

BROKEN BRIDGES



**INFORMATION ON DARREN THURSTON'S
COOPERATION IN THE GREENSCARE &
IMPLICATIONS FOR CURRENT STRUGGLES**

A n informant can no longer be welcome in the communities on which they informed. This is not necessarily punishment, but a matter of safety and empowerment for our struggles.

On Snitching

The primary goal of the government in any political case is not to put any one defendant in prison but to obtain information with which to map radical communities, with the ultimate goal of repressing and controlling those communities. The most minor piece of trivia may serve to jeopardize a person's life, whether or not they have ever broken any law.

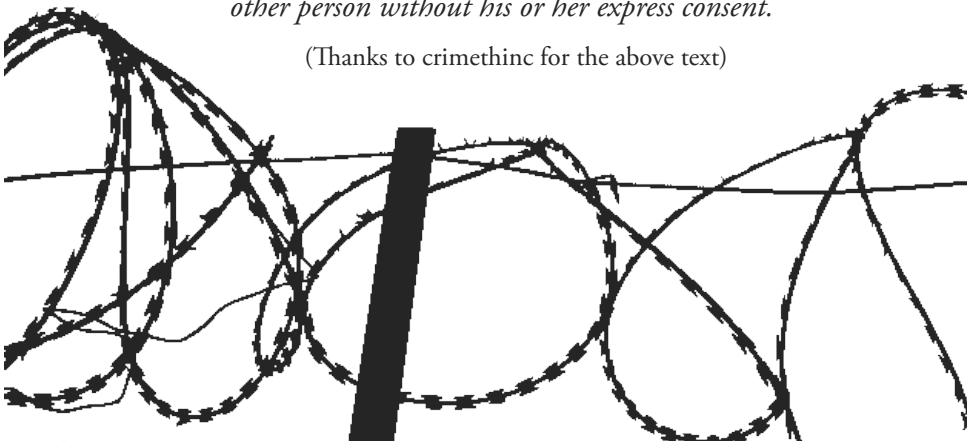
Addressing the question of what constitutes acceptable conduct is not infighting and backstabbing, but an essential element of healing and strengthening our communities.

We should focus on demystifying snitching and building up the collective trust and power that discourage it.

For this to work, of course, those who do inform on others must be excluded from our communities with absolute finality; in betraying others for personal advantage, they join the ranks of the police officers, prison guards, and executioners they assist.

It is never acceptable to give information about any other person without his or her express consent.

(Thanks to crimethinc for the above text)



Government Informant Darren Thurston: A Threat to Social Movements?



Darren Thurston was a Canadian animal rights activist for more than a decade. In 2006, Darren Thurston was arrested and charged for animal liberation actions in the United States under “Operation Backfire,” in what is known as the Green Scare. More than a dozen people were arrested in “Operation Backfire” and at least 8 became “snitches” (aka. co-operating defendants). Thurston became a cooperating defendant. He served around 3 years in prison and lives in Vancouver, BC.

In Vancouver, there is some confusion over whether or not Thurston informed against others. What follows is a contribution to clarify Thurston’s participation in incriminating his co-defendants who are now serving time in prison.

Operation Backfire and the Fallout: In Prison or Wanted

At the end of 2005, the FBI opened a new phase of its assault on earth and animal liberation movements with the arrests and indictments of several current and former activists. This offensive, dubbed Operation Backfire, was intended to obtain convictions for many of the unsolved Earth Liberation Front arsons of the preceding ten years.

Although some of the Operation Backfire defendants—Daniel McGowan, Jonathan Paul, Sadie (aka Joyanna Zacher), Exile (aka Nathan Block) and Briana Waters —refused to become government informants, the others “cooperated” in exchange for reduced sentences. In fact, the government has said these arrests wouldn’t have been possible if one of the defendants, Jacob Ferguson, hadn’t agreed to wear a wire and entrap his friends.

