

# J20 Trials Continue to Drag on

**Support still needed for those arrested at Trump's 2017 Inauguration**

anon.

2018

By the time this is published, the J20 trials, the prosecutions of protesters mass arrested at Trump's inauguration in January 2017, will likely be in full swing.

Despite having charges dismissed against 129 of the 230 people indicted and the first trial resulting in unanimous acquittals for six defendants in January, the US Attorney's office has doubled down on its year and a half long legal effort to prosecute the 59 remaining defendants.

The 59 are those who the government claims to have specific evidence against that they either destroyed property, organized the demonstration, or knowingly engaged in black bloc tactics. The cases against these individuals will be tried in groups of five and six through October of this year.

A major development in the case was a filing by the US Attorney that government wanted to call as a so-called expert witness, an FBI agent who spent two years in "an undercover capacity" infiltrating an "anarchist extremist group" in New York City from 2008 to 2010.

During that investigation, the agent participated in a black bloc action during the 2009 G20 meeting in Pittsburgh. The expert status designated is supposedly based on her undercover experience and "study" of black bloc tactics.

Court filings report that the agent receives monthly trainings on "domestic terrorism" that include discussion of black bloc tactics. In addition, she receives daily and weekly updates on "domestic terrorism operations" which includes "extremist individuals and groups in the anarchist and anti-fascist movements."

In the latest example of overreach on the part of the US Attorney, the government moved that the witness be allowed to testify under the alias, "Julie McMahan." The US Attorney argued that disclosing her full name would impact her capacity to work undercover in the future and might compromise ongoing investigations.

While court filings indicate that this witness is not presently engaged in active investigations, the US Attorney argued that her identity should be kept secret. Among the justifications was that other witnesses, including an undercover officer and the lead detective in the case, had been photographed by the media and their images have been disseminated online. This is a rather ironic concern given that the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) provided a list of names of all those arrested to an alt-right news website which facilitated the doxing and harassment of those arrested.

After challenges from J20 defense attorneys, the judge hearing pre-trial matters denied the US Attorney's request to keep the identity of the expert secret and placed significant restrictions on what the witness could testify to in court given that she was not at the Inauguration.

In response, the government unexpectedly filed to postpone the trial. The U.S. Attorney's office argued that in feedback from the first trial that ended in acquittal for J20 defendants, jurors indicated that expert testimony might have bolstered the prosecution's case and that they needed more time to find a suitable expert. The court granted continuances for both the trials that were set to begin in April, with defendants' court dates being rescheduled for later in 2018.

Other recent developments make it clear that this case is a political prosecution and is about much more than the handful of broken windows that are repeatedly invoked by the prosecution. It fits into a larger context of political repression directed towards anarchists stretching back to the Green Scare prosecutions of the 2000s, and to those experienced by anarchists in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

A common link to this history of repression is the fact that the government has sought to introduce evidence indicating that the defendants' involvement in the anarcho-syndicalist Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) is relevant to the case.

Several of those still facing trial are IWW members and the US Attorney has sought to use that affiliation, as well as evidence showing involvement gleaned from seized cell phone communications, against them.

The government is attempting to criminalize basic political organizing and is re-framing it as evidence of a criminal conspiracy. Routine political activity, including organizing and attending pre-protest planning meetings, producing flyers, appearing on podcasts, and engaging in discussions on email listservs, are being used to argue that the defendants engaged in a conspiracy to riot.

While conspiracy laws are notoriously vague and easy for prosecutors to use against defendants, this is indicative of what is most dangerous about the J20 prosecutions. If the government is successful in its efforts to redefine political organizing and militant resistance as criminal conspiracy, it will be emboldened to make mass arrests at protests and target increasing numbers of protesters with felonies with the ultimate goal of stifling resistance.

For updates on the case and to donate to the legal fund, visit [defendj2oresistance.org](http://defendj2oresistance.org).

Anonymous was a J20 defendant whose charges were dropped.

**J20 Update:** On June 6, 2018, a jury acquitted Seth Cadman of conspiracy to riot and other felony charges. On July 6, Federal prosecutors dropped all charges against the 38 remaining defendants arrested and charged with rioting during the Disrupt J20 protests on Donald Trump's Inauguration Day.



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