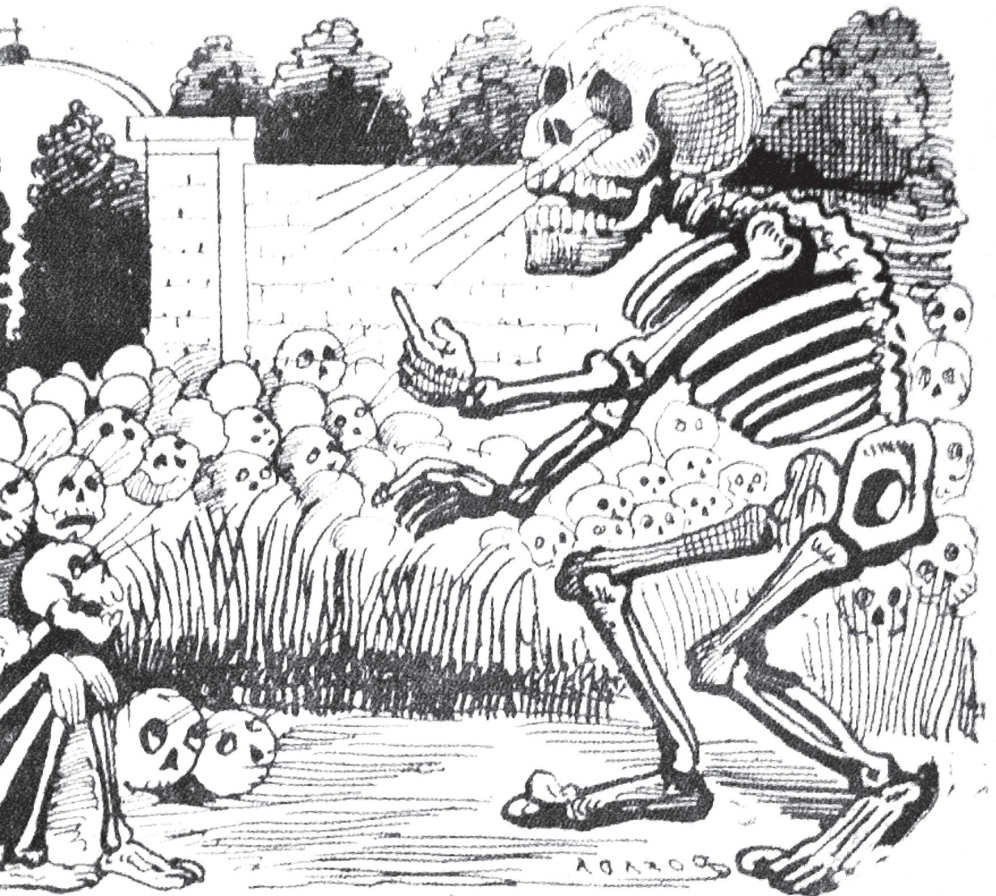


Ryan Rainville's Trial

Statement

to the Courts



Brought to you by:

Guelph Anarchist Black Cross

Guelph ABC would love to see every prison torn down, get a hold of us if you feel the same way. To learn more about the prisoners we support and other G20 defendants support work we do, check out our website.

guelphprisonersolidarity.wordpress.com

Guelphabc@riseup.net

Mailing Address:

Guelph ABC
P.O. Box 183
Guelph, Ontario
N1H 6J6

Preface

On June 26th, 2010 in Toronto there was a break off march from a larger demonstration against the meeting of the 20 richest nations and businesses interests. A confrontational bloc of 200 people destroyed the property of banks, businesses and state property. The total damage in broken windows alone was well over \$1 million dollars. This action against capital was aimed at causing economic damage to those profiting from the land and our labour.

On August 5th 2010, Ryan Rainville was arrested and charged with 3 counts of Mischief over \$5000, Masked with Intent, Assault Peace Officer with a Weapon, Intimidation of a Justice Participant and Breach of Peace.

