

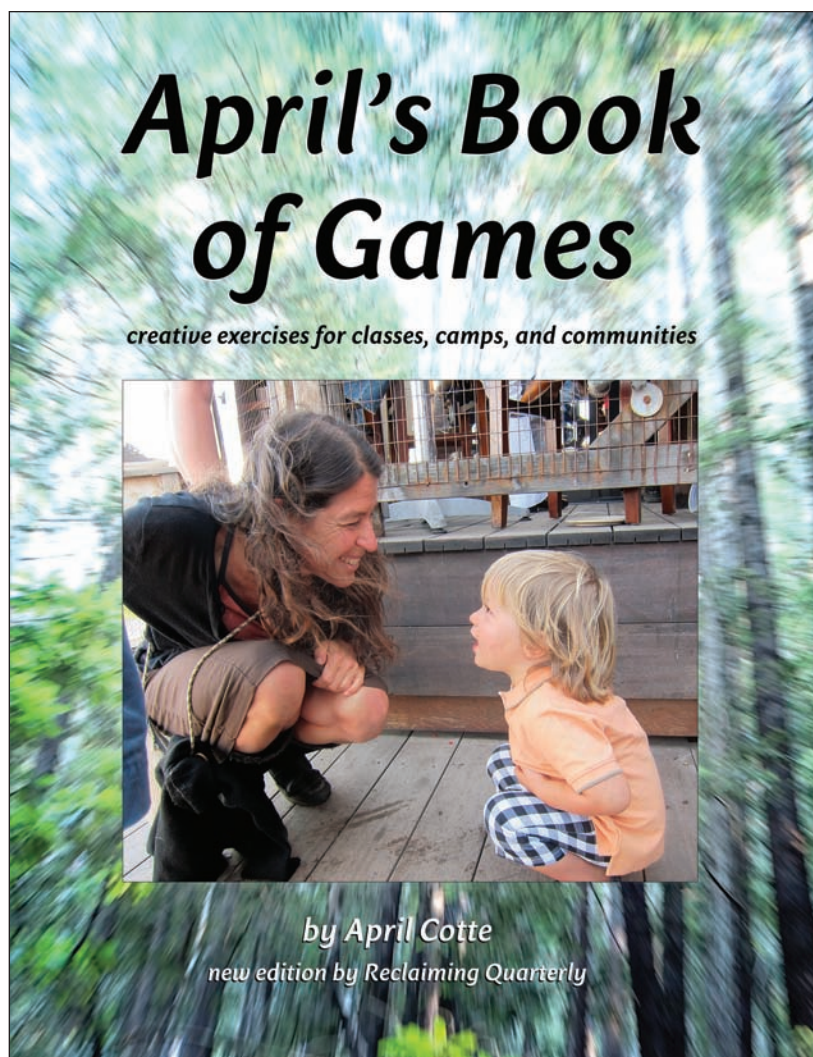
Sample pages from

April's Book of Games

- *Memories of April, by Starhawk*
- *pages from the old and new versions*
- *Resisting the Border Wall, by April Cotte*

Please advance-order or donate and help us complete the new book!

WeaveAndSpin.org/april



Memories of April

by Starhawk

I can't remember when I first met April, as she had been part of our extended Reclaiming community and networks for some time before we really connected. But I remember the day I knew we would become friends. We were at some large climate change demonstration that included a march across the city of Richmond out to the Chevron plant. The march was spirited, and went on for miles and miles. We were with our group of Reclaiming friends and fellow Pagans, drumming, chanting, and singing our way through the streets. But many of us were older, and after many miles, we were tiring. We were also realizing that our cars were left far, far away, and we weren't too sure how we were going to get back to them.

As we were discussing this, April popped up.

"I'll run back and get the car," she offered.

I stared at her. She was young and fit and still full of energy. My feet hurt. I didn't know her well. Could I trust her with my car keys? And did she say "run"?

I handed them over. In a shorter time than I could imagine, she was back with the car.



It's a small incident, but to me it is so characteristic of April. She was so strong and fit and full of life. Living down in the cove, with the only way in and out being a long flight of over 200 steps, she went up and down daily, even pregnant, even carrying a young child. She was always willing to put that strength to the service of others. I can't even begin to count the times she reached out to help me organize a ritual or a political action. She worked so hard with the communities on the Tejas border that she met through her work with Outward Bound, to help them resist the building of the Border Wall that would rip their lands and communi-

ties apart. She gave so much to every community she touched.

