

First Judi Bari Activist Grants Awarded to Two Northern California Coast Women

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Naomi Wagner and Lindsey Holm will be the first recipients of the new Judi Bari Activist Grants, according to a news release from Ellen Drell of the Willits Environmental Center. Each of the two will be awarded \$5000 in recognition of her exceptional courage and commitment to protecting the forests of northwest California. The public is invited to an awards celebration Saturday, June 16, from 6-8pm, at the Willits Environmental Center (WEC), 630 S. Main Street in Willits, California. (New location)

The Judi Bari Activist Grants are awarded biennially by the Redwood Justice Fund in collaboration with the Willits Environmental Center. The grants are funded from a portion of the damages awarded to the estate of Judi Bari in 2002, when a jury delivered a stunning verdict against the FBI and the Oakland Police Department in favor of Bari and Darryl Cherney. It was the culmination of an historic 11 year civil rights case.

Naomi Wagner and Lindsey Holm, each in their unique ways, embody the spirit and passion that Judi Bari brought to environmental work. From 1988 until her death from breast cancer in 1997, Judi was a potent and charismatic force in the growing movement to stop the corporate liquidation logging of the redwood forests of Mendocino and Humboldt Counties. Judi was also the first forest activist to reach out to the loggers and mill workers in an effort to form an alliance with environmentalists to promote logging practices that would be sustainable for generations to come. A Willits resident, Judi was known and admired for her courage in facing hostility and danger, her boisterous sense of humor, her electrifying speaking style, and her powerful intellect.

For two decades, Naomi Wagner has devoted her life to forest protection. In 1987 she walked into the Mendocino Environment Center seeking help to organize her neighborhood to fight abusive logging practices in the mountains west of Willits. She taught herself how to interpret official Timber Harvest Plan documents and learned how the public could influence them. Naomi enthusiastically joined Judi Bari and others working to reform abusive logging practices. Already a grandmother, Naomi became active in Earth First!, organizing and participating in nonviolent direct actions. The list of her involvement in forest defense reads like a history of the movement. She has been arrested, spent time in jail and endured a prolonged fast as expressions of her commitment to end non-sustainable logging practices on the North Coast. With her commitment to nonviolence and her rich experience in direct action, Naomi has trained a new generation of activists in the principles of effective action. Asked her reaction to receiving the grant, Naomi said, "I feel very honored for the recognition, but I'm also very aware of the hundreds and actually thousands of others who share the honor because we walk in Judi Bari's footsteps in working together to defend the forest against the corporations."

Twenty-two year old Lindsey Holm was born and raised in northern Humboldt County. Her childhood in the woods led her to become an expert amateur mycologist, which in turn propelled her into defending the old-growth forests of her region. Lindsey was among a group of tree-sitters attempting to save the ancient redwoods of Freshwater Creek near Eureka. When she and others were forcibly extracted from the trees and arrested, she taught herself the law, defended their actions in court, and, without lawyers, won a settlement agreement. Lindsey has become skilled in reviewing Timber Harvest Plans, becoming familiar with the specialties of hydrology, geology and forestry as well as the statutory and regulatory aspects of logging plans. She has recently

learned GIS and mapping techniques, and is about to embark on a year-long walk through the redwood bioregion guiding professional photographers to document the condition of this still-threatened ecosystem. Lindsey has demonstrated a voracious intellect, a matching appetite for hard work and a fierce drive to see justice done. And she's just getting started!

The Redwood Justice Fund and the Willits Environmental Center are proud to honor the memory of Judi Bari and encourage the work of these two exceptional women, Naomi Wagner and Lindsey Holm, by awarding these grants. The public is invited to attend the celebration on Saturday, June 16 in Willits.

More about Judi Bari

Earth First! leader Judi Bari was nearly killed on May 24, 1990, when a motion-triggered bomb hidden under the driver's seat exploded under her in Oakland. Judi and Darryl Cherney, also an Earth First! organizer, were traveling to promote Redwood Summer, a nonviolent campaign to defend the redwood forests from corporate liquidation logging. Judi had received death threats from timber industry supporters, and had reported them to police. But even as Judi was undergoing emergency surgery for her horrific bomb injuries, the Oakland Police, at the instigation of the FBI, arrested the pair, falsely charging that they were terrorists who were knowingly carrying explosives. It was a deliberate frame-up, as a federal jury would find twelve years later.

For nearly two months after the bomb attack, the FBI and Oakland police subjected Judi, Darryl and the Earth First! movement to a calculated media smear campaign intended to discredit them and neutralize their logging reform work. Eventually the prosecutor announced no criminal charges would be filed against them because there was no evidence they were guilty. Neither the FBI nor OPD ever pursued numerous clues or made any genuine effort to catch the real bomber, but continued to tell media that Judi and Darryl were their only suspects.

Despite the injuries that left Judi crippled for life, the pair filed a federal lawsuit to defend themselves and their movement against unlawful governmental interference with their First Amendment right to organize politically in defense of the forests. Five years after Judi's untimely death, a federal jury vindicated her and Darryl, awarding them an unprecedented \$4.4 million from the FBI and OPD, with fully 80% of the damage award for First Amendment violations and the rest for false arrest and unlawful search and seizure.