Ryan spent 3 months in jail before being released on house arrest at a Native men's residence in Toronto called Sagatay.

Ryan pled guilty to 3 counts of Mischief over \$5000 and Breach of Peace. On October 31st, 2011 with at least a dozen supporters present, Ryan made the following statement to the court.

In my statement to the court I am going to address what I consider to be the three most important issues that have been raised in relation to my sentencing. The first concerns my character and attitude toward society. The second relates to my connection to the First Nations and my legal father's Native heritage, and includes questions about my reasons for being at Sagatay and my attitude toward Native culture and spirituality. The third concerns the reasons and circumstances which have led to my being in court today.

It has been suggested by representatives of the state that I am an anti-social person. I am here today to tell you that I am not an anti-social person. I am a very pro-social person. I care deeply about the future and well-being of society. I care deeply about nurturing and preserving both human and non-human animal life. I care deeply about ending the suffering of oppressed Peoples as it currently exists within the authoritarian capitalist state. I am strongly committed to building positive, nurturing, egalitarian social relationships that are not based on hierarchy, exploitation, and prejudice. These are not the beliefs, values or goals of an anti-social person. These are the beliefs, values and goals of a person who cares so much about people and society that he or she feels morally compelled to challenge and eradicate

all forms of institutionalized oppression, even at great personal cost to him or herself.

The court has also heard from representatives of the state that in choosing to defy and challenge corporate, state, and police authority my behaviour is anti-social. Again, I am here to tell you that my behaviour is not anti-social. In consistently working to challenge and eradicate all forms of institutionalized oppression, my behaviour is very pro-social. In consistently working to build solidarity with marginalized, working-class Peoples and our allies in a genuine struggle against oppression, my behaviour is very pro-social. In choosing to give up my white male privilege and join the struggles of oppressed Peoples everywhere, my behaviour is very pro-social. In all of these choices and activities my behaviour is not anti-social. In fact, in each of these choices and activities I consistently reject and challenge anti-social behaviour wherever it occurs.

I reject and challenge the anti-social behaviour of the authoritarian, racist, colonial, capitalist, patriarchal state, which is founded here on stolen Native land and perpetuates the oppression of Indigenous and working-class Peoples, at home and around the world, in order to defend the interests of the corporations on which it depends for its economic strength; I reject and challenge the anti-social behaviour of the corporations that control and profit from our communication with one another, that exploit working class and Indigenous Peoples here and in the sweatshops and maquilas of the global assembly line, that operate the agribusiness plantations that supply coffee and food to the affluent countries at the expense of the poor people who must work on them, and that appropriate any parcel of ground from which can be drawn an ounce of gold, barrel of oil, or cord of wood; and I reject and challenge the anti-social behaviour of the violent police, army and private security forces that enforce the will of the authoritarian capitalist state and defend the interests of the rich by bashing heads, dragging off to prison, and even killing, working-class, Indigenous and Peoples of Color whose very existence represents a threat to oppressive capitalist institutions.

The second issue which the state has raised in relation to my sentencing concerns my connection to my legal father's Native heritage and the First Nations, which the state refers to as the

“Aboriginal Community.” It includes questions about my reasons for being at the Sagatay residence and my attitude toward Native culture and spirituality. I will address each of these concerns now.

First of all, it is misleading to talk about the “Aboriginal community,” because there is not one Aboriginal community or People or culture. There are many Aboriginal communities, Peoples, and cultures, and this is the reason why we use the plural designation of First Nations when talking about Indigenous Peoples in Canada.