But April also had an edgy side. One day she announced to me that she had a disguise. She got herself up in a wig and dress and became Patricia – a sort of prim suburban matron. I think this had something to do with the training she and Brian were doing with Jon Young and the tracking folks – about honing observational skills. But I might be wrong about that. She told me that she and Brian liked to sneak up on each other when they would meet someplace like an airport – a game my partner also liked to play whenever he was picking me up. One time, she said, Brian was coming to get her and she changed into Patricia. Brian didn't recognize her. She let him go all the way home, and down those 200 or more steps, before she called him to come back and get her.

April student taught one year at our Earth Activist Training program, and the month before she died she came to observe the EAT program and plan how to offer a children's program that would run alongside it. Her partner Brian took the course, and April came with Barry many times. One of my dearest memories is seeing the two of them perform a funny little skit in our closing night talent show.

April was devoted to children, to nature, to community, and to life. I still can't believe she is gone – and I miss her more than I can ever say.



DIVERSIONES EN EL SALON

FUN IN THE CLASSROOM

**A Source Book of Games and Initiatives
Done in the Classroom
at the Rafael Hernandez School**

by April Cotte

April's Book of Games

creative exercises for classes, camps, and communities



by April Cotte

new edition by Reclaiming Quarterly

Introduction

"I get it now," said Carmen Rivas, a kindergarten teacher, "an initiative is any time you give a group of students a problem that they will be capable of resolving on their own and you give them a safe space to do that in."

She was right and went on to create some great "initiatives" for her class.

The potential and wonders of cooperative games and initiatives were brought to us long ago in the works of such masters as Karl Rohnke, Jack Pearse, Andrew Fluegelman, Art Kamiya, Terry Orlick, Benjy Simpson and all of the folks at Project Adventure.

Thompson Island Outward Bound Education Center has been coaching Hernandez School teachers in their incorporation of games and initiatives in kindergarten through eighth grade classrooms for three years. Teachers now include these activities in their everyday practice. This Source Book is a collection of our experiences and a guide to creating your own experiential activities. With some imagination, you could make any curriculum into an initiative.

Imagine... Create... Experience!! Any moment in the day could be experiential. From lining up for lunch to planning a project, to cleaning up the classroom. Each of these chapters provides frameworks to play within: Time, Repetition, Finding Things, Making Things, Getting somewhere. Fill in any content you want to these frameworks. I warn you of loopholes so that you can feel more freedom to change everything else.

At the end of the book are tricks Outward Bound Instructors use in the field. These are your party favors for reading the book. Have fun with them. There are many indexes just for you so you can look initiatives up by grade, by expedition, by application and by alphabetical order.

Sometimes it surprises me that Hernandez students of all ages continue to be highly enthused to play these games and do these initiatives which I see as means to dynamic and impactful learning. But then I remember the common thread running through these activities which explains the childrens' excited smiles. These games and initiatives are fun.

Introduction

by April Cotte – from the original edition

“I get it now,” said Carmen Rivas, a kindergarten teacher. “An initiative is any time you give a group of students a problem that they will be capable of resolving on their own and you give them a safe space to do that in.”

She was right, and went on to create some great initiatives.*

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lunch to planning a project, to cleaning up the classroom. Each of these chapters provides frameworks to play within: Time, Repetition, Finding Things, Making Things, Getting somewhere. Fill in any content you want to these frameworks. I warn you of pitfalls so that you can feel more



Three generations of Cottes.

* - April uses “initatives” interchangeably with game, exercise, working, etc.

King Frog

Source: Project Adventure

Materials: None

Application:

Observation, memory, creativity, fun, focus, non verbal expression

Procedure:

The group stands in a circle. Each participant creates a hand signal for themselves. One person is appointed the King Frog, a role which comes with special privileges. (Usually we begin with the facilitator as King Frog to set the tone until the group is familiar with the game and rules).

The King Frog begins the game by making their hand signal followed by someone else's. The person whose hand signal the King Frog made, then makes their signal followed by someone else's. This continues until someone makes a mistake or can not think of a signal to make.

