

**Interviewee:** Jennifer Krill (JK)  
**Organization:** Rainforest Action Network in San Francisco  
**Interviewer:** Miguel Bocangera (MB)

MB Can you go through some of the main points and highlights of your activism career that led to the WTO protests, as well as some of the stuff that the Rainforest Action Network participated in leading up the WTO protests?

JK Okay. Well, I've been an environmental activist for six years, and in that time I've worked for several organizations, including Greenpeace, Earth Island Institute, and Rainforest Action Network. While I worked for Earth Island Institute, I worked on the Sea Turtle Restoration Project, which is the organization that originally brought the lawsuit that forced the United States to change the Endangered Species Act and protect sea turtles from other countries from being caught in shrimp nets.

This is a really important lawsuit, because sea turtles don't know borders. They don't know the difference between the United States and Mexico, and they don't understand that laws are different from country to country, so the United States... We won our lawsuit, and the United States amended the Endangered Species Act to protect sea turtles who were getting caught and dying in shrimp nets in amazing numbers every year. The United States would not import shrimp from countries that did not have sea turtle protection on the books.

And while I was working for the sea turtle project, we also experienced the WTO's first major challenge of an environmental law when some of these nations that didn't have sea turtle protection on the books sued the United States under the WTO and won, and forced the United States to change their law protecting a highly endangered species, the endangered sea turtle.

So I was involved. I was the Outreach Director for the sea turtle project at that time, and was well aware in 1997/98 as this decision came down the pike, just how devastating the WTO could be for our laws and our environmental protection. Later I came to work for Rainforest Action Network, and here, while I was here at RAN, I was studying the effects that the WTO would have on the world's forests. One study done by ... I think it was the United Nations Environmental Program ... but it actually... No, I've got that wrong. It was the industry association, the American Forest and Paper Association.

Don't quote me on this figure, but it said that the WTO's global free logging agreement, what we call the package of tariff loosening that would happen in the forestry sector, was expected to increase global logging by five to six percent. You're fighting to save the world's old growth forests, then one of the first things you realize is that we hardly have none left. We're talking about 20 percent of the world's old growth forests left after the last couple of centuries of devastating logging, and the last 20 years or so of clear-cutting and industrial scale logging. So increasing our logging by that much will hasten the decline of the millions of species that live in old growth forests. It will hasten the decline of water quality in these countries, in tropical countries, which

are very corrupt, especially countries which are very corrupt, welcome and love the idea of having increased incentives to log their forests and the corporations who are doing the logging love the idea of making more money.

All of this is bad for the environment and it's bad for species and it's very bad for Labor, so that's why we got involved with the WTO protests in November in such a big and important way.

MB So how did RAN mobilize people for the WTO? How did you mobilize your membership?

JK Well, we did some action alerts to our membership, both written action alerts and on-line action alerts. RAN staff members and volunteers and interns got involved, and petitions and demonstrations leading up to the WTO. We provided experts in forest issues and RAN's other major campaign area is fossil fuel consumption, so we provided experts in those issues to speak at teach-ins. We provided funding. RAN is one of the organizations involved that actually has an ongoing budget and ongoing staff and ongoing rent, so we are a little bit more stable than a lot of organizations that were also doing good work on the WTO.

So we went to a lot of our major donors and our foundations and solicited cash from them that we then tried to get to the more grassroots groups that were involved. So we helped with financial support. Nearly all of RAN's staff members physically came to Seattle prior to the WTO, so we mobilized on nearly every level that we have.

MB Did you work in coalitions with any other groups while organizing for the WTO?

JK Yes. We worked pretty closely with the Direct Action Network on Seattle mobilizing. We especially helped Direct Action Network with funding purposes. We worked closely with the Ruckus Society. We co-sponsored a WTO direct action camp. I think that was like in August, yes, in August, outside of Seattle. We helped in coalition with Ruckus in that sense. We also worked with Ruckus on a big banner hang the day before the N30 street protests on November 29<sup>th</sup>. We hung a banner from a crane just north of downtown that was essentially two one-way signs, one on top of the other. It was beautiful with the Space Needle in the backdrop and one one-way sign said "Democracy" and the other one-way sign said "WTO". That was co-sponsored by RAN and Ruckus Society.

We worked also closely with Global Exchange, Public Citizen, and a handful of other groups that were directly involved in the International Forum on Globalization and anti-globalization activity groups. We worked with other forest groups as well, especially American Lands Alliance, Sierra Club and Greenpeace on bringing the attention, that the global free logging agreement, what it would do to the world's forests.

MB Why did RAN decide to put so much effort into shutting down the meetings, because I know they were involved in a lot of the direct action stuff, not so much just the marches, but actually focusing on trying to shut down the meetings. Why was so much effort being put on shutting down the ministerial meetings?

JK

Well, RAN actually wasn't directly involved in that. In fact, we attended the meetings of the Direct Action Network, focus council meetings with... On the last couple of nights before that – I don't know if you went to those or not. There were hundreds of people in the convergence space there off Denny Street, and RAN had like two representatives in those meetings, so that's about how much we contributed to the shutdown effort.

Most of our resources really went into the banner hang, and into publicity efforts and that sort of thing. RAN has media, a media person, full-time on staff the whole time, and he spent his time in an apartment that we rented temporarily just turning out press releases and helping to coordinate press conferences and that sort of thing. So we have people who are skilled at trainings, so RAN had people who were involved in some of the training efforts. A lot of our people came there to the convergence space to learn about making puppets and taking trainings themselves. Then we also spent a whole bunch of our energy working on the banner hang.

