

# SDS Call to Action: Endorse and Participate in Shutting Down the RNC

Friday, March 28 2008 @ 01:09 PM PDT

Contributed by: activate

*Over the past year, organizing against the 2008 Republican National Convention (RNC)--which will take place from September 1 through 4 in St. Paul--has grown at a considerable pace. At our 2007 national convention, Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) passed a proposal endorsing the work of groups organizing against the RNC and encouraging folks within SDS to organize against both the RNC and the DNC.*

## SDS Call to Action: Endorse and Participate in Shutting Down the RNC

Over the past year, organizing against the 2008 Republican National Convention (RNC)--which will take place from September 1 through 4 in St. Paul--has grown at a considerable pace. At our 2007 national convention, Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) passed a proposal endorsing the work of groups organizing against the RNC and encouraging folks within SDS to organize against both the RNC and the DNC.

Since that time, ACTIVATE (Grand Rapids SDS) has grown increasingly excited about the prospect of achieving a significant victory at the RNC and thereby giving our movement a much needed influx of new energy, tactics, and experiences. Across the country, groups have been talking--and talking seriously--about shutting down the RNC via one of the largest direct action protests in years. The RNC is shaping up to be an event that we won't want to miss.

For SDS, the call to shutdown the RNC offers a tremendous opportunity to plug into what will likely be a major mobilization. Under the direct action strategy being discussed, SDS chapters can participate in this shutdown by selecting and utilizing the tactics with which they are most comfortable. The direct action framework will allow SDS chapters to work with those engaging in similar tactics, both within and outside SDS. Finally, chapters are free to theme their actions how they see fit and there could conceivably be SDS actions highlighting everything from the occupation of Iraq to the rising cost of tuition. Regardless of the themes and tactics chosen, imagine the excitement that we would all feel if SDS held down a few intersections and played a key role in shutting down the RNC...

To that end, we are calling on SDS chapters to both endorse and participate in a three-tiered system for disrupting the RNC on its opening day. At a gathering of over 100 anti-authoritarians from around the country in August of 2007 (facilitated by the Twin Cities based RNC Welcoming Committee), the following direct action strategy was adopted to shut down the RNC:

"Tier 1: Blockade the Xcel Center - Establish 15-20 blockades utilizing a diversity of tactics, creating inner and outer rings around St. Paul's Xcel Center.

Tier 2: Immobilize Delegates' Transportation - Immobilize the delegates' transportation

**Exhibit A-7(c)**

infrastructure, including buses, bus depots, etc.

Tier 3: Block Connecting Bridges - Block the five western bridges connecting the cities.

Those plugging into this strategy will be free to shape their actions as they see fit, using the tactics they consider appropriate. As the specific blockade sites are established, some sites may be designated "red zones" (prepared for self-defense), "yellow zones" (peaceful but assertive), and "green zones" (no risk of arrest) so as to accommodate a wide variety of creative tactics. The RNC Welcoming Committee is currently considering these zones and laying out specific blockade sites. Once these details are finalized they will be made public, and locals will be available to provide specific information and pictures of intersections, bridges, and other relevant locations to people that would like them."

We are calling on SDS chapters to endorse this strategy and to begin planning how they will fit into this strategy--if they chose to participate--by familiarizing themselves with the Twin Cities and building their skill set by hosting direct action trainings, skill shares, and thinking strategically about how their chapter can be involved in shutting down the RNC.

Finally, we are encouraging SDS chapters to act in solidarity with calls put forth by the RNC Welcoming Committee and Unconventional Action by undertaking actions in the lead-up to the convention against the electoral process, the RNC/DNC, and individual candidates. These actions should be used to build the skills, relationships, and solidarity that will allow our movement to both successfully shutdown the RNC and grow beyond the RNC protests.

