

# Free Rob Los Ricos

## The State Takes Its Vengeance for Riot in Eugene

Fifth Estate Collective

2000

Outrage is the only word that comes to mind to describe the reaction to the sentence handed down by a vindictive judge to an Eugene, Oregon anarchist following a militant action on June 18, 1999.

On October 13, 1999 Robert Thaxton, activist and writer, better known to his friends and readers as Rob Los Ricos, received 70 months (do the math; it's frightening) for the charges of second degree assault and rioting following his conviction by a Lane County jury.

Everyone from the cops and judge to Eugene's militant anarchist community (see last issue) knew it was the June 18 riot that was on trial, and the reason for Rob's draconian punishment. According to one observer in court, "The judge made this abundantly, explicitly clear."

June 18, 1999 was designated international Reclaim the Streets, a day of action against capitalism timed to coincide with a G8 meeting in Koln, Germany. Demonstrations and riots against these government elites occurred in numerous cities around the globe including one in London which paralyzed parts of the city centre and caused the Royal family to cancel an event. Rioting was widespread throughout that city.

Actions also took place across the U.S. and in cities as far-flung as Montevideo, Uruguay, Helsinki, Finland, and Valencia, Spain. Eugene, Oregon answered the call with 200 to 300 people lashing out for several hours, damaging banks, a fast-food outlet, and many police cruisers. The cops responded to their rocks with tear gas.

### **"I tossed the rock."**

Rob Los Ricos told the court it was in the middle of this action that "In a blank panic, I tossed the rock." The 4-pound, softball-sized stone didn't do any serious injury to the Eugene police officer it struck, but it is for this incident that Rob may spend almost six years in prison.

Sgt. Larry Blackwell, who was struck in the shoulder, is known throughout the Whitaker district, home to many of Eugene's anarchists and poor, as "a menace, specializing in threats, racism and intimidation." He came to Eugene from the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department following the 1992 Rodney King riots.

He is reported to have bragged, "I got to shoot one of those motherfuckers," referring to L.A.'s Hispanic population.

Thaxton testified at his trial dressed in all black before a judge who denied every defense motion. He admitted holding the rock behind his back, intending to smash an unoccupied police car in retaliation for the way the cops were using excessive force to subdue and arrest demonstrators.

## **Bias Against Anarchists**

According to his testimony, Blackwell approached Los Ricos, chasing another man down the street, who darted into the crowd for safety. The sergeant was holding a small, retractable baton in one hand and “looking right at me.” Thaxton says he feared he would be a victim of a police beating, and threw the rock almost reflexively.” I did not intend to strike anyone with this rock. When it hit him, I was shocked,” he said.

Stones are routinely thrown by demonstrators at cops around the world during protests, yet charges like this are rarely seen except in dictatorships. The trial was rigged against Thaxton from the start. The judge refused to dismiss jurors who stated bias against anarchists, she wouldn't allow evidence on the sergeant's violent history or the defendant's peaceful character, nor allow testimony from two expert witnesses on anarchism.

However, the judge did allow prejudicial slurs by the prosecutor about anarchism, and the extraneous (and untrue) allegation that Thaxton also threw a bottle at Blackwell.

Following the guilty verdict, about twenty of Rob's comrades, some wearing masks and hoods, hung a “Free Robert Thaxton” sign in front of the Lane County jail where he was being held.

No one expects to have a militant movement that doesn't suffer casualties, nor the state and its repressive apparatus to be “fair.” The outrage felt stems from the worthiness of our friend and comrade, Robert Thaxton, and his fate, compared to the worthless minions of the state.

The harshness of Rob's treatment can be contrasted with that of Christopher Smith, who was also arrested for throwing a rock at the cops. He was convicted of similar charges and spent six months in jail, being released just before the end of the year.

Prison letters from Rob continue to be upbeat, almost jovial. He's playing his guitar, learning Spanish, and answering his extensive correspondence, and plans to keep writing for the anarchist press, but he may be facing some hard time. An appeal is in process, but might take as long as three years even if successful.

Funds are desperately needed; send donations to AAA, POB 11331, Eugene OR 97402; checks payable to John Zerzan.

Please send Rob letters of encouragement and your publications. at Robert Thaxton, SID #12112716, Oregon State Prison, 2605 State St., Salem OR 97310.

# fifth Estate

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