Tonight In Kenzo and I gave a little talk on the subject of **Second Life political organizing and awareness raising**. We had a small but very engaged group of a dozen or so progressive activists participating in "RootsCamp," a weeklong series of discussions on the fallout from the recent US elections. What follows is a somewhat edited version of the transcript and pictures from our talk. I also included links to URLs and teleport SLURLs that I referenced during the talk.

Thanks to Drew Frobozz and Ruby Glitter for letting us present. It was a lot of fun!

**Transcript of Session on Second Life Political Organizing and Awareness Raising**
November 13, 2006
Edited by Rik Panganiban (Rik Riel)
Farrow re-scheduled for Jan 9

Real World Places in Second Life #13: Ancient Rome
Helping those who help themselves

Yehoodi VIDEO Talk Show now available!

Virtual Capitol to stream live video of opening of 110th Congress

New Year's Deep Thought: speaking truth to your loved ones

Hot kitty lickin' action!

Nothing says Christmas like SPAM

SEARCH ME

----------------------------------------

Google Search

CATEGORIES

Cats
Civil Society
Dancing
General
Information Society
Media Reform
Politics
Second Life
Travel
United Nations
Weblogs

[15:07] Ruby Glitter: Rik, are you facilitating this session?
[15:08] Rik Riel: I'm opening with some background
[15:08] Ruby Glitter: Err, shaill I just sit down now. ;-) 
[15:08] Rik Riel: and then passing on to In Kenzo
[15:08] Ruby Glitter: You may want to get some quick introductions.
[15:08] Rik Riel: for some detail on her project
[15:08] Rik Riel: sure
[15:08] In Kenzo: Yes, sounds great.
[15:08] Ruby Glitter: Also, anyone who does not agree to posting the chat log and images of this session contact me ASAP.
[15:08] Rik Riel: please take many pictures of me!
[15:08] In Kenzo: me too! pictures are fun.
[15:09] In Kenzo: slpics.com ;-) 
[15:09] Rik Riel: hi all, thanks for coming this afternoon. It's an enormous pleasure t obe here.
[15:09] Rik Riel: First I would like to ask Glitteractica to give some quick announcements about techsoup before she has to fly.
[15:09] Rik Riel: then I'll do my intros/
[15:09] Rik Riel: glitter?

[15:10] Glitteractica Cookie: Ok, so I am sorry to have to rush in and out
[15:10] Glitteractica Cookie: I have a meetign that I couldn't get out of
How to organize effective multiverse events

My poetry

New World Notes

Global Voices

Necessary Knowledge for a Democratic Public Sphere

UN Dispatch

LATEST VIDEOS I'VE DUG

Yehoodi Talk Show Video Podcast (75 Meg)