To endorse the direct action strategy, please send an email to [centrahmc@unconventionalaction.org](mailto:centrahmc@unconventionalaction.org)

To endorse this call to action, please send an email to [sds@activategr.org](mailto:sds@activategr.org)

For more on organizing against the RNC, visit:

<http://www.nornc.org> <http://www.unconventionalaction.org>

Finally, an updated list of endorsers will be available at:

<http://www.activategr.org/organizing/rnc-dnc/sds-rnc-call/>

With a New World in our Hearts,  
- ACTIVATE (Grand Rapids SDS) - [www.activategr.org](http://www.activategr.org)

[1 comments](#)

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<http://www.infoshop.org/inews/article.php?story=20080328130926247>

# RNC Welcoming Committee pReNC 5.3 ReportBack

Friday, May 23 2008 @ 07:38 PM CDT

Contributed by: RNC-WC

The pReNC 5.3 was the second national gathering for radical planning against the 2008 RNC. This meeting functioned as a spokescouncil, welcome to all representatives organizing within the framework that came out of the first pReNC, with the major action strategy being one of blockading delegates from the convention site. The consulta was well attended, with over 100 spokespeople representing about 40 organizing bodies from all corners of the country.

## pReNC 5.3 REPORTBACK

This reportback is divided into two parts- an abstract which summaries the major decisions and opinions of the group and an in-depth section which describes the meeting in much more detail.

### \*\*Abstract\*\*

The pReNC 5.3 was the second national gathering for radical planning against the 2008 RNC. This meeting functioned as a spokescouncil, welcome to all representatives organizing within the framework that came out of the first pReNC, with the major action strategy being one of blockading delegates from the convention site. The consulta was well attended, with over 100 spokespeople representing about 40 organizing bodies from all corners of the country.

The idea behind this meeting was two fold, one to clarify what it is we want to see at the RNC (September 1st in particular) and secondly to figure out how to make that happen. To do this first we assessed where we were in terms of filling the tiers of the three tiered plan that was created at the first pReNC. From this we decided to focus on tier one for that day, blockading downtown St. Paul, although we did not exclude the possibility of tiers two and three also happening.

The discussion of scenario for September 1st ended up with all of the proposals on the table being supported. All of the proposals worked well together with the end goal of using a huge diversity of tactics to blockade the delegates out of the Xcel center. The idea that was discussed most was the "Swarm, Seize, Stay" model. Swarm Seize, Stay (3S) is a 'big picture' to direct all of our collective energies towards on September 1st. Basically, 3S means:

1. Move into/around Downtown St. Paul via swarms of varying sizes, from multiple directions, and with diverse tactical intentions.
2. Seize space through both hard (e.g., lockboxes) and soft (e.g., congestion), fixed and mobile, blockading methods.
3. Stay engaged with the situation in downtown St. Paul as long as necessary.

It was stated that this proposal would allow for greater participation since it doesn't require the same level of expertise or experience as exclusively relying on technical blockading. There was also a proposal for a "Mobile Blockade Brigade" which could function similarly to a critical mass with the

**Exhibit A-7(e)**

goal of disrupting traffic flow, and would fit well with the tactic of "Swarm, Seize, Stay." Overall, no comprehensive scenario was consensed on, but the general momentum was for both hard, technical blockades, and softer, more mobile blockades.

The two things discussed around the how of September 1st were colored zones and dividing the city into regions (Note: In the future, these will be referred to as "sectors"). There were strong feelings throughout the meeting that having "green zones," places where police confrontation would be absolutely minimal (recognizing that we don't control the police), was important, but there were mixed feelings about the merits of having planned yellow and red zones. There was also a feeling that as opposed to having a group (such as the Welcoming Committee) come up with zones, or prescribe them, it might be better if they were more descriptive as to what actions had been publicly planned for different areas and what types of confrontation those actions were prepared for. From these descriptions people could make informed decisions about where different actions would be appropriate.

The idea of dividing the city into regions (sectors) was a large topic of discussion. The proposal was that the city be divided into regions (sectors) based on it's topography and that these regions (sectors) be used to coordinate different actions. Clusters could take on a region, or groups planning public activities could coordinate with other actions in their region. Although there were many concerns about the regions (sectors), specifically with how they might interact with colored zones, a breakout session continued this discussion and it was concluded that this would be a viable way to move forward. A group (such as the Welcoming Committee, a sub committee, a spokescouncil working group, or some other outside organization with knowledge of the downtown St. Paul landscape) could create the regions (sectors) and publish descriptions of each, as well as help facilitate coordination between different groups within them.

