

Police Terrorize Earth First!er In Ohio

anon.

2008

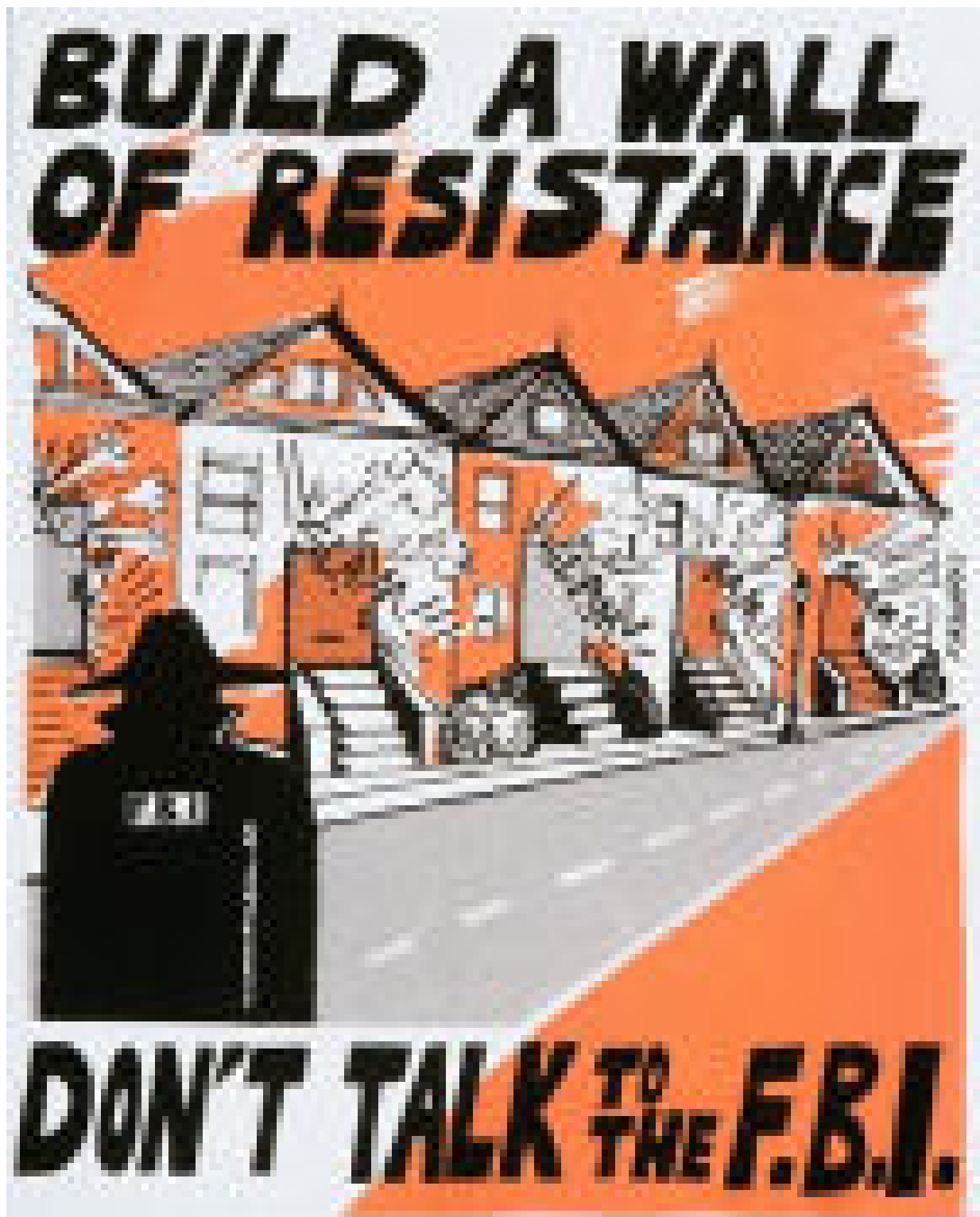
Just before midnight one night in early February Cincinnati Earth First! organizer (and longtime *Fifth Estate* friend) Marie Mason was terrorized by cops after her 16 year-old daughter discovered a cop fumbling with equipment underneath her automobile. Shortly thereafter, the same plainclothes cop and a uniformed henchman broke into Mason's home; when confronted, they claimed to be searching for "prowlers" who were stealing "catalytic converters" from cars in the neighborhood and then they hastily left the scene.

Recalling the attempt made by the FBI and the Oakland Police Department to murder Judi Bari with a car bomb in 1990, Mason immediately searched the undercarriage of her car and found a magnetically-mounted police GPS tracking unit. When Mason removed the device, a large unmarked pickup truck roared out of the dark, jumping the curb into the front yard and spewing out a number of plainclothes police with pistols drawn. Identifying themselves as narcotics officers, they ordered Mason, her daughter, and a friend to the ground at gunpoint in order to take back the tracking device before roughly questioning the trio for half an hour—at one point, one of the undercover cops called Mason's daughter by name and demanded to know why her regular routine for that night had changed at the last minute. Six more police soon showed up as Mason continued to deny consent for a search of her home by the anonymous gunmen. As police left, they threatened to return with a search warrant; later that night, plainclothes cops in the unmarked pickup truck did return to Mason's house, but no warrant was served and they were observed depositing a passenger who then ran into the backyard to places unknown.

This is not the first time that Mason has been harassed by State thugs since repeatedly refusing FBI requests "to remove herself as a suspect" through "voluntary interviews" about ELF actions in the Midwestern US. She has been the object of Federal raids in the past stemming from her involvement in the struggle against the neoliberal eco-terrorist activities of transnational resource extraction industries, such as the Perrier Corporation's privatization of Great Lakes Basin water: most recently, she has worked to block the construction of the I-69 NAFTA/FTAA globalization superhighway. Given this history, it is likely that the night's incident was neither a search for catalytic converter thieves nor a narcotics investigation, but rather a botched surveillance operation conducted by Cincinnati police in conjunction with the Joint Terrorism Taskforce as part of the cross-country "Operation: Backfire" witch-hunt against environmentalists.

UPDATE

As we go to press, we have learned that Marie Mason was arrested by federal agents and charged with involvement in a 1999 arson at a Michigan State University agricultural genetics laboratory. Agents from the FBI, the Department of Homeland Security, and Cincinnati Intelligence Unit executed a search warrant on Mason's home, detained her daughter, and seized several boxes full of material from her home including a computer and cell phones. A support network has been established (freemarie@riseup.net) and fundraising for legal expenses has begun. Friends report that they have already been approached by cops who claim that Mason has asked that they "co-operate"; Mason has denied this and asks that all contacts please adopt a zero co-operation stance with authorities. Please remind everyone in your households (including children) to stay focused, stay safe, and do not talk to law enforcement under any circumstances.





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