Rik & Cindy’s virtual adventures

Video of virtual showing of Machinima Fest

person2184 by Friedrich Kirschner

Charles Nesson’s Virtual Law Course

Presidential Hopeful Mark Warner in Second Life

Rik & Tomo dancing lindy hop

PHOTO ALBUMS

A Day in Queens

Angels & Accordians

Athens 2006

[15:10] John445 Bachman: Sorry can stay, all the best
[15:10] Glitteractica Cookie: but I wanted to say that you all are welcome to come to the weekly TechSoup meetings
[15:10] Glitteractica Cookie: every Friday from 8:30-9:30 PST (SLT)
[15:11] Glitteractica Cookie: and speak with other nonprofits in-world
[15:11] Glitteractica Cookie: we are doing a number of projects
[15:11] Glitteractica Cookie: that we are in the process of negotiating contracts and documents about
[15:11] Glitteractica Cookie: that will be a place
[15:12] Glitteractica Cookie: where nonprofits can get a free office
[15:12] Trevor Steptoe: RL or SL complex?
[15:12] Glitteractica Cookie: If you (or any other nonprofit organization) would like to get a free office in the Nonprofit Commons in SL, please send me an email with a little about your org, your plans for the work you would like to do in-world (if you are still in the idea stage,
[15:12] In Kenzo: /amazing to have free and available spaces for RL nonprofits to join us in SL
[15:12] Ana Herzog: how are you defining nonprofits in sl
[15:12] Rik Riel: free = good
[15:12] Glitteractica Cookie: any org wanting to do work for social change in SL
[15:12] Ana Herzog: where do we send the email?
[15:13] Glitteractica Cookie: susan@techsoup.org (me in RL)
[15:13] Glitteractica Cookie: i want to open up this opportunity to all nonprofits
[15:13] Glitteractica Cookie: and we will be starting with a pilot project
[15:13] Glitteractica Cookie: we have many otehr projects underway
[15:13] Glitteractica Cookie: but I am limited in time now
[15:14] In Kenzo: thank you glitteractica for sharing more!
[15:14] In Kenzo: many people have been asking ;-) 
[15:14] Rik Riel: thanks for coming by on short notice
[15:14] Glitteractica Cookie: if you are interested please come to our weekly meetings and/or email me at susan@techsoup.org
[15:14] Glitteractica Cookie: the only requirement is that orgs have a plan to use the space
[15:14] Rik Riel: I will also have the details available in a notecard I'm giving out
[15:14] Glitteractica Cookie: that is, we don't want to give out spaces to orgs that will forget about them
[15:15] Glitteractica Cookie: thanks for having me
[15:15] Glitteractica Cookie: and for letting me stop in and fly out
[15:15] Glitteractica Cookie: I think this is a great idea to have a roots camp
Glitteractica Cookie: I will stop by l8r. bye all!

Rik Riel: awesome

Glitteractica Cookie: thanks ruby, in kenzo and Rik!

Ruby Glitter: Thank you!

Rik Riel: Susan and her team at Techsoup is a great example of what can be accomplished in-world.

Ruby Glitter: Glitteractica got me started in SL, folks!

Ruby Glitter: Where would I be...?

Glitteractica Cookie: :)  

Glitteractica Cookie: prolly be here soon anyway

Ruby Glitter: maybe.

Rik Riel: Just two words about myself before my overview

Rik Riel: I work for a non-profit the Social Science Research Council based in NY

Rik Riel: I have several projects, but my main one here relates to funding research for activism on the media

Rik Riel: So I'm interested in this space as the next space for political organizing, research and communications

Rik Riel: I want to spend a few minutes bringing people up to speed on the lay of the land here in SL relevant to political organizing.

Rik Riel: Much of what I will mention will also be available as a notecard and on my blog rikomatic.com.

Rik Riel: First off I should say that the civic / non-profit space in SL is still fairly small, but evolving by the minute

Rik Riel: EX: techsoup's listing of non-profits is only ten organizations long

Rik Riel: the general kinds of groups who tend to get active in SL first are of the charitable kinds that work with particular disadvantaged groups

Rik Riel: i.e. people with disabilities, urban youth. aspergers syndrome folks, etc

Rik Riel: and there is a good bit of controversy about whether SL is the proper place for RW politics

Rik Riel: I wasn't around, but there was a huge debacle surrounding a guy planting giant anti-bush signs everywhere

Rik Riel: some of our veteran residents can relate more about that

Rik Riel: but in terms of what already has been accomplished, let me mention some notable projects
[15:22] Rik Riel: First off: Camp Darfur (SLURL), which is just around the corner.

[15:23] Rik Riel: What makes Darfur Camp so powerful is that its an immersive experience, surrounding you with the realities of the lives of the Sudanese refugees.

[15:24] Rik Riel: And its tied to a real world campaign that goes around the US building physical camps to dramatize their plight.

[15:24] Rik Riel: There's a tremendous debate between Hamlet Au and Ethan Zuckerman on the efficacy of this virtual world effort that is worth a read.

[15:24] Rik Riel: I'll post the link in the notecard.

[15:24] In Kenzo: it's funny, ethan was one of the inspirations for the camp.

[15:24] In Kenzo: through his global voices project.

[15:25] In Kenzo: inspired iACT, the videoblogs @ Camp Darfur, filmed in late 2005.

[15:25] Ana Herzog: can you mention it here?


[15:25] In Kenzo: Riversong Garden is here as well.