Another focus of the meeting was furthering support roles for the RNC, such as food, housing, transportation, legal, medical, media, etc. Updates from groups taking on these roles were given at the beginning of the meeting, and most also had a breakout in which people working on them could network and move forward.

A post 5.3 meeting of around 30 people from around the country took some of these ideas and attempted to get them to a place where they could actually be implemented. In terms of regions (sectors) it was thought that around 4-6 would be an ideal number. Clarity around what the word "stay" meant in terms of the "swarm, seize, stay" proposal was sought, with the conclusion being that it didn't mean necessarily staying put in one space but rather staying engaged with the situation downtown, remembering the goal of blockading. It was put fourth that affinity groups should begin forming clusters, calls for swarms would be useful, and that it would help to facilitate filling in the regions (sectors) if groups with public plans announced where those would be as soon as possible.

**\*\*In Depth\*\***

The day kicked off with a hearty breakfast provided by the local Food Not Bombs and then jumped right into what was to be an 8 hour meeting. Introductions, including preference for gender pronouns, were given, followed by an update from the local organizers and hosts of the event, the RNC Welcoming Committee. This summarized the work they had been doing since the last pReNC. Included in this was the continued search for a convergence space. Some space has been found but a space closer to downtown St. Paul is proving elusive. Finding a space near downtown is, however, a high priority of the Welcoming Committee. The Welcoming Committee has kept up its' organizing with other local and national groups planning against the RNC, with the culmination of that being organizing points dubbed "the St. Paul principles." This simple set of agreements are meant as a platform for successful resistance to the RNC amongst the diverse goals, strategies, and tactics of different groups. Other local organizing

has included the co-hosting of town hall meetings as a forum for networking amongst people planning around the convention as well as addressing concerns of those that will be effected by the protests, and a now stalled door knocking campaign. The Welcoming Committee also did a national anti-RNC tour to spread the strategy and bring back ideas and feedback to the twin cities. It has continued gathering intelligence about the RNC as well as serving as an informational clearinghouse for all things RNC related. It also is still coordinating or in touch with groups coordinating all infrastructure for the RNC (legal, medical, food, housing, medics, media, comms, etc.). The Welcoming Committee also stressed it's lack of funds and asked for national help with fundraising.

Next on the agenda was updates from some of the logistical support roles. Northstar health collective is a new group in the twin cities and is coordinating medical support for the RNC protests. They are looking to pool resources from med students and professionals, provide lots of trainings (especially in August), and provide a wellness clinic and trauma center during the RNC. They are encouraging all affinity groups to have at least one person trained in basic first aid.

Coldsnap legal collective is also a newly formed group in the twin cities and will be organizing legal support for the RNC and beyond with other groups such as midnight special. They will be providing know your rights trainings leading up to the RNC and are encouraging all affinity groups to have someone within them doing legal work. Coldsnap emphasized that there role is not to decide on a legal strategy but to provide legal support for whatever strategy people choose.

An update from "basics," included how food, housing, and transportation is coming along. Food is being spearheaded by seeds of peace as well as local twin cities groups. They are currently planning on serving 5-6,000 people 3 meals a day during the RNC. People working on housing are making an "adopt an anarchist" campaign for the protests, as well as a housing board, looking for larger spaces for people, and providing camping and squatting resources. In terms of transportation, locals are hoping to provide about 500 bicycles, and are asking people to bring their own bikes or locks.

The media update was given by someone from twin cities indymedia, which is hoping to get up a new website before the RNC. They are planning on using textmob to be on top of media work as things are unfolding. They are now collecting equipment and looking for space.

Next on the agenda was a review of the first pReNC goals and strategy. A link to that reportback can be found [here](#).

After that was a reading of the St. Paul principles, which have been agreed to by the Welcoming Committee and many groups in the Protest RNC 2008 coalition and the Coalition to march on the RNC and stop the war. They say:

1. our solidarity will be based on respect for a diversity of tactics and the plans of other groups.
2. the actions and tactics used will be organized to maintain a separation of time or space.
3. any debates or criticisms will stay internal to the movement, avoiding any public or media denunciations of fellow activists and events.
4. we oppose any state repression of dissent, including surveillance, infiltration, disruption and violence. we agree not to assist law enforcement actions against activists and others.

