

Successful Detroit Benefit Concert for Marie Mason

Marie's long sentence compared to that of an anti-apartheid revolutionary

Fifth Estate Collective

2012

Movement troubadour David Rovics performed a benefit concert in Detroit, October 27, for singer/songwriter/environmental activist, Marie Mason, the Green Scare prisoner serving the longest sentence for eco-sabotage.

Generous attendees at the benefit contributed over \$1,000 to support Marie's prison and legal needs.

The event was held at the Cass Corridor area's historic First Unitarian-Universalist Church, the scene of numerous radical and progressive events over the decades, and where Marie attended many of those events, including civil disobedience training in the 1980s.

The IWW Detroit branch's Wobbly Kitchen provided their usual array of delicious food and desserts. Rovics wrote a song, bearing her name, especially for Marie and performed it for the enthusiastic audience.

David has offered his time and talent to help raise funds for Marie in any city he visits. If you'd like to organize a benefit for Marie, check his tour schedule at davidrovics.com. This is a great way to bring the community together in support and solidarity in addition to raising much needed funds.

Mason and her then partner Frank Ambrose set fire to a GMO research laboratory at Michigan State University in East Lansing in 1999. No one was injured. Ambrose turned snitch and Mason was arrested in 2008.

The presiding judge ignored what the prosecutor recommended in exchange for her plea agreement (in which she admitted guilt but did not name any names), applied the Terrorist Enhancement Act, and sentenced Mason to 22 years in federal prison in 2009.

It is difficult to understand the harsh sentence Mason received when we often hear about others who committed arson, destroyed more property, and injured or even killed people, but received lesser sentences. Not that we think any of them should get more time; on the contrary, Marie's sentence should be reduced in accordance with those sentences or less.

In a recent Detroit case, for example, an arsonist received a 15-year sentence for a crime in which seven people (all firefighters) were injured including one who became paralyzed.

We were struck even more by the harshness of Marie's sentence after listening to Eddie Daniels share his story with a group of us at the Occupy Detroit encampment site on October 23. Daniels was a South African anti-apartheid revolutionary who was arrested in 1964 for sabotage as part of the African Resistance Movement (ARM).

Daniels and his comrades stole explosives and blew up several government facilities between 1961 and 1964, without causing any injuries. He refused to cooperate or turn state's witness despite several offers. The judge sentenced Daniels to 15 years at Robben Island where he shared quarters with Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners from the African National Congress.

Apartheid South Africa was one of the most notoriously repressive governments in history. Thousands ended up dead or in jail for many years for attempting to overthrow it. Yet, Marie's sentence is seven years longer than was Daniels'.

Daniels wrote a book about his experiences, *There and Back, Robben Island, 1964–1979*. We told the 83-year-old Daniels about Marie's case and he was very sympathetic. He also urged the attentive group to stick to their ideals and not give up their struggle.

The space in the 95-year-old church building used for the Rovics performance was used without fee thanks to the generosity of the East Michigan Environmental Action Council (EMEAC). The Detroit-based group assumed responsibility for operation of the church complex on August 15 after the UU board formally donated the facilities to EMEAC.

EMEAC's plans for the complex include creation of a Cass Community commons comprised of social justice organizations, and to environmentally retrofit the facilities. The Unitarian congregation will retain use of the worship and meeting facilities.

David Rovics continues his busy schedule touring the U.S. and Europe with stops in this country at over 20 Occupy sites performing free concerts. His song, "Occupy Wall Street (We're Gonna Stay Right Here)," has gone viral and is available at soundclick.com/davidrovics.

His two new full-length recordings are Big Red Sessions, featuring full-band arrangements of "Song for Bradley Manning," "I'm A Better Anarchist Than You," and many more, and ten new songs, including, "Osama Bin Laden is Dead," "No Frackin' Way," and "Tax the Rich."

Order David's CDs by clicking the big blue "donate" button at **davidrovics.com** or by sending a check (or well-concealed cash) to PO Box 86805, Portland, OR 97286. Most of David's music is available for free download at his site, but his efforts need support, so please consider ordering his CDs.



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