[15:25] Ruby Glitter: I read an entry on Ethan's blog about this, and I thought he raised excellent points that discounted it as a medium but raised some serious issues we will have to address.

[15:26] In Kenzo: we both worked on Camp Darfur here since February of this year.
A US-British team challenges the idea that the tiny skeleton dubbed the "Hobbit" is a human new to...

[15:26] Rik Riel: The other recent examples I wanted to mention was Silent Witness and Stand Up Against Poverty

[15:26] In Kenzo: yes, we worked through ethan's blog too, looked at what we were doing and redesigned this October.

[15:26] Rik Riel: both are awareness raising campaigns about domestic violence and poverty respectively. [SLURL to Silent Witness memorial.]

[15:26] Rik Riel: awesome, In Kenzo. Please talk about that more later!

[15:27] Rik Riel: So SL is clearly fertile ground at least for education / awareness raising

[15:27] Rik Riel: more questionable is SL for campaigning and lobbying

[15:27] Rik Riel: Governor Warner explored using SL as a space to get out his message.

[15:28] Rik Riel: We'll never know how far he would have taken it, since he dropped out/


[15:28] Rik Riel: Well he wanted to hold an in-world town hall, which would have been really interesting

[15:29] Rik Riel: I think he had the kind of team that could pull it off well

[15:29] Morris Vig: Rik - Question....Do the rules of SL not mirror those of RL? There's always a question of appropriate time and place.

[15:29] Zuru Cult: SL is somewhat inherently limited by the dual requirements of beefy client hardware and reasonably good net connection

[15:29] Trevor Steptoe: Except that SL can't host more than 100 people on a sim, and that usually crashes.

[15:29] In Kenzo: but one event reaches far with videoblogs and other new media

[15:29] Zuru Cult: sl is not exactly a "peoples platform"

[15:29] Zuru Cult: yet
Rik Riel: Trevor, good point. It doesn't scale to “viral video” proportions.

Rik Riel: the other recent campaign I wanted to mention is outside the US

Rik Riel: 3 dutch parliamentarians are going to do a “tour” of SL and the Dutch dominated areas as a way to reach out to new constituents

Rik Riel: I don't know frankly what they are going to make of Amsterdam in SL though

RiverSong Garden: <grin>

Morris Vig: yeah

Rik Riel: and lastly the UK independent party is thinking of setting up an HQ in SL

Zuru Cult: depends on what constituency they are reaching out to

Trevor Steptoe: destroytv.com is an interesting way to show SL to people with net access but not beefy hardware: http://destroytv.com

Rik Riel: perhaps the sex industry?

Morris Vig: whoa - so it's OK for a party office to open up, but not for individuals to campaign?

Rik Riel: there's nothing wrong with campaigning in SL

In Kenzo: we have a dutch builder here on BWI too, a little easier on the campaign eyes ;-) lots of european media groups coming in soon.

Rik Riel: individual or group

Ana Herzog: but anti-bush signs are not ok?

Rik Riel: let me close and pass off to In Kenzo so the exciting stuff she is doing

Zuru Cult: I think campaigning in SL will not be particularly compelling unless you leverage the unique SL experience in a new way

In Kenzo: maybe it's more in HOW we do it here

Morris Vig: ah-nuance

In Kenzo: people don't like to be smacked up with messages everywhere

Ana Herzog: try it and find out.

Ana Herzog: never say never.

Rik Riel: Ana, from my perspective, virtual space doesn't have to copy the kinds of in-your-face confrontational politics of traditional media

In Kenzo: camp darfur is different than many typical campaigns because it's one that's hard to stomach RL

Rik Riel: it can, but that's a choice, a strategic choice.

In Kenzo: we do some street activism too ana

Ana Herzog: :-)

In Kenzo: camp darfur is very much on the ground in cities around America

Rik Riel: it can just as easily be used to build bridges, create dialogue, get folks talking who wouldn't meet in the RW

In Kenzo: in front of city halls, Washington, parks and universities, churches and anywhere that will have 15 tents and a bunch of genocide
activists.