Next a tier strength assessment ensued, in which the room was broken into regions (sectors) and an estimation of actions coming out of each region was given. It was decided that for today we would focus

on tier one, although that did not rule out the options of deciding to implement tiers two or three later in the summer or there being tier two or three actions anyway.

Subsequently an intelligence update was given to start off a discussion of scenario for September 1st. The GOP has announced that the RNC will commence at the Xcel energy center sometime between 9 am and 7 pm on September 1st. The schedule won't be released until August. The opening days of the past two RNCs have had a morning session starting at 10am and lasting no longer than 2pm, and then an evening session starting at 7pm. The march coalition is planning a rally for 11am at the capital and has requested a 2 pm step off time for the march. They have received a permit for gathering on the grounds of the capital all day and a permit to leave the capital for the march, though no time nor route yet [as of this writing the march has been issued a route, but they are challenging it in court]. They have been told, however, that they will be allowed within sight and sound of the Xcel. 200 buses as well as rented cars will be used to transport delegates.

Many police will be equipped with tasers, though it has been publicly stated that they are not for use on non-violent protesters. Police have been in touch with police forces of many European countries studying their crowd control tactics.

A speculative hard perimeter was given, though it was stressed that it was too early to know. The perimeter will be announced 6 weeks ahead of time.

The discussion moved into the scenario proposals. Many proposals had been submitted prior to the meeting, and they were summarized as follows:

A "Swarm, seize and stay" model: in addition to hard blockades this would incorporate overwhelming numbers of people, allowing them to be more mobile and offer support to blockades as needed. This model is easier for people without previous plans to plug into the days events.

"Mobile Blockade Brigade" would look like clusters of affinity groups being mobile to support hard blockades.

"Blockades" would look like a bunch of stationary blockades, but would organize them completely publicly, with groups signing up for different intersections.

"Color in" proposal incorporates zones colored green, yellow, and red according to the risk of arrest.

"Rename the streets" is a proposal to rename streets in St. Paul, which could be a way to claim space as our own.

Another proposal was for an anti-capitalist block within the permitted march, which is being organized by the IWW. Combined with the swarm, seize and stay model, this would allow for people to be directed out of the march to hot spots that need reinforcement.

There was also a proposal that the city be divided into quadrants based on its topography. This ended up being the main topic of discussion. The idea is that people work within smaller organizing groups and sign up for regions (sectors) of the city without being specific as to where they are planning their action. This would allow for autonomy within the regions (sectors) and yet break down the city so everywhere would be covered. This proposal caused a lot of questions, confusion, and conflict. A main concern was that the regions (sectors) could conflict with the concept of color zones and that people may end up not knowing where they were in terms of danger zones. Also, this model could make it difficult for people to plug in, since there could be confusion as to who was coordinating a region and what the

communication and coordination would look like. A straw poll was taken and around 1/3 of folks had outstanding concerns about regions (sectors).

With little time remaining for the scenario discussion it was realized that the regions (sectors) proposal was really a proposal for how to coordinate the blockades (a separate agenda item) as opposed to a proposal as to how the scenario would look. Attention was refocused on more scenario concentrated ideas, primarily the Swarm, Seize, Stay proposal.

Timing was a big point of discussion. If they have some sort of morning session should we try to blockade that? And then the evening as well? If they don't, how early will they be transporting to the excel center? One idea was to have comms scouts at many of the major hotels keeping abreast of the buses while people are in position to put up blockades when it seems appropriate. There was also an idea for a wave of soft blockades to stall traffic while the hard blockades were being put up. The notion that swarms could be used to put up hard blockades was also liked.

After lunch it was decided that generally all of the strategy proposals were liked and support for all of them was consensed on. It was emphasized that they all go together quite well.

Following the scenario agenda item was a discussion about how to coordinate the blockades. This mostly consisted of talking about whether we wanted colored zones, if those would be descriptive or prescriptive, and what they would signify (level of conflict or types of tactics). It was generally agreed that green zones, or at least green actions (such as the march) are important. There was much more support for descriptive versus prescriptive zones, i.e. that as opposed to a group carving up zones for everyone they could describe in what areas different types of public activities are planned for and if the planners of those actions have requested that they be a certain color. Generally also there was support for any colored zones being about level of engagement / conflict with the police as opposed to a grouping of tactics. It was decided that this discussion would be continued in a breakout.

