



ERIC
McDAVID

Eric

Eric McDavid is an environmental activist, a writer of zines, a sometimes-poet and an almost always magician. He is a son, a brother, and an uncle. He is an amazing partner (although, maybe the author is a bit biased). He also happens to be an anarchist political prisoner.

Eric was arrested (along with Zachary Jenson and Lauren Weiner) on January 13, 2006, as part of the government's ongoing Green Scare campaign. All three were charged with "Conspiracy to damage and destroy property by fire and an explosive." The conspiracy charge is, quite literally, a thought-crime – no actions were ever carried out by Eric or any of his alleged co-conspirators.

Eric's arrest was the direct result of a government informant known only as "Anna." Anna, who was paid over \$65,000 for her work with the FBI, spent a year and a half drawing him in, fabricating a crime and implicating Eric in it. At the time of his arrest, Anna (or, rather, the FBI) was paying for the house he was staying in, the car he traveled in, the food he ate and the computer he used. Anna brought the group together in California, paid for their existence, and harassed them endlessly about sticking to a "plan" and setting "a damned goal." When it seemed clear that none of this was working for her, the FBI swooped in and arrested Eric, Zach and Lauren.

After his arrest, Eric was denied bail twice – despite having no prior criminal record and no history of violence – and spent almost 2 years pre-trial in Sacramento County Main Jail in "Total Separation" (solitary confinement). This meant that he had little to no contact with other prisoners or the outside world and was only allowed to leave his cell for a few hours each week. During that time he endured two separate hunger strikes to gain access to

vegan food. He also endured two separate bouts of pericarditis – a heart condition which Eric had never experienced before his time at Sac County.

Both of Eric's co-defendants caved under the threat of being imprisoned for 20 years and plead guilty to a lesser charge. In doing so, they agreed to testify against Eric and cooperate in every way possible, including testifying in front of secret grand jury proceedings. At their sentencing hearings in 2008, they were both sentenced to time served. For Lauren, that amounted to about 2 weeks and for Zachary, 6 months.

Eric's case is a clear-cut example of entrapment, and he fought the charges against him on those grounds at trial in September of 2007. After a trial riddled with errors, lies and blunders on the part of the government, a jury found Eric guilty. Many of those same jurors later made damning statements about the FBI's handling of the case, and two of them submitted declarations to the court stating that they believed Eric deserved a new trial.

None of this can change the fact that Eric has been convicted of a crime that was never committed.

In May of 2008 Eric was sentenced to an outrageous 19 years and 7 months in prison. At the time, it was the longest standing sentence of any environmental prisoner in the US. Unfortunately, Eric's case and sentencing seem to have set a precedent for such injustice, and others have since been sentenced to similarly outrageous time in prison. Eric appealed his conviction and his sentence immediately following his trial. The 9th Circuit Court rejected his appeal in September 2010. The supreme court has refused to hear his case. Eric is currently imprisoned at FCI Terminal Island, CA.

The Green Scare

Eric's arrest is just a single facet of a broader wave of repression by the U.S. government known by many anarchists as the "Green Scare," an allusion to the Red Scare of the 1950s in which communists in the United States were harassed, blacklisted and even deported. Environmentalist anarchists and animal rights activists in the U.S. have faced a similar brand of harassment since 2001, being named the #1 domestic terrorism threat in the United States, even though their actions (through their careful planning and caution) have never harmed a single human or animal.

In 2005, the government's "Operation Backfire" plan ripped open the underground E.L.F. movement in the northwest United States. Subsequently, many more anarchists and environmentalists, including Eric, have been targeted because of two apparent purposes: to completely wipe out the E.L.F. in the United States, and to terrify broadening circles of people into compliance and inaction. The state has been arguably successful in this: the culture of fear around anarchist and radical circles has indeed been intensified, thanks to tactics such as extensive surveillance, infiltration, wiretapping, and clever prosecution, aided by laws such as the A.E.T.A.¹, anti-mafia laws, conspiracy charges, and terrorism enhancements.

Since Eric's arrest, it has become apparent that this repression manifested itself in various ways for him and his friends. The most obvious example in Eric's case is the use of the informant, Anna. Anna successfully inserted herself into various anarchist circles in 2004 – attending things like Crimethinc gatherings, the RNC, the DNC, and more. During her time at these events, she was the eyes and ears of the state – reporting back to them about anything and everything she heard and saw, the vast majority of which was perfectly legal. According to the criminal complaint filed in Eric's

case, Anna provided information that was used in at least 12 separate “anarchist cases.”