So that wasn't really a RAN strategy. Now, why people worked on shutting down the ministerial and RAN was one of the many, many, many hundreds of participants involved in that is simple, because the WTO ministerial is the meeting at which they, the WTO, was determining the fate of the world's forests, and it was a meeting in which corporations were involved and non-democratically-elected representatives were involved, and there were not spokespeople for the environment and there were not spokespeople for labor.

The meeting in itself was not the kind of meeting that we want to have deciding the fate of our natural resources for the rest of eternity. The WTO ministerial as it was set up, as the WTO was set up, is simply wrong, and that's why, in my opinion anyway, the campaign to shut down the ministerial was enacted upon and that's why it was successful. I mean, it's not going to be good for humanity if we log the world's forests, and that's just one example of one issue that was affected by the WTO.

If the world's forests disappear, then our human future on the planet is in jeopardy. So if the WTO is trying to increase logging in the world's forests with no representation by the people who are affected by this, much less the species that are affected by this, then it has to be shut down, and something new has to be built, some kind of new world ministerial that is going to make more sense for long-term human sustainability on the planet. The WTO is only representing long-term corporate and economic interests at the expense of labor issues and of environmental issues.

MB

How successfully do you think the mobilization efforts were? Even though you didn't participate in direct action, shutting down the meetings, I remember driving over the bridge from the University... Actually, we were driving to the University in the morning to help with the students and seeing the banner, the WTO banner, and even though you may not have actively mobilized people to shut down the meetings themselves, that was a pretty inspiring act to go out there. That wasn't like a legal act. That was a direct action tactic right there that I think inspired a lot of people to get

involved that day and put their own bodies on the line, so how effective do you think those tactics that you guys employed were?

JK

I think they were very effective. I mean, like you said, which, actually, thank you for saying that, that makes me feel good. RAN's involvement attracted attention on a lot of different fronts. The Convergence Center and the Direct Action Network and the action spokescouncil and the efforts that were happening with street mobilization in Seattle were great and were amazing. My hat's off to those people who helped make that work happen.

I was proud and thrilled to participate on, and all of us personally participated on N30, but I think there was maybe only one RAN banner up there because we were all so exhausted that we just fed into everything else that was happening. So I was there, and I saw all the shutdown happening, and I saw all the linked arms and I got gassed and we all did. We were all out there as individuals and as representatives of RAN.

It was very successful, because... The overall movement was successful, and RAN individually played a successful role in the movement. The overall movement was successful in that we did delay the protests. The protests did delay the ministerial for a day. They didn't have an effective meeting because of our work on that day, and they actually were under closer public scrutiny for the duration of that ministerial, and now are under much closer public scrutiny generally. Prior to our meeting that day, prior to our protests that day, prior to Seattle, if you asked anybody on the street in the United States about the WTO, you'd be lucky if one out of 20 people had even heard of it. And after those protests and after Seattle, everybody knows about the WTO and everybody knows that it's a bad thing, that there's negative connotation that people are protesting. People may not like the protestors. They may think that we're a bunch of anarchist punks, and in some ways they're kind of right, but they know that the WTO is something that was protested. They don't know that the WTO is something that affects their life, and in that sense, it was extremely successful. We won in the arena of public opinion.

RAN's participation was successful because, like I said before, even though we're on the radical edge, we are a more mainstream group (gap in tape) ... as a convergent space, then a few other groups would pool in their money, too. So there were several occasions in the preparations for the meeting where we actually started trends among other NGOs and got more groups involved, so that's not really easily measured, but ... NGOs involved.

MB

So what do you think the next steps for organizing against WTO and related issues are?

JK

Well, the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas is coming up on April 20<sup>th</sup> in Quebec City, and solidarity actions are being planned around the country, especially at major border crossings, since getting into Quebec City is probably going to be a little bit different just getting across the Canada border from the U.S. So that's a pretty (incomprehensible) things that comes next, though. It's really time and energy and (incomprehensible) to travel across the country to do one of these big convergence

efforts. I was in Seattle and I was in D.C. I was in Philly and I was in Los Angeles, and I know I'm tired of traveling. So, I think it's going to be very important for people to translate what they learned in all of those teach-ins and what we now know about multi-lateral trade and what it does to the local economies. We need to translate that to our own local economies. People need to wean themselves off of the nuts and bolts of global trade, and wean themselves onto good, sustainable, alternative economies.

Like in the wood products industry, for example, wood is hard. You need wood to build houses with. There are other ways that you can build it. (incomprehensible) You're not really recycling unless you're buying the paper back, so if we didn't create a market for these internationally traded products, like forest products, for example...

MB Any last statements that you'd like to add that weren't covered?

JK No. I don't think so.

MB All right. Great. Well, thanks a lot. I appreciate it.

JK Thanks, Miguel.

MB Yes, I appreciate you taking the time and giving us the interview. I know that it's hard for people to, sometimes... It's been hard to schedule some of these interviews, and some people don't have the time. I know a lot of the activists just can't do it. I know that banner hang was really great that you guys did. I saw that. But, I'm sure, I'll send you up the release form. You'll get that soon.

JK Okay, great.

MB Thanks a lot.

JK You wouldn't believe the banner hang, how difficult it was to come up with that sign. It's like we spent three weeks designing it and two days producing the damn thing.

MB I can imagine.

JK But it was a true, successful, consensus. Okay. Thank you. Talk to you later. Bye bye.

MB Bye.

End of Interview