The next agenda item was on the ground communications for September 1st. It was decided that since most people present didn't know anything about the technical aspects of comms and trusted the comms team to come up with the best systems, comms will act as it's own affinity group.

The following agenda item was strategy recruitment. It was decided that this wasn't really something that this group had to deal with and that local communities would be better equipped to recruit in their communities.

Next someone from Bash Back presented a trans jail solidarity proposal that came out of the Bash Back convergence. The proposal was not explicitly to call for jail solidarity but, rather, to redefine jail solidarity- were it to be called for- to include trans solidarity, which could include actions such as refusing to be separated by gender and giving gender neutral names when remaining anonymous (such as Jessie Doe). There were questions about how this would actually play out, and concerns as to whether it would actually be an affective form of solidarity, as well as support for it. No decision about this proposal was consensed upon, but it was decided that this would be kept in mind in discussions around jail solidarity.

The last agenda item before breakouts was communication between may and September. It was decided not to have another spokescouncil until the time just before the RNC. Instead organizing would continue regionally. Information will keep being disseminated by the Welcoming Committee.

Breakouts were decided on and the reportbacks from each of those follows:

Medics: Close to ten medics met to discuss plans. We had folks representing locally, from Chicago, Madison and Iowa City. We reviewed what was said during the update and got out the map to talk about clinic locations and where the trainings were going to be offered. We discussed distance, accessibility and the preferred number of clinics. Because of the layout of downtown St. Paul we might end up with 1-3 smaller trauma clinics with a larger space and/or clinic further away (no more than 2-3 miles). We are committed to providing a wellness clinic as well - possibly within the convergence space, but also potentially it's own separate location.

There was a lot of interest in providing trainings that would cover the issue of consent and we talked about the difference between consent as a medical professional and a street medic. Within the group there was interest and capacity to offer rape and sexual assault trainings as well as yoga and other healing arts at the wellness clinic. Many were interested in receiving more action medical training. We talked about focusing on training affinity medics as the key for on the ground medical access. We talked about the 3 national conference calls that have already occurred, with 7-10 people on each call - you can get in on those by subscribing to the convention-medical listserv.

We closed the breakout discussing the need for medics needing medical care (trauma and/or wellness). This need might be found during the RNC - we would like to designate some space for medics to receive care. We'd also like to be able to offer a space for medics to decompress after the RNC - possibly in a space in Madison or Chicago, although North Star might be able to find a space closer to the Twin Cities (the idea being out of the cities in a rural, quiet location).

No one had any experience with medic comms, but we agreed that medic comms need to be at the RNC and need to start being organized. We also talked briefly about fundraising and agreed it was a local thing.

People were encouraged to stay in touch via the listserv which people can gain access by emailing - northstarhealth (at) gmail (dot) com - or to keep updated via the website - [www.northstarhealth.wordpress.com](http://www.northstarhealth.wordpress.com)

Comms: A group is working on the technical issues, as well as how to receive, process and disseminate information. Space needs to be found.

DNC to RNC : This is a caravan going from the DNC to the RNC. It will take 2 days from Denver-leaving on Thursday with a stop over in between for a festival of music, fun and puppets. They are in need of vehicles, especially buses.

Media: The media breakout focused on setting up an outreach comms system during the RNC. This would function much like an internal comms system however, runners and other participants would be focusing on getting news, information, photos and videos out to the general public (both locally and nationally) and not just the independent media or affinity groups. This would be set up by establishing minute by minute updates from the ground during the RNC through media-based affinity groups interchanging between the three tiers.

To begin this process the media breakout folks set up a list serve to ask for support with media work and materials from around the country, providing a video server to put video on the internet (but censoring incriminating material), working with medics for documentation trainings on police brutality, publishing a clear media plan, setting up wireless mesh networks and other things that make it easy for people to participate, possibly reaching out to the international media and setting up decentralized information points where RNC news can be distributed widely during September.