My legal father’s heritage is Sioux and Plains Cree, although according to custom his father joined the Cree Nation when he married his mother, so he is registered as a member of the Sakimay Band. He was raised in a residential school and his immediate family left the reserve more than 50 years ago. After he left school he moved across the country and intentionally avoided contact with any of the First Nations because he was ashamed of being, as he called himself, “an Indian.” He had no stories to tell me about traditional Cree cultural practises because he didn’t know any, but he did tell me about how, when he was a small boy, the Keeper of the school used to take him out of his bed at night and return him in the morning (he says he can’t remember what happened to him during the hours in between); how small boys were awakened, caned, and forced to stand in the corner during the night if they did not sleep with their arms outside of the covers at all times; how he was constantly taught that he was a sinner and found himself making up sins to confess on Sunday because he was so sure he must have done something wrong that he believed that he needed to be punished anyway; and how, when it was time to play “cowboys and Indians” on the schoolyard, no Native child wanted to be an “Indian,” because every child in the residential school thought she or he “knew” how bad “Indians” were.

He also told me how he was frequently racially profiled and harassed by police when the white people around him were not; how his white friends could stagger home from the bar without interruption but he was on several occasions taken to drunk tanks and Native shelters to “sleep it off” even though he had photo identification with a perfectly good address; and how he was often followed around stores by security staff even though

he had never stolen anything in his life. On several occasions I also had to defend myself from the racist insults directed toward my father by white children in my classes at school, and I cringed when I had to explain to him the reason why I had been sent to the principal's office on those days.

I want to make it clear to the court that the connection I feel to my legal father is not rooted in a shared sense of Cree, or even Native, heritage or cultural tradition. It is rooted in my experience of the oppressive ways in which racism and colonialism have impacted on his life as a First Nations man living in the racist, colonial, Canadian state. This is a connection that is not limited to one Native community or cultural experience. It is a connection to a shared experience of racist, colonial, oppression that bridges all cultural and historical differences between First Nations Peoples. I take that connection very seriously, or I would not be here in court today.

I currently reside at Sagatay, which is a shelter for homeless Native men, but my case is somewhat atypical because it does not involve a problem with chronic substance abuse or a history of being in and out of jail prior to my participation in the anti-G20 protests of last year. My reason for being at Sagatay is that I was considered to be homeless at the time I was applying for bail. I was considered to be homeless because the court would not let me return to my previous surety's house even though I had been living there and abiding by previous bail conditions at the time of my last arrest.

One condition of living at Sagatay was that I participate in a mandatory three-month daily program, with an optional three month extension which I participated in as well. Another is to take part in doing household chores, which I have done except on those occasions when I was absent from the residence for court, appointments, or overnight passes. There are also opportunities to participate in sweat lodges and other ceremonies which are, to my knowledge, neither Sioux nor Plains Cree, but that is not an issue for me. I have not refused to participate in these spiritual activities, but I have refused to falsely embrace traditional Native customs and beliefs in order to appease the Canadian state. I respect other people's spirituality and appreciate the comfort and benefit that many First Nations men find in participating in

Native spiritual practises, but I am not a religious person, and I will not exploit Native culture in exchange for a better sentencing report or to make me seem more appealing to the court.

In regard to my connection to the anti-colonial struggle of the First Nations, it has been suggested by the state that there are both legitimate and illegitimate claims made by First Nations Peoples, or organizations, and that mine are somehow illegitimate. Well, in my experience all First Nations make the same claims against the colonial Canadian government: that Canada is founded on stolen Native land, that First Nations Peoples have been oppressed economically, politically, and socially within the colonial structure, and that First Nations Peoples are entitled to hold, make decisions about, and utilize for their collective benefit, the land and resources which have been taken and kept from them by the colonial Canadian state and its police and military forces. These claims are not only consistently made by First Nations Peoples and organizations across the country, they are also consistently legitimate, whether or not they are voiced by me, or a Mohawk Warrior, or the Chief of the Assembly of First Nations.

Differences do arise between First Nations Peoples and organizations over the ways and means used to achieve these goals. The colonial state and its defenders are quick to paint some of these means as being legitimate and others illegitimate, but there is strong support for radical Indigenous activism across the country, and many of us embrace and encourage those who are brave enough to risk their lives and personal freedom in order to put an end to colonial oppression by any constructive means necessary (to adapt a phrase first given to us by Malcolm X).

