank on CNN this morning and their response was that the protesters simply say 'I don't think so.' It was absurd."

Routine stories on corporate broadcasts, and in corporate newspapers, sobbed about how IMF/World Bank officials felt their good names and reputations were under attack by protesters.

"That was absolutely the spin on CNN this morning," Flynn said.

Controlling spin was clearly an objective of IMF/World Bank officials in weeks preceding the meetings. *Boulder Weekly*, and all other alternative weeklies that applied, were flatly denied press credentials to cover the meetings. The rejection letters contained no explanations, and IMF/World Bank officials have refused to return phone calls to alternative media reporters and editors. The D.C. branch of the American Civil Liberties Union is looking into it.

Kevin Danaher, of Global Exchange, analyzed the political economy of corporate media Sunday night at the Independent Media Center.

The Independent Media Center was established, in large part, by the staff of Boulder's own Free Speech TV. Future media centers are being planned for the protests coinciding with the upcoming Republican convention in Philadelphia and the Democratic convention in Los Angeles.

"It is important to get out a clear understanding of what corporate media is," Danaher

said. "It is not information media. It is not entertainment media. It is commercial media. The products being sold by corporate media are not the tires and the toothpaste in the ads. The products are us—we are being sold...The corporate media is the marketing of human minds, which is far more insidious in fact (than slavery), because most people don't feel themselves being marketed. They think, 'Oh, I am free to change the channel.' You're free to change the channel to some more commercial drivel, with an occasional off shot of reality.

"What the Indy Media Center represents is the best of what information media should be about, helping people to understand day to day reality and lead their lives in a less fearful, more loving way," he continued. "And that's part of this revolution; and it's going to move forward to higher and higher levels all the time."

They've only just begun

Activists in Washington aren't only concerned with the IMF/World Bank fiasco. Many were the same protesters who stood up for American sovereignty in Seattle last year. And most are committed to exposing all major sources of world injustice. Their work, they hope, has only begun.

"It is imperative that we join our voices with those in every corner of the world who struggle for human dignity, for a healthy, just and fulfilling life," said Nadine Bloch, organizer for the Mobilization for Global Justice. "We do this in many ways, through an organizing process that is inclusive and not hierarchical... Despite the scare tactics, the threats, the harassment, the surveillance, the helicopters overhead, the raid of our workshop space and our teaching area, the tear gas rubber bullets and pepper spray, we will not be silent!"

Danaher also believes that the movement needs to be broader than simply protesting the IMF and World Bank. He believes humankind is at the brink of a global revolution.

"People all around the planet are sick and tired of seeing Mother Nature destroyed and seeing 30,000 children a day dying from the effects of hunger," Danaher said. There are "children dying from diseases where the vaccine costs only 10 cents. There are children going permanently mentally retarded from a lack of iodine. In your whole life you need only a spoonful of iodine, it's a trace element. Iodized salt is enough to eliminate this and it costs pennies. So this is totally unacceptable, and it's been going on for decades now, and these wealthy guys, these millionaire bankers, are always coming out with propaganda and rhetoric about how they're going to fix it. They don't fix it and it gets worse. Their own data shows that the inequality is worse now than it was 50 years ago when they started. So we're saying enough! Those institutions are either going to change their policies or those institutions are going to come down."

Oronto Douglas, of Environmental Rights Action in Nigeria, was among hundreds of foreign protesters who had survived physical torture and tyranny.

"The first decade of this century will be a decade of protests, a decade of the struggle for liberation, a decade of the attempt by humanity to resist that resistance by international financial institutions and those corporations that have refused to understand humanity's cry for justice," Douglas says. "Expect more protests to happen whether in Nigeria or in the United States, whether in England or Pakistan. There will be protests until humanity decides that there is justice." ❏

At a glance Colorado takes on D.C.

If there was any doubt, it's been erased: Colorado is an activist state. The following are some of the local organizations that sent members to the IMF/World Bank protests last weekend:

Free Speech TV

Activist Media Project

Denver Peace and Justice Center

Rocky Mountain Peace and Justice Center

Colorado Medical Community for Human Rights

Jubilee 2000 Colorado Campaign

Web resources:

Global Exchange:
www.globalexchange.org

Mobilization for Global Justice:
www.a16.org

Independent Media Center:
www.indymedia.org

Fifty Years is Enough:
www.50years.org/

Jubilee 2000 USA:
www.jubilee2000usa.org

Corporate Watch:
www.corpwatch.org

International Forum on Globalization:
www.ifg.org/

International Monetary Fund:
www.imf.org/

World Bank:
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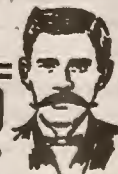
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