Only the King Frog can judge whether someone is out. Other participants can not make a comment about whether someone is out or the King Frog can make them out. The group can make a decision only when it is the King Frog who made the mistake. And the group's goal is to get the King Frog out.

When someone makes a mistake or can not think of a signal to make they then go to the outside of the circle and try to distract the other participants without touching them. The King Frog then begins the game again. The last player to remain in the circle without messing up becomes the new King Frog.

Facilitator Framing:

Rules and Precautions:

You may want to discuss appropriate hand signals with your group before beginning. Fortunately, we have not had a problem with this in the past.

Variations:

King Frog

Materials

None.

Application

Observation, memory, creativity, fun, focus, non-verbal expression.

Procedure

The group stands in a circle. Each participant creates a hand signal for themselves. One person is appointed the King Frog, a role which comes with special privileges. (Usually we begin with the facilitator as King Frog to set the tone until the group is familiar with the game and rules).

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The group's goal is to get the King Frog out.

When someone makes a mistake or cannot think of a signal to make, they go to the outside of the circle and try to distract the other participants without touching them. The King Frog then begins the game again. The last player to remain in the circle without messing up becomes the new King Frog.

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Resisting the Wall

Working for a world without borders

by April Cotte

Originally appeared in RQ #99, 2008.

At a child's birthday party in Redford, Texas, where I have lived for parts of the past twelve winters, men were sharing ideas for fixing the roof of the *jacal* (the traditional earthen structure) that I rented.

They explained how to use a traditional method of weaving "palma" through river cane and then covering it with adobe made from river mud. They showed me an elder's roof built this way thirty years ago.

I asked if there was enough river cane. One said "sure," full of support and enthusiasm for the project.

Then his eyes dropped and more quietly he said, "if the border patrol lets us."

10,000 YEARS OF PERMACULTURE

Redford and the river valley it follows are on the US/ Mexico border. For thousands of years people here, as in many communities along the Rio Grande, have interacted with the river ecosystem.

Traditional cultural practices make survival possible within the limited-money economies of some of the poorest counties in the United States:

- Along the river people gather plants for animal and human food and medicine. The river environment is an abundant corridor for fishing and hunting.
- River cane and river mud is the lowest-cost roofing and building material in this region for human and animal shelters and shade structures.
- Farmers still depend on the 2000-year-old tradition of diverted river water irrigation. Formerly gravity-fed, irrigation now depends on pumps that must be checked multiple times during

the day and night when running.

- Planting on the flood plains is common, and livestock depend on the river to drink.
- Elders are passing on traditions of using river clay to make pottery, and using river limestone to whitewash walls and for sweat lodges.
- Walking along the levy and the river, fishing, boating, wading in the river, swimming during the heat of the summer, picnicking on the banks and enjoying the cool shade by the river are traditional pastimes essential for health and physical exercise.
- Children here are taught to be connected to their whole environment, understanding nature better than many adult naturalists and biologists. They learn the specific relationships between the plants, ecosystems, animals, insects, birds, fish, and humans. They learn to tell when it will rain by the behavior of certain ants or the calls of migrating birds.

BROKEN BONDS, DYING TOWNS

Over the past half-dozen years, the U.S. government has attempted to alter Indigenous, tribal, and familial migration routes that are thousands of years old.

In rural Texas/Mexico, families on both sides of the border are related. Up until the events of September 11, 2001, there were many Class B Informal river crossings where people in remote towns between El Paso and Brownsville could legally cross the border to visit with each other, herd their cattle, bring milk to grandma, etc. These crossings were lifelines for the remote, predominately Indigenous communities on both sides of the Rio Grande.

Following September 11, a Redford woman looked out her window to see a truck dumping cement blocks in front of

the traditional crossing.

She went outside and asked, "What are you doing?"

A Border Patrol Agent replied, "Protecting the United States from terrorists."

The recent documentary "Mexiphobia"¹ addresses the devastation the closures of these informal border crossings caused.

"You took almost a hundred years' worth of history, of supporting families from this interaction across the border," says Linda Walker, a business owner. "You took that away, and so what do you think those folks are doing for a living? You think they're going to let their kids starve? They're not. No, they've gone back to the things that we didn't want them doing. They're making a living, [and] they're not making it selling tacos anymore."