[15:34] Rik Riel: but that is the quaker in me talking
[15:34] In Kenzo: agreed rik.
[15:35] Rik Riel: Let me close with some of the cool stuff that NOAA is doing in SL
[15:35] Ana Herzog: amish background here....
[15:35] Ana Herzog: lol
[15:35] Morris Vig: If Reuters can report on SL, if IBM can have a SL HQ, if the BBC can have a SL concert island...then we can campaign hard online.

[15:35] Rik Riel: For those who haven't been to meteroa sim (SLURL), definitely head over there
[15:35] In Kenzo: here we chose not to do the viral posting......we made a sim walkthrough space that takes you through the expierence of war, displacement, hunger...
[15:35] Zuru Cult: you forgot about MLB!
[15:35] Ana Herzog: and some can be in your face......
[15:35] Zuru Cult: (major league baseball)
[15:35] Ana Herzog: and some pc
[15:35] In Kenzo: (former chaplain/minister/missionary)
[15:36] Rik Riel: It's set up by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
[15:36] In Kenzo: prefer avatar monk ;-) 
[15:36] In Kenzo: NOAA is stellar!
[15:36] Rik Riel: they do some amazing stuff to show the effects of climate change
[15:36] Rik Riel: its almost immediately galvanizing to people to do SOMETHING
Rik Riel: what's missing is the connection to a group of people willing to do something about global warming
Rik Riel: and that's where we step in
Rik Riel: I want to pass off to Kenzo now
Rik Riel: I have notecards with links to the places I mentioned if anyone wants them
In Kenzo: helping to crosspromote these spaces makes all the difference
Rik Riel: otherwise find them on rikomatic.com
In Kenzo: you can create landmarks in your spaces and help your audiences see more of the picture here inworld, many different types of groups using this space now.
Ruby Glitter: And we will have all the link on rootscamps.sl.org of course
In Kenzo: we talked about techsoup and their nonprofit org groups, commonwealth is organizing progressives and environmental groups, there are a handful of foundations sniffing around too for those with nonprofit 501 (c)3 status
Ana Herzog: which foundations?

In Kenzo: Camp Darfur has been my main interactive activism project, but better world island here is one giant experiment in what can be done within a 3D social network
In Kenzo: attended macarthur event on NMC last month, very informative.
In Kenzo: they are working with universities and academic research institutions for new media education within virtual worlds
In Kenzo: there's a LOT of momentum in education here
In Kenzo: building momentum in nonprofit community and amongst other activists, but often $ stand in the way.

The Resident you messaged is in 'busy mode' which means they have requested not to be disturbed. Your message will still be shown in their IM panel for later viewing.

In Kenzo: that's why i invited glitter to start us off, wanted to let you know that there's options to build here without much $ down.

In Kenzo: very important on the grassroots end of things.

In Kenzo: Better World Island is all grassroots groups, educational, aid....a mix from around the world.

In Kenzo: We came together to work on camp darufr starting in February of this year, opened early April to coincide with the first live CAMP DARFUR

In Kenzo: organized by Stop Genocide Now and a coalition of groups, we have brought in RSS feeds, links to news, videoblogs straight from the refugee camps, stories from those who cannot be here to tell us themselves.

In Kenzo: we see ourselves as bridgebuilders here

In Kenzo: and that has been very successful so far, thanks to bloggrs, conferences, print publications like the Camp Darfur Comix.

In Kenzo: simple and easy way for us to keep track of how many are dispersed, hundreds so far shared and we printed 3000 of the comics for the live camps.

In Kenzo: you only need to pay $1L to buy a comic or $100L for a dispenser.

In Kenzo: we have a few vendors who have shared them in their stores, helps us grow.

Rik Riel: hey, I recognize that avatar!

In Kenzo: this was something i did on my computer at home in less than 24 hours on Comic Life, a $25 program.
In Kenzo: we got a funder to pay for the comic printing after they fell in love with the project, a mashup of RL and SL photos.

In Kenzo: little elements like this help us spread the meme here.

Trevor Steptoe: I heart Comic Life.

Morris Vig: Kudos on the Camp Darfur exhibit. I just toured it today. So powerful - leveraging all the different media...