The four held out through a year, during which it seemed certain they would end up serving decades in prison, until they were able to broker plea deals in which they could claim responsibility for their actions without providing information about others. Eight people cooperated with the government and informed on others in hopes of reduced sentences: Stanislas Meyerhoff, Kevin Tubbs, Chelsea Dawn Gerlach, Suzanne Savoie, Kendall Tankersley, Jennifer Kolar, Lacey Phillabaum, and Darren Thurston.

Joseph Dibee, Josephine Overaker, Rebecca Rubin, have been charged but not found and Justin Solondz was recently arrested in China. One more defendant, William Rodgers (aka Avalon), died in custody in an alleged suicide shortly after his arrest. Jonathan Paul was sentenced to 4 years and 3 months and was just released into a halfway house January, 2011. Daniel McGowan was sentenced to 7 years and ordered to pay 1.9 million dollars in restitution. Joyanna Zacher (Sadie) is serving 7

years and 8 months. Nathan Block is also serving 7 years 8 months. Briana Waters was sentenced to 6 years in prison. In 2010, her sentence was repealed due to problems with the original trial. She is home with her four-year old awaiting re-trial.

What is Thurston's Involvement in Resistance Movements Now?

Since his release, Thurston has moved back to Vancouver, BC and is working in the legal offices of Peter Edelmann as technical support and has been able to view personal legal files. Edelmann regularly offers legal support to members of the radical and migrant justice communities. Thurston also runs an internet security company.

Throughout his imprisonment Thurston received public support from the Vancouver based Resist! collective, who hosted a support website. Resist! publicly adopted a position of support for Thurston.

Currently, Resist! is hosting a G20 defense listserve, in which the supporters or the G20 Conspiracy arestees are to co-ordinate their defense efforts. Some of those facing the conspiracy charges and their supporters have been disturbed to learn of Resist!'s role. Defense against conspiracy charges demand a high level of solidarity between defendants and some feel that by using Resist! they are legitimizing state cooperation which would weaken the G20 defense immeasurably. In addition some defendants are concerned about relying on a collective that doesn't appear to have a firm stance on snitching.

Darren Thurston has attended resistance oriented events in Vancouver including the annual "Under the Volcano Festival" last summer.

In Thurston's own words from "The Animal Liberation Primer" he claims to have authored, "If you really feel the need to say something a simple "NO COMMENT," should answer any question that they ask you. But it's still better to just keep your mouth shut. *And remember, the ALF support groups do not help prisoners who cooperate or testify.*"

How does Thurston Pose a Danger to Social Movements?

This is not intended to deter informal friendship and support for Thurston *outside of radical circles*. If individuals choose to maintain their personal connections with Thurston we are not taking issue with that.

According to Lyn Highway, "Darren Thurston (should not) continue to have access to, or participate in activist or resistance activity. He should not be allowed to jeopardize wider resistance movements by having access to activist social circles and organization, or to sensitive resources and infrastructure... Emphatic efforts (have been made) to support Thurston's re-integration into activist scenes and resistance activity despite obvious concerns about security and ethics from other people --concerns that are so serious, it prevents us from accessing vital resources

and disrupts the ability of overlapping communities to maintain healthy networks. Informants and snitches harm social movements. It is a matter of self defense to keep them away.”

Sections 15 and 16 of Thurston’s plea agreement are still sealed. This raises the question; do these sections state that Thurston has an obligation to continue to co-operate with law-enforcement indefinitely? This is common to this kind of co-operating agreement (see: Lauren Weiner. a co-operating greenscare defendant’s plea agreement).

Darren Thurston’s Co-operating Plea Agreement:

In 2006, Darren Thurston signed a co-operating plea agreement with the US Government. It is now available for public viewing. Find below an excerpt which shows that Thurston verifies the guilt of un-cooperating defendants and defendants that were, or are still on the run.

Two sections of the plea agreement, 15 and 16, are still sealed. Requests have been made that these sections to be unsealed, Thurston refuses.

Snapshots A. and B. below show Thurston’s incrimination of others in his plea agreement.