Another business owner says, "It's making criminals out of everyday people, the tourists and the Mexicans alike."

Due to these changes, many small Mexican towns are dying. "Everything's quiet," says Danielle Gallo of Boquillas, a small town in Northern Mexico. "No one plays music anymore. There's really nothing to buy and nothing to do. Everything has a feeling of destitution and despair, and it's not a happy place anymore. It's depressing."

GLOBAL INEQUITIES

Behind the border tensions are unjust and ineffective global economic policies, which cause mass migration of dislocated people seeking to survive.

When the 1990s North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) opened the door for subsidized farm products from the United States to enter the Mexican market, rural semi-subsistence farmers – predominately Indigenous

people – lost their capacity to survive. Many became displaced, moving from their land to find work in cities and in the U.S.

NAFTA encouraged *Maquiladoras* (U.S.-owned factories near Mexico's border with the U.S.), but these could hire only some of those workers. Others have had to seek work in the U.S.

World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations provided another blow to Indigenous subsistence farmers by forcing an end to communal land systems. The Mexican *Ejido* system was dismantled and for the first time since the Mexican revolution, rural people could sell their land and move.

Arnoldo Garcia, of the National Network for Immigrant Rights (NNIR) in Oakland, California, explained: "The [border] wall is part of a policy of militarization that was formulated in the 90s when NAFTA was planned. The government knew that with NAFTA there would be

displacement, so they planned a strategy of militarization that was piloted in El Paso and spread to the whole border.

"[Militar-ization] is beginning on the border with the most vulnerable communities, but is intended to spread throughout the United States as our acceptance increases."

Garcia also described "Operation End Game," designed to end the backlog in deportations by detaining people in Hutto Residential Center (formally a prison) in Taylor, Texas.²

POLITICAL FALLOUT

For communities right on the border, the intense presence, militarization, and enforcement by border patrol agents also affects local elections and economies.

Border Patrol agents and their families have a substantial percentage of the votes in Presidio County even though many are only stationed there for two years.

A local landowner explained that prior to 1985, Presidio was famous for its onion and cantaloupe crops. Farmworkers were local people that lived in Mexico, crossed the border to work in the U.S. fields, and went home on weekends to their own small farms.

The 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act made farm owners

through deviousness and corruption.

In February 2008, Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff shared with the Daily News: "I don't see any imminent threat" of terrorists infiltrating from Mexico.⁴

So why all this effort to depict the "dangerous illegal immigrant" who crosses the U.S./Mexico border?

According to a friend, "This racist ideology around immigration provides a scapegoat for the U.S. government as people deal with a failing U.S. economy and momentous losses of services."

I have heard people from across the political and economic spectrum who live on the U.S./Mexico border ask, "Why are they closing our border and not Canada's? What do they have against brown people?"

Enrique Madrid, Jumano Apache Historian from Redford, Texas, explains that in order to have militarization you have to have an enemy.

Propaganda and psychological warfare create that enemy. For at least a century, academic and journalistic references have transformed people on the border from farmers, goat herders, parents and home-makers to bandits, murderers, drug smugglers, human traffickers – and now terrorists.

Once you have an enemy, Madrid says, you can commit acts of war on that enemy. In 1997, Marine Joint Task Force Six (after being told by superiors that 75% of the people in the small town of Redford were dangerous) shot a high school student, Esequiel Hernandez, Jr., who was herding his goats near the border.

And since 2001, the government has added the new "War on Terror"



Cattle graze in the foothills of the Bofecillos Mountains, near the U.S./Mexico border.
Photo by David J. Owen.

liable if they hired illegal workers. This had an immediate and drastic effect. In 1985 the payroll for farm work in the Presidio region was six million dollars (1985 dollars). In 2007 the payroll for farm workers in the region was thirty thousand dollars.

But are farm workers and other residents of the border areas the problem?

According to Ted Robbins on "All Things Considered," nearly half of all illegal immigrants in the United States enter legally through tourists visas and overstay.³

At Texas schools where I worked in the 1990s, I heard Border Patrol Agents state that 80% of illegal human and drug trafficking happens at *legal* ports of entry