



## YEAR 1.5 IN REVIEW NEWSLETTER

where we've been, where we're going

Keep it cool. Keep it safe. And  
when the cops come around, keep  
your f\*ckin' mouth shut!

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### who we are

Coldsnap Legal Collective was formed in January 2008 by a small group of people who were interested in doing legal rights activism. Especially after the Critical Mass arrests in August 2007 in Minneapolis, we had become aware of a need in the radical community for more information and resources regarding legal rights and how to deal with state repression, as well as more organized structures for supporting activists in the event of arrest.

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### where we're goin'

This year, we're continuing our RNC arrestee support efforts through our involvement with Community RNC Arrestee Support Structure (CRASS; see page 4). Much work remains to be done to assist our friends and comrades in fighting the bogus charges from the RNC.

We're also continuing to educate and empower our communities by further demystifying and decentralizing basic legal knowledge. One way we're doing this is by facilitating Know Your Rights workshops in conjunction

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### the rnc and its aftermath

#### The RNC

The arrival of the Republican National Convention in St. Paul heightened the need for awareness and solidarity in our community, and reinforced its immediacy. Even before the actions in the streets, sophisticated modes of police surveillance, infiltration, and targeted attacks on perceived organizers were already in effect. We in Coldsnap spent the months leading up to the RNC working to set up our legal support office; organize and train volunteers for our jail support hotline, street team, and jail vigil; and give trainings about legal rights for protesters. We also worked closely with lawyers from the Minnesota chapter of the National Lawyers Guild ([www.nlgminnesota.org](http://www.nlgminnesota.org)).

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[www.coldsnaplegal.org](http://www.coldsnaplegal.org) \* [coldsnap\(at\)riseup.net](mailto:coldsnap@riseup.net) \* jail support hotline 651.356.8635

## where we're goin', continued from page - 1 -

with EXCO (Experimental College, excotc.org). The workshops teach people about their rights in the streets through role plays, batons made out of newspaper and duct tape, plastic cop badges from some dollar-store toy sets, and energetic facilitators who love empowering people.

Another big project of ours is revising "Need-to-Know Basis," the zine we put out in the run-up to the RNC. We are working to expand and clarify existing sections, condense some sections as necessary, and add a couple new sections to make it an even more useful legal primer (such as a glossary of legal terms).

Our goal in all of these efforts is to strengthen our communities by ensuring people are as prepared as possible. The extreme repression during the RNC surprised many of us, but we are ready to share the legal knowledge we have learned so that we all come out of this experience more informed and more prepared.

## who we are, continued from page - 1 -

We took our name from Operation Coldsnap, which was the largest police mobilization in Minnesota history prior to the Republican National Convention (RNC). Beginning on December 20, 1998, Operation Coldsnap was directed at activists who were occupying land at the Minnehaha Free State anti-road occupation and seeking to stop Highway 55 from being built. More than 600 officers swarmed the site at 4 a.m. on the coldest day of the year, barring media from the site and smashing observers' cameras. They brutalized the non-violent activists, arrested 36 of them, and razed the houses, tipis, and sacred objects on the land.



coldsnap collective members, pre-rnc

By taking the name of this massive abuse of police power, we choose to send the message that we will never be taken off guard again. With every action and demonstration, we're going to become more organized, more educated, and more empowered. And we'll never stop fighting for our rights and the rights of our friends, comrades, and allies!

Please remember that we in Coldsnap Legal Collective are NOT lawyers. We do NOT give legal advice or provide legal defense, but we may be able to direct you to lawyers who will. We DO want to change the world.

## the rnc and its aftermath, continued from page - 1 -

Our jail support office went live on the Friday afternoon before the Convention, and the phone calls started pouring in that evening as a result of a preemptive raid on the Convergence Space in St. Paul, a gathering place for activists. No arrests were made, but this raid was only the beginning. The next morning, activists in three houses in Minneapolis and one house in St. Paul woke up to police officers entering their homes with weapons drawn. Five



arrests were made that day, and the Coldsnap office team spent the weekend dealing with the aftermath and making hurried preparations for the coming days of the convention.

On the first day of the RNC, hundreds were arrested as they publicly expressed their dissent and many survived extensive police brutality. These instances of brutality and repression continued throughout the week and, by the fourth day of the convention, the St. Paul Police Department and other cooperating agencies had arrested 818 individuals. Downtown St. Paul had become an overt police state, filled with police officers in riot gear using pepper spray, tasers, rubber

bullets, tear gas, and other "less lethal" crowd control measures. The cops cordoned off streets and bridges, making numerous mass arrests. Everyone on the streets became a target that week, including legal observers, street medics, bystanders, journalists, and protesters.

Time and again, the police and other agents of the state worked to isolate individuals-- putting our friends in solitary, brutalizing them both on the streets and in the jails, dropping them off on random and often unfamiliar street corners in the middle of the night, and so forth. Coldsnap came to see our role as working to foster community and solidarity in the face of isolation and repression. In preparation, we had encouraged everyone to memorize our legal hotline number (651.356.8635!) and write it in permanent marker on their bodies so the police couldn't take it away if they were arrested. The Coldsnap street team also made their way through the crowds, handing out the jail support number and helping to serve as the office's eyes and ears on the ground. We fielded thousands of calls from people on the streets witnessing police actions and arrests, and we were then able to publicize these updates in real time through Twitter ([www.twitter.com/coldsnaplegal](http://www.twitter.com/coldsnaplegal)) and elsewhere. We were also there by the phones through all hours of the day and night to support people who'd been arrested and were finally getting their



## the rnc and its aftermath, continued from page - 3 -

phone call from jail, as well as people who'd been released from custody. We served as a liaison between those in jail and their friends and families, and helped to stage a round-the-clock jail vigil so those released were met with clean clothes, warm food, and hugs.

