

Interview with Eric McDavid

Jeffrey Luers

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Jeff Luers set fire to three SUVs at a car dealership in Eugene, OR during the summer of 2000 in response to the environmental devastation that he saw occurring on a global scale. The court levied an egregious sentence to make an example out of him, to send a clear message to others who might share Jeff's outrage and will. In 2004 Jeff was three years into his 22+ sentence. That year his support crew announced that June 11th was the International Day of Solidarity with Long-term Anarchist Prisoner Jeff "Free" Luers. In the following years, June 11th served as a day for anarchists, environmental radicals and forest defenders alike to show some kind of support for Jeff. After years of struggle, Jeff and his legal team won a reduction in his sentence and he was released from prison in December 2009. In the years intervening Jeff's arrest and release, the FBI executed raids, subpoenas, indictments and arrests in an attempt to dismantle the radical environmental, anti-globalization and anarchist movements. Two of the people caught up in this maelstrom of repression were Eric McDavid and Marie Mason. Eric McDavid was arrested in January 2006. A paid government informant — "Anna" — created a crime and entrapped Eric in it. He was charged with a single count of "conspiracy." Though Eric carried out no actions and was accused of what amounts to "thought crime," the State pushed forward with Eric's charges. He refused to cooperate and took his case to trial. After a trial fraught with errors, the jury reluctantly convicted Eric. He was subsequently sentenced to almost 20 years in prison. Marie Mason was arrested in March 2008. Her former husband — Frank Ambrose — turned informant for the FBI and cooperated in a number of open cases including Marie's. Marie faced a life sentence if she went to trial, so she accepted a plea agreement in September 2008. She admitted her involvement in the burning of an office connected to GMO research and the destruction of a piece of logging equipment. At her sentencing in February 6th, 2009, the court sentenced Marie to almost 22 years. Since Jeff's release, Marie and Eric share the unfortunate distinction of having the longest standing sentences of any environmental prisoners in the United States. Eric is currently serving out his 19+ year sentence in Victorville, CA and, after seemingly constant transfers, Marie is currently serving her 21+ years in Carswell, Texas. In 2010, both Marie and Eric lost appeals that would have reduced their sentences. Thus, June 11th resumes this year as a day of solidarity with Long-Term Anarchist Prisoners Eric McDavid & Marie Mason. Though June 11th is one day; it's a specific time to think and act with our friends who are in prison — who are continuing their struggles on the inside.

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JEFF: Eric, you were convicted of conspiracy to damage or destroy by arson or explosive public and/or private property. How did that happen? What led up to it?

ERIC: What led up to my B'n convicted of conspiracy to damage &/or destroy govt property & interstate commerce is a long path to travel – but the short version of it is how after high school i dabbled in a couple of so-called careers (serving tables/bartending, carpentry/framing) & in each, i looked at the preceding generation to see where i'd possibly be in 10–20 yrs... not finding what i saw to be appealing, i chose to go back to school & try to feel out another way... i was leaning toward teaching philosophy when i ran across the anti-war movement pre-Iraq II & after that 1st march in San Fran on the 25th of Oct. there was no holding back... what i felt amongst those masses of people filling the streets tapped into something that nurtured my heart in a way that i hadn't felt since i was a kid... i joined a couple of peace groups & went to multiple skill-shares on deescalation & dealing w/cops, so as to help out w/security during marches... i soon became disheartened, finding out that the people/groups putting on the marches weren't just getting together to 'act now to stop war & end rape', but were some political vanguard – that piece made me reel it in & stay closer to home... i mostly helped out through the students for peace group at the J.C. i was attending... it was at one of these meetings where i saw this scrungy kid stapling stacks of paper copies together down the middle & folding them in half making a little booklet... i quietly asked to see one, & hardly picking up his head, he said that i could keep it – the 'cover' was this feminine face w/what looked like metallic dreadlocks & the words *Species Traitor* (don't recall the #)... my initial feeling was = 'weird', so i stuffed it in my bag a while later... that zine was my 1st intro to a social critique i felt to be authentic & it resonated w/how i felt in that becoming moment; after that, thresholds began to appear everywhere, & my real journey began w/remembers who i am...

J: You were the victim of a paid FBI informant. How did "Anna" earn your trust?

E: some may call it naïve, but in my authentic self – i naturally and whole-heartedly trust every one... so, 'Anna' never earned my trust, she manipulated it, by tugging at heart-strings she'd woven whenever she felt me drift from the course she'd chosen...

J: According to the State you are a convicted terrorist. How does that make you feel? Are you a terrorist?

