

SOLIDARITY FOREVER ...

STANDING UP TO ATTACKS ON ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENTS

"The FBI agent sat me down at a table and said, 'You're on that side of the table and I'm on this side...and we're also kind of on opposite sides in this situation.' I said, 'What do you mean?' And he said, 'Well, I'm a conservative, law abiding citizen, and you're on the opposite end of that political spectrum.' I realized at that point this guy wasn't interested in investigating the crime." – Firebomb arson victim Josh Raisler-Cohn

The weekend of October 15-17, 1999, Redwood Summer Justice Project and the Rocky Mountain Peace and Justice Center brought together environmental activists from across the country whose campaigns have been targeted with violence, infiltration and harassment. The gathering, called "Ridding Activism of Intimidation and Disruption," (RAID) was held in Boulder, Colorado.

Violence and harassment aimed at environmental activists is nothing new. Communities that are effective in challenging the power of resource extractive industries to destroy ecosystems have always been targeted by corporate power ravenous to get out the natural resources. But during this past year we've seen a dramatic escalation in attacks against environmental activists nationwide, as well as the proliferation of increasingly sophisticated anti-environmental organizing.

From the murder of nonviolent Earth First! activist David "Gypsy" Chain by an irate logger, to torture by swabbing pepper spray directly into the eyes of activists passively resisting arrest, to the attempted pipe bombing of the New Mexico-based Forest Guardians, we are in the midst of an alarming wave of repression nationwide.

It was important to bring the targets of these attacks together for a number of reasons; first, to identify the common sources and similar tactics of repression being used against us; also, to learn from each other strategies that have been successful in defeating the violence; and finally, to build solidarity to support activists under attack. Here's a look at what we learned.

REDWOOD SUMMER JUSTICE PROJECT seeks justice in the case of the 1990 car-bombing of Earth First! activists Judi Bari and Darryl Cherney, whose successful Redwood Summer campaign was plagued by death threats and corporate-sponsored threats and violence. Their landmark civil rights lawsuit against the FBI and Oakland Police gives us a window into a government campaign designed to smear nonviolent activists as terrorists and neutralize successful environmental organizing, while letting the perpetrators of the violence go free. The filing of the lawsuit was a successful tactic to de-

escalate the violence and harassment on California's Northcoast.

MINNEHAHA FREE STATE in Minneapolis, Minnesota, is an occupation by a community-based alliance of Earth First!, the American Indian Movement, and local residents protesting the razing of a neighborhood forested park and Native sacred sites to make way for an unpopular highway reroute. The repression has been intense, including the use of infiltrators, teargas, smearing pepper "gel" directly into the eyes, noses and mouths of activists, and beating activists who were already handcuffed. In December, 1998, this peaceful occupation was raided by over 800 riot police who beat protesters, bulldozed the encampment, and declared martial law. Despite this overwhelming and prolonged assault, activists in Minnehaha, stronger and more unified than ever, continue to hold back the development.



Judi Bari at the Oakland Federal Courthouse, March 1995

Photo: Xiang Xing Zhou

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA EARTH FIRST! and **THE HEADWATERS FOREST CAMPAIGN**

have led a twelve-year, nonviolent direct action campaign to defend the last ancient redwoods from corporate plunder by Maxxam Corp./Pacific Lumber. Headwaters activists have been repeatedly pepper sprayed and brutalized by police, who have fostered a culture of company violence that has flourished with impunity. In 1998, Pacific Lumber logger A.E. Ammons killed Earth First! activist David "Gypsy" Chain during a peaceful blockade, felling a tree directly on top of Chain. Despite the reign of terror, activists have kept up continuous nonviolent

investigating the arson, and threatened with jail time for refusing to name names and answer questions about their constitutionally protected political activities. But, faced with the activists' solidarity and with mounting protests and media attention, on November 16th, federal prosecutors dropped the contempt charges. Victory!

COVE MALLARD COALITION, based in Idaho, has successfully stood up to shocking, ongoing violence and harassment by a right-wing coalition of the timber, Wise Use, and Aryan Resistance groups. Since 1993, using direct action they have preserved the largest roadless area left in the lower forty-eight states.



Video image of activists swabbed with pepperspray, Congressman Frank Riggs' Office, Fall 1997

direct action, forcing a government buy-out of the Headwaters Forest and framing the debate over forest practices. They've also used civil rights lawsuits (pepper spray) and a wrongful death lawsuit against Pacific Lumber Company (for the killing of David Chain) to back down the violence.

ANCIENT FOREST RESCUE (AFR) has worked to build a community movement that overwhelmingly opposed the expansion of a Vail ski resort into endangered lynx habitat. On the eve of their first nonviolent blockade of logging operations, fire mysteriously broke out, destroying a lodge at the resort.

Local law enforcement used the arson, anonymously claimed by the "Earth Liberation Front," as an excuse to investigate AFR activists. The press branded organizers "ecoterrorists," thus fracturing the movement. Logging roared forward within days, protected by federal authorities. More recently, AFR members (who admittedly are not suspects) were subpoenaed by a federal Grand Jury

Cove Mallard activists have been shot at and their cars riddled with bullets. They've been subjected to Russian roulette torture by loggers who also threatened to chain and drag them behind a truck. All the while, law enforcement stood by and condoned the violence, refusing to investigate when complaints were filed. Activists were hit with a SLAPP suit and found liable for over \$1 million. They too have been threatened with a Grand Jury investigation.

Despite this incredible array of repressive tactics, the Cove Mallard Coalition stood their ground ... and they won. They recently filed a civil rights

lawsuit after their forest occupation and support camp were attacked with the knowledge of local police by a vigilante-style mob.