In Kenzo: encourage others to take pictures at camp darfur on the web, we have talked about hosting more contests to encourage more creative content that helps spread this project.

In Kenzo: thank you morris. there are a handful of avatars who have put a lot of love in that space.

In Kenzo: and many others working hard on the ground who wish they could be here.

In Kenzo: hard to find balance.

In Kenzo: like ruby mentioned earlier...we were criticized, for having a fire and making it look much easier than the real camps.

In Kenzo: it has taken us time to roughen up SL a bit.

In Kenzo: SL is pretty and glossy and digital and fake, all of the things a refugee camp are not.

In Kenzo: we had to face that and get over it and make it real.

Trevor Steptoe: So, the question I'm sure you get asked all the time is whether you could help those in Darfur more by making calls and knocking on doors. What do you say in response?

In Kenzo: well, we get people to do that here, and we do that RL too.

In Kenzo: this camp is open 24/7, the only camp darfur experience that can be.

In Kenzo: it fills a void that nothing else approaches right now.

Trevor Steptoe: So you stress that it is integrated with RL action?

In Kenzo: we do lots of live camps and meet people in cities, very similar experience.

In Kenzo: 15 tents, activist groups, videoblogs, photos and stories from darfur.


Trevor Steptoe: I ask because you've faced that question, not because I don't think SL Camp Darfur is powerful.

In Kenzo: SL is just one piece of the puzzle. we are doing a live show this saturday in Los Angeles, if you're local to me here.

Ana Herzog: information is power and sl is information

In Kenzo: where we mix it all...the pictures we WONT show here.....the SL experience.....the speakers who have been there and the documentarians and advocates still on the ground.

In Kenzo: we've found that SL Camp Darfur is activating people around the world.

