



About Carol Tarlen – Caroltarlenlives’s Blog

11-14 minutes

I get to the rally late. The procession of signs and crosses down Mission Street has ended, and the crowd dutifully gathers around the public address system for the obligatory speeches. Today we are listening to “testimonials” by the victims of US government policy during the Reagan years in Central America.

The atmosphere is somber, even though most of us are glad old Bonzo is gone. We’d spent a good part of the week making Reagan jokes and rehashing some of his most famous quotes like “You’ve seen one redwood you’ve seen them all” or “Facts are stupid things.” A friend held a party to celebrate the passing of the Great Communicator and the jokes about Bonzo and Ronnie and Nancy and their sordid lives continued. I brought my guitar and sang Malvina Reynold’s song “Boraxo”, conjuring up images of Reagan the actor, Reagan the cowboy, Reagan the butcher of People’s Park.

“It’s all right, it’s all right
When you’re righteous it’s all right
Though you have you hands in blood up to the elbows
You can always wash them clean with Boraxo. “

I wanted to come to this rally and sing Boraxo too and a couple of parodies my partner Christy had written, but Christy tells me it’s the wrong occasion, this is a mock funeral for Reagan’s victims. So I just show up, standing at the edge of the crowd, watching the rally and the people watching the rally. I see a few familiar faces in the crowd, listening to the speeches and holding up signs and crosses. A friend asks me to hold up his sign for a minute – it’s painted red and blue on a white background and says “Reagan the Great Communicator” with “Communicator” crossed out and the word “Liar” written over it. I try to hold up the sign but I get frustrated with the wind blowing it around and return it. The speeches, as usual, do not interest me. Feigning tiredness, I sit down on a little concrete bench near the entrance to the BART station.

I remember being asked if I considered myself an activist. Or perhaps someone called me an activist, identifying me with my affinity for left wing politics? No, I don’t consider myself an activist (we used to say “cadre” in the Party). Sure, I’ve been showing up again in recent years, singing and playing the old protest songs