A. IN THURSTON’S OWN HANDWRITING BELOW:

following facts are true:


Count 1 :

I adopt the statement identified as
Attachment 1 incorporated into my plea agreement
as the factual basis for my plea of guilty.

25. I offer my plea of "GUILTY" freely and voluntarily and of my own accord and with a full understanding of the allegations set forth in the Indictment or Information, and with a full understanding of the statements set forth in this Petition and in the Certificate of my attorney that is attached to this Petition.

SIGNED by me in the presence of my attorney, after reading (or having had read to me) all of the foregoing pages and paragraphs of this Petition on this 20th day of

July, 2006.



Defendant

continued next page...

B. THURSTON AGREED TO THE FOLLOWING:

ATTACHMENT 1

United States vs. Darren Todd Thurston

Counts 1 and 2: Conspiracy to Commit Arson and Conspiracy to Destroy an Energy Facility of the United States:

Beginning in October 1996 and continuing through December 2005, in the District of Oregon and elsewhere, Josephine Sunshine Overaker, Kevin Tubbs, Stanislas Gregory Meyerhoff, Daniel Gerard McGowan, Joseph Dibee, Rebecca Rubin, Chelsea Dawn Gerlach, Kendall Tankersley, Suzanne Savoie, Jonathan Christopher Mark Paul, Darren Todd Thurston, Nathan Fraser Block, Joyanna L. Zacher, Jacob Jeremiah Ferguson, Jennifer Lynn Kolar, William C. Rodgers and other persons, willfully and knowingly conspired and agreed to maliciously damage or destroy, or attempt to damage or destroy, by means of fire, buildings vehicles and other personal and real property owned in whole or in part or possessed by, or leased to, the United States or any department or agency thereof, and or used in interstate commerce or in any activity affecting interstate commerce; and to knowingly and willfully damage and attempt to damage the property of an energy facility of the United States involved in the transmission of electricity.

Imagine the situation of an activist who has agreed to testify against her former comrades. All the experiences that made her an anarchist, from childhood on, come back to haunt her as she betrays her own values and commitments, siding with the bullies, the rapists, the snide executives and sadistic police. Whatever tremendous feats she has accomplished, whatever personal qualities she took pride in, now she will be remembered as a informant and must live with the knowledge that she is one.



Statements from Thurston's Co-Accused Non-Cooperating Defendants

DANIEL MCGOWAN'S STATEMENT REGARDING THURSTON'S COOPERATION

December, 2007

I understand my cooperating co-defendant Darren Thurston via his support person/ex girlfriend's (*name removed*) blog is once again promising an essay that will somehow justify his cooperation with the US government and prosecutors in the Operation Backfire cases. I welcome this essay and have been anxiously awaiting it for some time since January 2007 when freedarren.org (oddly enough, hosted by an activist tech collective, resist.ca) reported that Darren and/or his one support person would address his cooperation with the investigation(s). It would be more accurate to say that I have been waiting to hear Darren's explanations since March 2006 when he abandoned the Joint Litigation Agreement (JLA) he had with my fellow non-cooperating defendant, Jonathan Paul and me.

When one side lies, obscures, hides and refuses to be forthright, resolution of these issues is difficult and next to impossible. Yet, the behavior of Darren and his support person have used these methods to postpone the inevitable conclusion. For some time, the official story from Darren's support person was that he was not cooperating. After much evidence surfaced that he was, including his departure from the non-cooperators' joint litigation agreement, his refusal to answer any questions from outside supporters about his cooperation, his letters to both the Earth First! Journal and UK ELPSN (Earth liberation Prisoners Support Network) asking for clarification about their policies on cooperation and his plea hearing taking place at the same time as other cooperating witnesses as well as his lawyers' fervent arguments for sealing his whole plea bargain, it became impossible to deny his cooperation. Then, the story changed, seemingly overnight, acknowledging his cooperation but offering support for him nonetheless...