FOREST GUARDIANS is a Santa Fe group that challenges timber sales on public land in the Southwest. In March of 1998, they found in their mailbox an unexploded pipe bomb powerful enough to have killed anyone nearby and destroyed their office. Although they had received death threats (including one with a rifle scope and cross hairs over their name, similar to a threat received by Judi Bari in 1990) and are the targets of long-term, aggressive Wise-Use movement organizing, the FBI has not found the bomber(s).

Like other groups, Forest Guardians have been targeted in ways designed to divide them from natural allies (e.g., native peoples) and subjected to SLAPP suits.

ALLEGHENY DEFENSE PROJECT activist Josh Raisler Cohn woke one May morning to find his car in

flames. The firebomb attack came after Josh had received death threats over the course of two years, triggered by his successful forest advocacy. The FBI agent "investigating" the arson ignored the multiple threats Josh had reported to police and instead investigated the innocent victim – Josh Raisler Cohn.



Photo: Mark Slupe (Courtesy of the Colorado Daily)

Ancient Forest Rescue blockade at Vail, July 1999

ESCALANTE WILDERNESS PROJECT, in the rural town of Escalante, Utah, saw a member's home vandalized because of their advocacy for wilderness protection, clean water, and grazing restrictions. They have been aggressively targeted by the anti-environmental Wise Use movement group People for the USA. Violence and the fear of similar vandalism are being used to isolate them from the activist community.

THE TACTICS OF REPRESSION

This litany of attacks shows just how threatening well-planned direct action campaigns are to the resource extractive industries. It also reveals a pattern of tactics frequently used against us. The most common of these tactics are:

- Infiltration and internal disruption.
- Increasing use of police violence and brutality, including torture and the use of pepper spray and teargas as tools of pain compliance.

WHAT TO DO IF...

STRATEGIES FOR RESPONDING TO A VIOLENT ATTACK AGAINST AN ACTIVIST OR GROUP

– DOCUMENT WHAT HAPPENED

While memories are fresh, immediately take written declarations with times, names, and details. Collect documentation: videos, photographs, flyers, eyewitness statements, media reports, newspaper clippings, letters-to-the editor, etc. (Send copies to the National Clearinghouse in Boulder.)

– GET AN ATTORNEY

Lawyers can help you document the collusion of law enforcement, as well as give you access to police and other documents otherwise off-limits. ALWAYS file complaints with law enforcement when you are brutalized or attacked, if only to create a record. NEVER talk to police, FBI or prosecutors without a lawyer present. NEVER give police/FBI original documents (like death threats).

– SPREAD THE WORD

Ask allies in your community and nationwide (use the National Clearinghouse) to take action in solidarity with you (i.e., demonstrations, petitions, direct action, public pressure of police and public officials, etc.). Refuse to be isolated and marginalized. Remember, whoever is threatening your work already knows who you are.

– MAKE NOISE!

Focusing public outrage and exposing the abuses will prevent violence from escalating. Publicize the attacks. Put your struggle into the larger context: include a chronology of similar attacks locally and nationally in your press packet. Encourage people to write letters to the editors of newspapers. Flood law enforcement and corporate offices with phone calls demanding an end to the violence. Be public, visible, and outraged!

– DON'T BACK DOWN

Standing up to violence and intimidation in a public, nonviolent way works. Stay out on the front lines, emphasize your commitment to nonviolence, and keep up the struggle!

- Divide-and-conquer tactics used to separate us from our natural allies—working people, communities of color, etc. – pitting us against each other.
- Corporate/government/law enforcement complicity in the violence against us. Police, beholden to powerful corporate interests, stand silent in the face of such violence, then refuse to investigate. As a result, we face a complete lack of Equal Protection.
- In fact, when activists are the targets of violence, police blame the activists themselves, and then use that violence as a pretext to investigate and to demonize our work and our movement.
- At the same time, grassroots activists are routinely falsely associated with violence and sabotage. This tactic of creating the false menace of ecoterrorism gives the corporate/government alliance the excuse to target and criminalize nonviolent defense of the environment.
- The use of SLAPP suits and Grand Juries to harass and gather information about activists is on the rise.
- Wise Use Movement organizing is alive and

well nationwide. This phony front for corporate interests is being used to hate-monger, incite, and commit violence against environmentalists. Several conference participants have been targeted by the same Wise Use group, "People for the USA."

NEW INFORMATION CLEARINGHOUSE

One of the most important results of the RAID Conference was the creation of the National Clearinghouse on Intimidation of Environmentalists. The clearinghouse will serve as a resource for media and environmental groups for information and updates on violence against eco-activists and violence falsely blamed on activists.

Please report violence and intimidation aimed at your own group. (Include documents and photos.) Also, pass on the names and contact info on other groups that should be a part of the network. Contact the clearinghouse at the Rocky Mountain Peace and Justice Center, 1520 Euclid Ave, Boulder, Co 80302; 303-444-6981, fax 303-444-6523; e-mail: bygyaball@earthlink.net

STAND UP!

It is critical that we acknowledge the violence and repression against the environmental movement. Activists at the RAID conference discovered by coming together just how successful each region has been in standing up to the harassment, using strategies of solidarity, collectivism, and nonviolence, with a good dose of humor and music. We also came away with a tremendous respect for the strength, courage and perseverance of our movement as we struggle for the wild! The connections made at the conference will go a long way toward building solidarity among groups and strengthening the environmental movement with the knowledge that it is possible to stand up to corporate power, FBI COINTELPRO and corrupt law enforcement, and win.



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Produced by


Redwood Summer Justice Project
 PO Box 14720, Santa Rosa, CA 95402
 PH 707-887-0262 • FAX 707-887-0865
www.monitor.net/~bari 



Photo: Evan Johnson

Log Truck Blockade, Redwood Summer, 1990