In this chaotic environment, we tried to provide a reliable support structure in the face of police repression and violence, and to send one over-arching message to those expressing their dissent in the streets: We've got your back!

### RNC Aftermath

Coldsnap helped organize the first meeting of RNC arrestees and supporters two days after the end of the convention and meetings have continued regularly since. Through these meetings, a non-hierarchical coalition of arrestees, community groups, and allies known as CRASS (Community RNC Arrestee Support Structure; [www.rncaftermath.org](http://www.rncaftermath.org)) evolved. Though less than a quarter of the 818 arrestees have been formally charged and hundreds of charges were dropped, many folks are still dealing with court proceedings. CRASS has developed a court solidarity strategy and assembled a number of different working groups to help the arrestees organize, making sure that all who are



[www.rncaftermath.org](http://www.rncaftermath.org)



Defend the RNC8

[www.rnc8.org](http://www.rnc8.org)

interested have the support necessary to fight their charges and stand up for free speech. CRASS has a travel fund available to aid arrestees in returning to the Twin Cities for their court dates and is dedicated to aiding and facilitating civil suits.

Coldsnap has continued running our jail support hotline and has been working extensively with CRASS. For example, the working groups that comprise CRASS have had access to our office, where they have been able to use our phone lines for arrestee support work, hold meetings, and organize events such as protests and press conferences.

In the aftermath of the RNC, there is also a group of eight people who face what are perhaps the most serious charges. The "RNC 8" ([www.rnc8.org](http://www.rnc8.org)) are organizers who have been charged, not on the basis of particular actions in the streets, but solely in response to their organizing itself. They originally faced felony conspiracy charges and, in the first-ever use of Minnesota's PATRIOT act, multiple "terrorism enhancements." Thanks to community organizing and a widespread outcry against this absurd use of "terrorism" charges against political organizers, the "terrorism enhancements" have since been dropped. However, the 8 still face serious felony charges: 2nd Degree Conspiracy to Riot and 1st Degree Conspiracy to Commit Criminal Damage

## get involved!

We believe our work is valuable in seeking to cooperatively build a larger network of solidarity and mutual aid within our community. We approach our legal rights activism with the greater mission of educating, empowering, and supporting our community by sharing knowledge, raising awareness, and developing a network of legal support and solidarity. Thus, we aim to decentralize information as much as possible so it can be easily passed on to others, therefore reaching as many communities as possible through networks of shared knowledge. We also seek to provide people with the information necessary for them to make educated decisions for themselves based on their needs and desires. This mission allows autonomous action within a larger, stronger, more informed community that is better able to combat repression.

We operate as a collective, which means we are non-hierarchical and make decisions on a consensus basis. We choose to use this structure to support work that aims to redistribute and share social and political power and knowledge for a more just society. By committing to working as a collective, Coldsnap is helping to develop and further a structure in which people dedicated to fighting for justice in the legal system can take powerful roles in transforming their own lives, as well as their communities and the larger world.

If you're excited about the work we're doing, we would love for you to get involved! We are especially looking for folks to help out with legal rights trainings for activists and community members, but we welcome all skills and ideas! We are also still a young collective, and membership is open to anyone who shares these values and is committed to working with us as we grow and develop.

Join us! Support radical legal activism!  
Give us some money! (Pretty please!)

[www.coldsnaplegal.org](http://www.coldsnaplegal.org)

## the rnc and its aftermath, continued from page - 4 -

to Property.

While the attempted use of the "terrorism enhancement" provisions was historically significant, the critical nature of these trumped-up charges is more far-reaching even than that. By arresting political organizers under conspiracy laws, and by deploying the notion of "terrorism" in direct response to political activity and thought itself, the state is openly signaling its desire to silence dissent. Had these false and dangerous charges held up in court, it may well have had a chilling effect on all political activity in Minnesota...which, of course, is the intention.

For the RNC & themselves and for the future of radical organizing in the Twin Cities, we stand in total solidarity with the accused and will continue to do so until all charges are dropped.

## thank you!

There is simply no way Coldsnap and our allies would have been able to accomplish any of our objectives, during the PNC and since, without the generous support of our donors and volunteers. While we would prefer a world unshackled by capitalism, there is no denying the fact that certain things cost money. Bail and phone lines spring to mind! Thank you to each and every donor who supported our efforts during the PNC, and to all those who continue to support us. We honestly would be hamstrung without your generosity.

There's also no denying that volunteers made this effort work. You staffed the office, you answered the phones and made out-calls, you stood in the cold outside the jail so that our friends knew they weren't alone. Some of you taught us how to do the things we tried to do. Some of you made our machines work. There is no adequate number of words to convey the profound gratitude and humility we feel for your guidance, generosity, support, and love. Thank you.

We would also like to make an extra-special thank you shout-out to the fine folks from Midnight Special Law Collective in Oakland, CA ([www.midnightspecial.net](http://www.midnightspecial.net)). Not only were they the inspiration for much of our work, many MSLO members came out to the Twin Cities to help us throughout the planning and preparations, through the solid week or long days and little sleep that was the PNC itself, and through the months of work that have followed. Again, thank you.

## donate!

We need your financial support to keep doing what we do. Donate online at [www.coldsnaplegal.org](http://www.coldsnaplegal.org)!

## contact us!

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