In Kenzo: egypt, canada, france, holland....tours i've given this week to avatars from all over....
[15:50] In Kenzo: reaches further than any of us can individually.
[15:50] In Kenzo: helps that we have good volunteers.
[15:50] Trevor Steptoe: How many people are volunteers?
[15:50] In Kenzo: i am teaching many more of my volunteers to come into SL now
[15:50] In Kenzo: all of us
[15:51] In Kenzo: BWI is full of scout volunteers! none of us get paid to do this, right riversong? thinking thru it here...
[15:51] In Kenzo: most of us are grassroots organizers who are working out new ideas together.
[15:51] RiverSong Garden: no no paycheck...except the satisfaction of making a difference
[15:51] In Kenzo: we came together on the omidyar netowrk originally.
[15:51] In Kenzo: a social network for social change on the web, we migrated here to continue this work and help it grow.
[15:52] In Kenzo: i'm training a whole studio for machinima production now
[15:52] In Kenzo: that's the real gift of this place...
[15:52] In Kenzo: media beyond SL
[15:52] Zoe Visconti: cool :)
[15:52] In Kenzo: machinima, comics, photos, all of it...
[15:52] In Kenzo: that's what you all have here to play with!
[15:53] In Kenzo: and we welcome you to play with us here on better world island, with many of the other rootscamp organizers and presenters. make it easy, clickable, immersive and magnetic.
[15:53] In Kenzo: i would love to see more creative uses of this medium for social change....moments where we all stand up and click bracelets or go to concerts are a good start, but we can easily spread viral campaigns here by making it fun.
[15:54] In Kenzo: i would encourage candidates to have dance parties
[15:54] In Kenzo: camp-ins, you name it.
[15:54] Ana Herzog: and wear pink slips while dancing!
[15:54] In Kenzo: definitely a pink slip dance is in order.
[15:55] In Kenzo: i think of this as the most affordable animation platform imaginable combined with everything i love most from social networks....anything you can dream up can be done, so DREAM!
[15:55] In Kenzo: if your dreams are powerful, magnetic, beautiful others will come.
[15:55] In Kenzo: if you show truth people will understand.
[15:55] In Kenzo: don't be afraid to show it.
[15:56] errcheck Hicks: I am interested in details about the event in LA
[15:56] In Kenzo: we did an AIDS awareness event 12/1 last year, photos and documentaries, red crosses and luminarias. it doesn't take much and it can be anything at all.
[15:57] Zuru Cult: so it might be interesting to try to "package up" these "events" so they are "repeatable"
[15:57] Rik Riel: any other questions for In Kenzo, or about SL organizing in general?
[15:57] John445 Bachman: Thanks In Kenzo
[15:57] Rik Riel: yeah, great stuff, In Kenzo!
[15:57] errcheck Hicks: Gotcha, TX
[15:57] In Kenzo: good luck out there
[15:58] Morris Vig: It seems to me like you're pushing education/information...right?
[15:58] Ana Herzog: Thank you! In Kenzo is a pink soul!
[15:58] In Kenzo: we do some mobilization too here, but minimal so far. we had one opportunity to grow that but because of the delicate nature of the Darfur work we have had to tread lightly at times.
[15:58] Viggo Engebretsen: ty very much
[15:58] Ruby Glitter: This has been a great session!
[15:59] Rik Riel: I hope it was of some help.
[15:59] Ana Herzog: CP SL doesn't have to be careful. Give us your outrageous ideas!
[15:59] In Kenzo: definitely drop a line anytime if you have questions down the line. Camp Darfur is on the other side of the mountain there if you have not been there yet.
[15:59] Morris Vig: If that's the case - knowing the rules of SL as I understand them, is there merit to a group purchasing small plots of land across SL to broadcast the messages of the partner orgs?
[15:59] errcheck Hicks: Thank You so much.
[15:59] In Kenzo: i like that there are outrageous too!
[16:00] Ruby Glitter: Morris, there is already an effort to create shared space for progressive groups, called Commonwealth Island.
[16:00] In Kenzo: yes, it's gorgeous, rik and i were there earlier.
[16:00] Morris Vig: Not office space...promotional space.
[16:00] Ruby Glitter: :-)
[16:00] In Kenzo: meeting spots.
[16:00] Rik Riel: it's freakin beautiful
[16:00] Ruby Glitter: This is different from the NP Commons.
[16:00] Ruby Glitter: An unfortunate overlap in names...
[16:00] In Kenzo: commonwealth is a SIM north of Info Island, where TechSoup meets on fridays.
[16:01] In Kenzo: they've got a GREAT virtual reality immersion experience that i highly recommend viewing.
[16:01] Rik Riel: it will blow your mind
[16:01] In Kenzo: great potential for interactive and immersive experiences.
[16:01] RiverSong Garden: yes it's amazing
Ana Herzog: codepink has some land that is surrounded by my small pit of land that folks can use too
Ruby Glitter: Let's wrap this up and folks can stick around if they want to chat.
Morris Vig: Thanks In Kenzo & Rik
Rik Riel: sure thing. Thanks to everone for coming
In Kenzo: thanks for supporting RootsCamp!
Ruby Glitter: Any closing thoughts, Rik?
Morris Vig: and Ruby
errcheck Hicks: Rootscamp!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
Zuru Cult: woo
Ruby Glitter: Thank you ALL! I am so impressed with teh quality of the participation as well as the speakers!
Rik Riel: Just that SL should be seen as more than just an opportunity to create flashy 3d graphics.
Rik Riel: It's a space for collaborative, cool, fun community work.
Rik Riel: The rest is just window dressing.
Ana Herzog: and fun is important because it is generations upon generations of work.
Ruby Glitter: Right on, Rik. I am totally putting your blog in my aggregator ASAP.
Trevor Steptoe: RL calls. Thanks, RootsCampers.
Rik Riel: yeah, aggregator-love!
In Kenzo: yes, do that, rikomatic rocks
Rik Riel: WOOT!!!!!

Technorati Tags: civil society, politics, rootscamp, rootscamps, second life

Posted on November 13, 2006 at 11:17 PM in Civil Society, Politics, Second Life | Permalink

TrackBack

TrackBack URL for this entry:
http://www.typepad.com/t/trackback/6817644

Listed below are links to weblogs that reference Pics and transcript from talk on SL political organizing:

Comments

Post a comment

If you have a TypeKey or TypePad account, please Sign In

Name:

Email Address: