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Mutual Interview

Rob los Ricos and Jeffrey “Free” Luers

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“Just because we are prisoners does not mean that we have lost our reasoning, analytical powers. We still have world views based on long years of experience. Too many, even in our own political movements, would prefer to relegate us to museum pieces, objects of campaigns perhaps, but not political subjects and comrades in an ongoing political struggle against imperialism, oppression, and exploitation. The state tries to isolate, true; that makes it all the more important not to let it succeed in its proposition. We fight for political identity and association from here; it is important that political forces on the outside not lose sight of why the state wants to isolate and destroy us, and therefore fight to include is in political... struggle... In many struggles, many militants have been exiled yet they have still been considered part of their struggles, not merely objects. We, we here, could be considered internally exiled. Don’t lock us into roles as objects or symbols...”

Marilyn Buck, from Enemies Of The State.

Rob Los Ricos (RLR): Hey, Free! Welcome to Oregon State Prison — Prison Paradise!

Free: I always wondered what paradise looked like. I'm glad to have finally found it. It is good to know that these guards with guns and 25-foot, concrete walls are here to keep paradise safe.

RLR: Man, there is so much I want to discuss with you — one political prisoner to another. I almost don't know where to start. That's why I put that Marilyn Buck quote up front, to perhaps get the ball rolling. My immediate reaction to meeting you would be envy, due to the amount of attention you're getting. But — dude — I do not envy your sentence at all. So, first of all, how are you holding up? Does all the publicity — for the most part sympathetic outrage — over your outrageous sentence help?

Free: All things considered, I'm holding up alright. I don't think that I could ever put into words what it feels like to lose everything that I love. The people that I love. And that is basically what has happened.

It is good to know that a lot of people are seeing what I'm going through and saying "Wow — that's just wrong." If those people actually get involved in an effort to free me (us) that would help a lot more. For the most part, though, I think a lot of people are just saying "That's fucked up" and not doing anything about it. How about you? I know from being on the outs when you fell, there were a lot of people talking about you. Everywhere I went, you saw flyers saying "Free Rob Thaxton!" Has that helped your situation, or made it more bearable?

RLR: Yea, "Free Rob Thaxton — with your subscription to Green Anarchy." No, wait — "Come to tonight's punk show and you may win a free Rob Thaxton!" I'm sort of underwhelmed with the support I've gotten so far. I'm not gonna knock anyone, though our movement — such as it is — doesn't have a lot of experience with real oppression, so most of our lip service supporters are at a loss as to what to do, other than send reading material and money. And I sincerely appreciate having that sort of support. Still, I would like

to be more involved with what's happening out there beyond those big, gray walls.

As far as being the subject of graffiti, hey — what red-blooded, rock-slinging, cop-assaulting, rioting anarchist wouldn't be honored by that? It's totally understandable that folks out there don't know how to help out, considering all the petty rules prisoncrats arbitrarily throw up to discourage and limit access between us and the outside world. It takes a lot of time and effort to be involved with prisoners as allies and comrades. Being friends — pen pals, even — is much easier and the people who've been writing for a while have made a lot of difference to my time in here. I can't imagine how I'd have managed so far without them. Other than contacts and friends I had from my previous existence, all these folks got my contact information from zines or prisoner listings on the internet.

So, I enjoy the attention, but I'd like to feel like I'm still part of the struggle, instead of a fallen martyr.

What are some of the ways you think people could help us out more? All the ideas I have would take a lot of resources and effort, more effort than one or two people could be expected to do. How about you?

Free: Well, some of the obvious things that come to mind are writing the governor. It might not seem like much, but there is always the possibility it can help us legally. If nothing else, it shows we have support and that makes it less likely we'll get fucked with.

Second, stop treating us like a cause. We're human beings and not abstract enemies. A lot of people have gone on, without my consent, to speak on my behalf, to claim to represent me. That really disturbs me — that is the exact process/system/attitude I struggle against. If you really want to get involved, contact me. Talk to me about what I want, what you can do to help. If you don't want to get involved, but want to show a level of support — write letters. It may be hard to believe, but very few people actually continue a correspondence. I'd really like to form new friendships.

We are in here as an example, our sentences are meant to be a deterrent to dissent. Actions of solidarity show them that the voice of revolution will not be silenced because a few of us have fallen. We must continue to increase the pressure on all fronts. The continuation of the struggle is the greatest form of support, because it gives us hope that one day there will no longer be a corrupt, oppressive power to keep us behind these walls.

While there are so many ways to support us, and I can't possibly write or even think of them all, a combination of all the above would be so awesome.

Rob, you and I are both writers. It isn't always easy to get our writings out there, where lots of people can read them. What would you think of setting up some kind of network that could pass our prison writings along?

RLR: Hmm... seems like that is happening already. We have — along with our friends and comrades — APLAN and Break The Chains. We both have friends in Earth First! And the folks in Eugene who stepped up to be our www helpers. That's a great start, heh?

You know — being 41 years old, Tejano and a parent, I have a lot of interests that aren't usually addressed in the punk rock or student circles. It's been difficult for me to convince folks in the great beyond that there are groups and publications I'd really be interested in contacting. Too many of my contacts out there aren't interested in those groups, people and publications, so they downplay, question or blow off my requests. Some times I feel like the sibling no one likes to talk about. Luckily, I'm a resourceful person and I have patience and lots of friends, so I know I can eventually get around to doing the things I want to do.

It would be nice to have a support group, though — there are lots of things I'm not able to do from here that outside folks could do. I really worry about being forgotten in here. For instance, no anarchist zine has published anything I've written in over a year. There have been a few exceptions, but those have all been letters

and rants I wrote a year — or two — ago. Again, things are happening now that are really encouraging, so by the time this goes out, I'll have a few loose ends tied up that will help start to prepare me for life after prison.

How about you? What are you going to do with your time?

Free: I think I'm going to dedicate most of my time to personal growth. I've spent the last several years dedicating my life to activism, revolution — the cause. And I will continue to do so. I want to inspire people to educate themselves and to take action. I also want to continue to educate myself, I'm going to study sociology and environmental science. I'm going to find the ways I can continue to be effective from here. And prepare for what will be a very different life than what I'm used to, 20 years from now.

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“Prison is a weapon used by the State to crush individuals who step out of line”

(Michael Collins — former Mayday 2000 prisoner)