Documents obtained through a FOIA (Freedom of Information Act) request for Eric shed light on many pieces of the investigation that occurred after Eric’s arrest – including the use of his letters to and from his friends as a fishing expedition for possible future prosecutions. The Sacramento County Main Jail forwarded all of Eric’s letters to the Sacramento FBI field office, which then forwarded them to local field offices around the country (and to law enforcement internationally) to warn the FBI in other cities of a “possible environmental/animal rights extremist” or “a possible anarchist extremist” in their community. Originally, the FBI’s communications included a statement that “Sacramento is forwarding this communication for information purposes only.” But later, they began including a much longer statement which read, in part: “this information has been determined to be of such a nature that some follow-up as to the possibility of criminal activity is warranted...” These statements were included no matter what was the content of the letter – often the documents include the statement that the letter was “benign in nature.”

It is clear that Eric’s arrest and imprisonment had nothing to do with a “crime” being committed. Eric was targeted for his politics. And he was sentenced for his politics. And both of these were meant to send a clear message to other folks in the communities he was a part of: “Don’t even think about it...” But we would like to propose a different message... One that involves taking into account what is at stake, what lessons can be learned from the past, and the fact that only someone considered a threat – or an idea considered to be a threat – could possibly warrant so much time in a cage.

And we would also like to send a message of our own: that our friends and loved ones will not be forgotten. That we will fight for their freedom and well-being as long as the state holds them captive. In order to do this more effectively – and for such extensive amounts of time – we need to seriously consider how we do the work we do, and what can be changed or improved upon for the long-haul.

June 11: A Proposal

In beginning to talk about new strategies, we might draw inspiration from the case of Jeff “Free” Luers, another anarchist who was imprisoned for an E.L.F arson against an SUV dealership in the late 90s. While initially sentenced to 22 years in prison, Jeff was released after 10 years – in part because of an ongoing campaign of support and solidarity. Early release of this sort is very rare in the U.S., especially for prisoners labeled “terrorists.” While Jeff was imprisoned, June 11th (the day he was sentenced) became an annual day of solidarity. Events and actions were held internationally to ensure that he was not forgotten in prison. Since Jeff was released in December 2009, there has been momentum towards June 11th becoming an international day of solidarity with both Eric and Marie Mason², as well as other longterm anarchist prisoners.

Many of us with experience in supporting comrades who’ve been imprisoned are familiar with the challenges of shorter-term imprisonment, but feel that new considerations have to be discussed now that our comrades are regularly receiving 20-year sentences rather than 5- or 10-year terms. Marie’s 22 year and Eric’s 20 year sentences are clearly outrageous, but we can’t forget that sentences exceeding this length are fairly common in the U.S. prisons system, and are currently being served by many black and indigenous liberation prisoners, as well as countless others.

The government imprisons our comrades and others as a way to erase them, and it is crucial that they do not succeed in this sinister task. If we take one day a year to shout our comrades’ names from the rooftops, to write them on the walls and share their stories with each other, then not one year will pass when we will not take action for our friends in prison at least once. This is beyond minimum for those of us who daily remember and feel the pain

of our comrades who sit behind bars, but we hope it will serve as a starting point for others, and as a helpful point of focus. As a first attempt (for these people, in this form), June 11th, 2011 was a huge success, with actions and events happening in dozens of cities all over the U.S. and the world. Funds were raised, information was distributed and mischief was managed, as arsons and attacks took place along with benefit movie screenings, community dinners, and info-nights.

June 11th can and should be an opportunity for conversations around the conditions of long-term imprisonment. As longer sentences for us become increasingly common in the U.S. and other countries, the importance of talking about these conditions as anarchists becomes apparent. By calling an international day that focuses on long-term anarchist prisoners, connecting lines can be drawn between our experiences in the U.S. and those of anarchists in other places, regardless of the separation that borders and languages impose upon us. We cannot and will not sit back passively as these measures are forced upon us.

