



THE LAST NIGHT SANTA CRUZ DIY PARADE

A LAST NIGHT MANIFESTO

Last Night is a decentralized, collective, spontaneous, open, public New Year's Eve celebration in Santa Cruz, California. Last Night is a completely organic event, organized and put on at a grassroots-level. No city-sponsorship. No corporate donors. It's a do-it-yourself (D.I.Y.) parade and celebration.

We write this manifesto in the spirit of understanding, in an attempt to communicate our intentions. The parade is not merely a celebration, but a celebration of the power that we all have when we gather together to make something happen. Not just a street party, but a party to reclaim our streets.

Last Night started in 2005 as a response to the implosion of the city-sponsored First Night celebration. Elsewhere that year, the government abandoned millions of poor people in hurricane-ravaged New Orleans. Last Night was also a commemoration of the do-it-yourself spirit of those surviving communities.

That year, thousands of people came out to participate in the people's parade that marched raucously up Pacific Avenue. The parade included the Santa Cruz Trash Orchestra, martial arts displays, firedancers, the Santa Cruz Peace Coalition, Indonesian music, drum circles, floats, and the Opera Lady. The parade was high-energy and peaceful. There were no conflicts with police who's light presence remained far on the periphery. The parade and it's organizers represented a broad cross-section of the community.

In a typical overreaction of authority to the threat of people taking responsibility in their own lives, the Santa Cruz Police Department deployed undercover officers to infiltrate parade planning meetings for three months. Records released after the spying scandal came to light, revealed a pattern of abuses, including monitoring unrelated groups and other first amendment activities and compiling police dossiers of organizers. The city's own police auditor determined that police had violated the civil rights of parade organizers. After six months of effort, community, activist, and ACLU involvement, the city put in place a weak policy to curb some of the abuses of police power.

The celebration is decentralized -- no one person or group is making it happen. There is no central committee nor board of directors. No one is in charge, but we are all leaders. Decisions about route and timing and other tactical matters

are made collectively by those willing to step up and make it happen. Collective simply means we all do it together.

The celebration is spontaneous -- we are not asking for permits and permission, nor are there any limits on participation. No one is in a position to restrict who can participate or in what way. People simply show up prepared to take part in a city-wide celebration. Our entire community is invited to participate and celebrate together.

The focus is on self-reliance. One of the most important aspects of the Last Night celebration is that people take responsibility for themselves and for their community. As such, parade "un-organizers" take pains to address issues such as security, traffic control, sanitation, clean-up, and police liaison.

Beyond the impossible barrier of the city's arduous and prohibitively expensive special event permit, the permit process itself is a racket. It is the process through which the city seeks to charge us for the privilege of exercising our rights to free speech and free assembly. Accepting a permit puts one person or group in the position of having to put controls on other people, lest someone damage their good standing with the authorities. Additionally, that person or group takes responsibility and liability for the actions of others. We don't want to be in that position, nor do we want someone to have that responsibility for us.

We want to live in a world full of play and celebration, where self-expression is a matter of course. A world full of surprises, in which relationships are authentic and open-ended. A world in which we share a direct connection to the world around us. Where one does not have to ask permission of authorities to realize one's dreams of adventure and possibility.

Part of creating a new world is resistance to the old one, to the relentless commodification and control of everything, including celebration and the way we relate to each other.

When we ask permission to live our lives, to celebrate, to come together, to express dissent, we legitimize the power of institutions over us. We give up our power to make our own choices and become subject to the decisions of others who may or may not be acting in our interests.

Therefore, we are not seeking permits from the city. We refuse to ask permission to be free.

Love and Celebration,

Last Night Santa Cruz