

Nest Defense for Marie Mason

William R. Boyer (Bill Boyer)

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The savage crimes of civilization cannot mute the cries of the savage. But the voice of the savage is not the machine buzz of chainsaws in the forest or the clank of garbage trucks in the ghetto. Her savage voice mirrors an angel, an angel wailing one last song of protest before the last bulldozer takes out the last wild place.

During the drafting of this statement, our friend Marie Mason—*Fifth Estate* staff writer, IWW and Earth First! member, and mother of two—was taken to jail by federal authorities to await sentencing on February 5, 2009. Although she had been confined to her mother's home in up-state Michigan, the federal prosecutor told the court that she was a flight risk. In the months since her initial arrest in Cincinnati in March, Mason had entered a plea bargain but still hoped to have the remaining weeks before sentencing to spend with her family and loved ones.

While some apprehended activists have employed a “necessity defense” for their transgressions against property, the justification for Marie's actions can be seen as the “nest defense,” one based in the natural world. The closing, title track of Not For Profit—Marie's folk album of resistance hymns produced by Earth First! troubadour Daryl Cherney in 1999—is a moving testimonial of the maternal motivation for resistance to ecocide. The lyrics to this song—not some legal document produced by the cops and spies and prosecutors who caught her—provide the script to Marie's life calling as a warrior for the earth. This song also offers us the narrative for her defense.

While the so-called “Nuremberg defense” is rooted in history, the “nest defense” is rooted in nature. Evident in the wild and studied by scientists, it is what parents—female and male—do when the nest is threatened. It is what a mother does when her home is attacked. It is not rational per se, but its logic is primal; in humans, its logic is love.

It is what Marie did for her children and all our children, and it is why she will not be free to spend time freely with her children for a decade or more. Her specific choice of acts and tactics may seem extreme to some, but equally extreme is the bee sting after the hive has been disturbed.

At this point in the state's long history of suppression of radical movements, the Green Scare that has emerged to target and intimidate the radical environmental movement has sent a chill wind through all of our communities.

To some, these people are just names on a website and footnotes in a news story. To too many of us, though, they are our friends and comrades. We feel anger when we learn of the vile tactic of infiltration used by law enforcement agencies that not only does the state's dirty work, but destroys the trust that communities have built over the years. We feel pain when we learn that one of the accused would take his own life rather than spend a life behind bars.

Members of the *Fifth Estate* editorial collective have never been comfortable supporting eco-sabotage. Over the years, we've given scant coverage to such actions and the subsequent arrests and trials until the recent ones hit home. Such acts seem perilous without being particularly effective in the short-term, often resulting from an understandable frustration that calls to defend the web of life and its fauna went unheeded by the larger movement and certainly by the general population.

The propriety of violent tactics has been debated within the anarchist movement and the larger left since the 19th century, and we doubt we can resolve this within our pages. Even if the targets of sabotage are guilty of crimes against the planet, whether anything is truly accomplished by this tactic is another question entirely.

Usually the impact on the saboteurs is dramatic—often leading to their apprehension, sometimes even to death—and yet the institutions remain. This situation places more of us under the microscope of the state security apparatus. Marie’s “nest defense” may have brought increased government scrutiny down on some of us in the extended nest. None of us knew or know anything about the incidents to which she and her snitch ex-husband, Frank Ambrose, recently pled guilty. And, none of us were asked in advance whether we would play a support role, committing time, funds, and resources, if their actions resulted in arrest. We do what we do now instinctively and reflexively to defend someone who is family to several of us and a comrade in need to all of us.

Also, in fairness, those who participate in acts of ecosabotage do so because the damage being done by the earth destroyers is permanent and not debatable over the long run. When an old growth forest is clear cut, debate ends. One of the acts Marie pled guilty to was the destruction of a GMO lab at Michigan State University in East Lansing. The government considers this to be one of the most egregious acts she and her companion at the time admitted to and probably will carry a terrorism enhancement sentencing penalty with it. But shouldn’t the creation of genetically modified organisms that unravel sections or perhaps even all of the DNA chain on earth qualify as terrorism against the planet?

Where did a university working at the behest of a corporation get permission to risk who knows what by turning loose Frankenstein organisms in the world? Who was asked whether we, the people and the plants and animals of the planet, want to risk messing with fundamental biology which will only benefit giant agri-businesses already responsible for limiting seed pools and actually creating starvation?

It’s not possible in words to capture the anguish we feel when confronting the prospect of such a good person going to prison for 15 years. Marie took her commitment to the planet way beyond what any of us will ever do. At this point, prisoner support means making her years behind bars as easy as possible and working to get her sentence reduced.

The nest still needs defenders. The nest still needs repair. Each of us will have to decide for ourselves how we will protect the nest. Below, we offer some ways to support our friend and nest defender, Marie Mason.

Send letters of support to Marie!

Marie Mason’s support committee is encouraging people to write her while she is incarcerated. Letters from the outside are a lifeline to keep her spirits up.

If you send Marie a letter and it is returned to you, let her support committee know so they can add any other restrictions to the guidelines.

Letters must have a return address on the envelope and on the letter itself. Avoid using white-out, stickers, tape, colored ink/paper or glitter. Written correspondence and drawings may be in pencil, standard ink pen, typewritten, or computer generated. No felt pens, markers, crayon, or colored pencil, etc.

Personal artwork must be in black & white; copied pages may be in color. Most facilities do not allow torn pages from books, magazine or newspaper clippings. Photocopies are accepted. All mail is read by authorities.

Do not discuss Marie’s case, her co defendants, illegal acts, or the Green Scare when writing; even if unsolicited, mail can still result in sanctions against a prisoner.

Send letters of support to:

Marie Jeanette Mason

Clinton County Jail

1347 E. Townsend Rd.

Saint Johns MI 48879

Visiting Marie

Marie can receive only one 30 minute visit per week of up to four visitors. Visitors must have government issued photo ID. The support committee is compiling a list of non family friends and supporters who would like to visit her. Email freemarie@riseup.net with your complete name, phone number, and your availability.

Visit freemarie.org for more information.

Web Archive update 2-11-2019: for the above, see <https://supportmariusmason.org/>



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