Certainly, we don't want June 11th to be monolithic or official; we recognize our strategy proposal as one aspect of a struggle that necessitates many approaches. There are a number of ways in which people are supporting Eric through his imprisonment - including his family's and friends' constant and unwavering commitment to helping him meet his practical needs in prison. If we are truly committed to our comrades' freedom, we must be open to the necessity of a multiplicity of approaches.

So plan something for June 11th, whether it be raising money or awareness for Marie Mason and Eric McDavid, reaching out to them personally, helping their friends and family maintain their legal and day-to-day needs, or continuing their projects of defending the wild and waging war on the existent. The best solidarity we can offer Marie and Eric is to continue in their struggles and in our own.

A Few Practical Ideas for Supporting Eric

Avoid the trap of renunciation. Honor Eric publicly: in the context of universal condemnation of Eric's politics and alleged "crime" from the state and the media, public statements denouncing these play into the police strategy of isolating and cutting Eric off from friends and supporters. He has already been condemned to a prison cell. Any further condemnation aids the repressive project of his jailers.

Communicate: write to Eric, especially if you are an old friend. Send pictures and poetry, drawings and dreams, articles about what's going on in the world. He may not always be able to write back, but letters are a window to the outside world, and are always much appreciated.

Push harder: develop new methods of spreading information about his case and raising money for his legal and life expenses. Organize an event, action or happening on June 11th to keep his name on everyone's mind.

Suggestions and Starting Points:

- Info nights
- Microphone demos³
- Other solidarity actions (Have fun and be safe)
- Hanging banners and putting up posters to spread an understanding of his case.
- Take seriously the radical transformations this world will need to experience before Eric could be freed. Work towards ending society that spreads prisons and ruins wilderness. *This is a project that Eric feels passionately about, and it's fulfillment is now the best guarantor of his future freedom.*

Endnotes

1. The Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act is a federal law that prohibits any person from engaging in certain conduct “for the purpose of damaging or interfering with the operations of an animal enterprise.” Passed in 2006, the law is an extension of the Animal Enterprise Protection Act, and has been used to target primarily above ground animal rights activists and classify them as terrorists. For more info see shac7.com and aeta4.org.

2. Marie Mason is a community organizer, environmental activist, and anarchist. In 2008, she was arrested and charged with multiple acts of sabotage claimed by the Earth and Animal Liberation Fronts. She was sentenced and is currently serving a 22 year sentence in a federal facility in Texas where she is extremely isolated from her family and friends. Her imprisonment is the direct result of her ex-husband, Frank Ambrose, becoming an informant and providing information to the FBI. For more information, visit <http://supportmariemason.org>.

3. see <http://anarchistnews.org/content/3912-demo-fourth-anniversary-maries-arrest>

Writing to Eric

Letters for Eric can be sent to:

Eric McDavid 16209-097
FCI Terminal Island
Federal Correctional Institution
PO Box 3007
San Pedro, CA 90731

This address is current as of 4/1/12. Eric can be moved at any time, so please check supporteric.org for his most recent address.

Eric's mail is heavily scrutinized, so please refrain from mentioning illegal acts as this endangers both you and him. However, do not let this stop you from writing to him- he loves to hear about walks in the woods, books you're reading, current events, projects, and many other things. We highly recommend writing his full name, number, and address on each page of the letter, as authorities have a tendency to "lose" envelopes and forget where letters are going.

Funds raised for Eric should be sent directly to his support crew (Sacramento Prisoner Support). All money (checks made out to Jenny Esquivel – Eric's partner) can be mailed to:

SPS
PO Box 163126
Sacramento, CA 95816

Further Resources

Interwebz

supporteric.org - *Eric McDavid's support website.*

june11.org - *Info about June 11th, international day of solidarity with longterm anarchist prisoners.*

greenisthenewred.com - *Reporting and analysis about the Green Scare.*

supportmariemason.org - *Marie Mason's support website*

ecoprisoners.org - *Eco prisoner support information.*

Articles and Zines

Reed, Henry: *Between Orwell and McCarthy :The Crucifixion of Marie Mason.* Fifth Estate #380, Spring 2009

McGowan, Daniel: *Exposing Little Guantanamo: Inside the CMU.* NY Anarchist Black Cross. Spring 2009

Many printable zines and resources about Eric are available on his support website, as well as <http://zinelibrary.info>

Solidarity with Marie Mason, along with many other pamphlets and zines about Marie.