Although I have consistently maintained a strong commitment to protecting both human and non-human animal life throughout my protest activities, last year at the beginning of my second and longest period of incarceration I was viciously beaten and kicked to the floor by prison guards who explicitly told me they were doing so because I was what they called a “violent” anti-G20 protester. They showed my bruised face to the next man waiting when they brought me out and said they were going to do the same thing to him because he was an anti-G20 protester too. This is a stark example of the way in which state violence permeates every aspect of my life because I have chosen to challenge

its oppressive institutions, yet it is something that First Nations and Peoples of Color must experience every day simply because their very existence represents a threat to the racist, colonial, capitalist state.

This brings me to the final issue that I am going to address in my statement: the reasons and circumstances which have led me to be in court today. I have already told the court that I reject and challenge the anti-social behaviour of the authoritarian capitalist state, the corporations it protects, and the armed forces it uses to protect them. I have explained the sense of connection that I feel to the First Nations' struggle against colonial oppression. In addition, I have a deep sense of connection to anti-imperialist struggle around the world, from Latin America and Haiti to Greece and Palestine. Much of this comes from the awareness that my mother instilled in me from childhood of the abysmal living and working conditions endured by the majority of people around the world. I was also lucky enough to have a stepfather who participated in the Salvadorean people's revolutionary struggle against the brutally repressive US and Canadian-backed governments of the time.

My stepfather told me about the incredible spirit of resistance and courage he found in the Salvadorean people. He drew on that spirit himself when he joined the resistance in spite of the state-sponsored torture and murder of many people around him, including some of his teenage schoolmates. He relied on it again for survival when he also was disappeared and tortured as a result of his work teaching poor Salvadoreans about their constitutional rights. Throughout his experience as an Immigrant of Color in Canada he has drawn on the same spirit of resistance as he fought against poverty, racism, and classism in a racist colonial state. He has consistently taught me through word and example that we must resist oppression in any way that we can because people everywhere are suffering and dying so that a few affluent countries, and corporations, can prosper at any expense.

The understanding and experiences of oppression and resistance that I have drawn together here in my statement to the court form the core of my commitment to resist state and capitalist oppression by any constructive means necessary. By constructive means necessary I am referring to anything which effectively disrupts capitalist business as usual but causes no harm to human or nonhuman animal life.

The colonial capitalist state is violent because capitalist property requires violence in order to keep it under capitalist control, and colonial property requires violence in order to keep it under colonial control. State violence, and the threat of state violence, is so common in our collective lives that many people become desensitized to it and don't really notice it until it is brought to bear directly on their own lives. The state and its forces act with virtual impunity against working and Indigenous Peoples, and state violence is the most pervasive and odious source of violence that we must face.

Defending ourselves from the violence of the capitalist state and its property is not violence, but self defence. Colonial and capitalist property must be abolished in order for state violence to be withdrawn from our lives. In protest actions such as those which I participated in during the last G20, destruction of capitalist property sends a clear message to those in power that oppressing us, and/or other Peoples in our name, is absolutely intolerable. It is, in my lived and observed experience, the most resonant way to get that message across, not only to those in power, but also to those who have the power to resist oppression and bring about real change.

I have pled guilty to the destruction of state property, and while awaiting trial and sentencing I have spent more than 3 months in jail, 9 months on house arrest, and 2 months living under strict bail conditions. I have served enough time in punishment for the damage that I have accepted responsibility for. It is time now for the state to set me free.

-Ryan P. Rainville

“Following the June 2010 G20 summit in Toronto, a wave of repression came down on anarchists and anti-authoritarians in Southern Ontario. Ryan Rainville was one of those arrested and he was held in jail for 3 months before being released into house arrest at a Native men’s residence in Toronto called Sagatay.

Throughout the court process, Ryan proudly proclaimed his anarchist values and defended the use of property destruction during anti-capitalist protests that weekend to disrupt the economy.

Ryan eventually pled guilty to 3 counts of Mischief over \$5000 and Breach of Peace. On October 31st, 2011 with at least a dozen supporters present, Ryan made the following statement to the court.”