E: it's a trip to be labeled a terrorist by a group of bureaucratic terrorists; i'd say it feels awkward, almost comical... i've had all sorts of folks attempt at sticking me in some category & i'm pretty good at ducking out of 'em

J: There is a lot of contention in the Environmental movement about snitches and how to deal with them. In many cases they have been welcomed back into activist communities or continued to receive support. What is your opinion on snitches and how do you think the activist community should respond to them?

E: my opinion on snitches is that each is unique, & ought to be handled as such... for those who create a great degree of damage, i believe the severity of their treatment by their loved ones & friends ought to be reciprocal... some will be forgiven by some people, but their choices can never be forgotten by anyone...

J: Having been found guilty of thinking about property destruction what is your opinion on that tactic? How does this movement and others work toward a better future?

E: my opinion on the tactic of property destruction is that i haven't yet found a viable argument against it... (remembering that the Sedition Act of 1917 has yet to be revoked) hypothetically

speaking = it's possible that the folx who choose 2 utilize the myriad of tactics that R out there need 2 all Dance 2gether... for instance, if there were an action done by some anonymous folx, those who've been working on the same subjects w/the public could utilize that flow of energy towards their own end, as well as those N the surrounding areas... let it B a ripple effect that folx can ride the wave after the pebble hits the water...

J: What is your daily life like? Can you walk us through a typical day?

E: a typical day = up at 5/5:30 am 2 do joint rotations & a kundalini yoga session... we get unlocked @ 10 2 6 am, & i go out N2 the pod 2 read the ticker on the news station (w/a cup of coffee every other day), 2 wait 4 the 1st 'recreation move' at 6:20am... outsd exercising until @ 7:45, mwf an hr of yoga at 8, otherwise head bk 2 the pod 4 some breakfast & reading/writing/letters/projects until our unit gets called 2 chow... eat light on tues/thurs bc of the beginner's yoga class i teach at noon 4 an hr; i'm basically out at the yard until recall at 3pm... come bk 2 shower B4 we get locked dn 4 the afternoon count - from ¼ 2 4 til ¼ 2 5... when we get unlocked i sometimes play some dominoes or read/write until chow... mon/fri i go out 2 'rec.' & do bloodpressure/body-fat readings until recall at 8pm, or on other days i might go over 2 the library 4 some space & a 'lil quiet... after that it's lockdn at 9:15pm & i crash as soon as the door locks... 'groundhog day' barely scratches the surface where visits & mail R basically the only things that change...

J: What do you miss most about being free or, as I like to think of it, in minimum custody?

E: what i miss most about minimum security is *DIVERSITY* = of everything; B'n @ my Partner, trees, my family, dogs, kids, rivers, elders, the ocean, stars - *fuck'n stars*, lakes... needless 2 say i could go on 4 a *long* time...

J: What is your advice to the next generation who want to be involved and want to create change?

E: my advice 2 the next generation who wish 2 B involved, & wish 2 create change - would B 2 seriously learn & explore who U R... not who U think U R, or who society or some counter-culture says U R, but really *who U R*... learn/explore who nurtures who UR (B they humyn or non-humyn), & listen 2 Ur Heart & 2 those who nurture who UR; everything else falls N2 place after that...

J: Clearly you can't answer this without bias, but how important is prisoner support to this struggle and others?

E: yes, i'm totally biased - i believe prisoner support is 1 of the fundamental facets of the mosaic we're all a part of - esp. recognizing & supporting p.o.w.s & political prisoners from other genres who've moved contrary 2 the culture; N sharing support, we open ourselves 2 new relations which R integral 2 nurturing change...

J: Do you have hope for the future and if so what gives you hope?

E: do I have hope 4 the future? i can't say i'd call it hope; but despite what i feel B'n weaved N the coming pattern, i do have a crush on the resonating idea that there will always B those who choose 2 listen 2 & follow their Hearts regardless of the programming all of us R subjected 2 over our lives...

J: And finally what do you need or want? What would help make your time inside easier? (This is your chance to unashamedly put it out there so do it this is where it is absolutely ok to be selfish :))

E: what do i need or want 2 make my time go by easier? Other than the obvious? ... this isn't something easy 4 me 2 do... <SIGH> ... folx have been continuously help'n out w/my requests 4 reading material which helps a lot, & every once N a while i find a surprise deposit on my books...

mostly, my concern centers @ the monetary burden placed upon my partner 4 hir costs 2 make it dn 2 C me 4 visits... oh, & it's always beautiful 2 receive zines & rad publications...

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More information on Eric's case can be found at <http://www.supporteric.org>

More information on Marie's case can be found at <http://www.supportmariemason.org>

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