There has been much clamoring for Darren to unseal the parts of his plea agreement that covers cooperation (paragraphs 14-17). All the cooperating witnesses in the case have this section sealed and even myself and the 3 other non-cooperating defendants can only view the full, unsealed plea bargain in the company of our lawyers. What is in this agreement and 3 paragraphs? I am prohibited from sharing the specifics but I believe strongly that the public and the media need to see these sections...

I challenge Darren to unseal those paragraphs in his plea bargain and the 200 pages of his 302/debrief documents which detail his cooperation. I'm sure many people in the movement would help pay for that! I have no faith he will take me up on my offer but that information would help clarify the issues many have argued over.

P.S.- I've referenced resist.ca, but let me explain. Recently, resist.ca has come out

in support of Darren... It's pathetic to think a so-called radical tech collective would publicly support and provide web-space (which they always say is so limited) to a snitch. In light of this, I think now is the time to pull ALL support from resist.ca including your email accounts and websites (such as Wii'nimkiikaa and Orion from Alberta already have)... Do you really want your email and website hosted on resist.ca after you have read this?

Full Statement: <http://news.infoshop.org/article.php?story=20071210130941710>

EXCERPTS FROM A STATEMENT BY SADIE AND EXILE

First Epistile: Phoenix from the Flames, 2007

It has been extremely heartening to know that there are those who stand with us when it seems that so many whose strength we once considered unassailable have had their roots dislodged and their honor torn asunder. Those who hear the call of Direct Action should not fear the prospect of imprisonment if those, or those similar to, who have supported us continue to act in such a responsible and dignified manner in support and solidarity with those of us who have attracted the wrath of the state. Again, a great thanks to all who have assisted us and continue to do so.

That said, it has come to our attention that perhaps through naivete and perhaps through the deliberate spreading of misinformation, there has been some confusion over who amongst the indictees is worthy of prisoner support; meaning to us: who has NOT made statements implicating others, as the purpose of such statements is the further prosecution and imprisonment of others. Let us make this clear: all those amongst the indictees who have been apprehended, other than Ms. Waters, Mr. McGowen, Mr. Paul, obviously the authors of this piece; the so-called Ms. Zacher and Mr. Block, and sadly Mr. Rodgers, have dishonored themselves, their families and the very lineage of struggle which they themselves were once an integral part of, by becoming vicious traitors and handmaids of the state. To actively support these indictees who have been apprehended but not aforementioned is to support not only our incarceration but to wish that same fate upon many others currently living as fugitives or being sought similarly.

If there are those amongst you reading this who feel the need to make excuses for those responsible for our imprisonment, we would ask you to refrain from offering a Janus-faced 'support' to us also, as it is completely antithetical to the reasons for our captivity.

Those who have signed their cowardly allegiance to the state and through the state to those powers that seek to prostitute and obliterate the natural world, as well as strip-mine our souls, clearcut our minds and pollute our very being, are not only directly responsible for our imprisonment, having given the state our physical description, names and legal names, along with statements on our involvement in Direct Action, both witnessed and in conjecture.

Perhaps these vile turncoats deserve compassion, in the same way that all creatures deserve compassion, and indeed they once deserved acclaim for their physical deeds, but now they deserve neither praise nor forgiveness, for in the hour when the struggle returned for them, when the predator had once again become the prey, they failed in spirit and resolve cowardly breaking long held oaths and begging for mercy from their captors, hoping to gain leniency by offering as a sacrifice to the alter of a perverted 'justice' their former friends, trusted colleagues and any dignity they once held.

Full Statement: <http://news.infoshop.org/article.php?story=20070725135339798>



SOURCES AND RESOURCES

NON-COOPERATING DEFENDANTS:

BRIANA WATERS SUPPORT:

<http://supportbriana.org>

DANIEL MCGOWAN'S SUPPORT:

<http://supportdaniel.org>

SADIE AND EXILE'S SUPPORT:

<http://supportforsadieandexile.com/>

SOURCES:

GREEN SCARED? (AND THE HARMS OF SNITCHING).

<http://www.crimethinc.com/texts/rollingthunder/greenscared.php>

ON DARREN THURSTON'S STATEMENT, "FIRED BACK"

<http://crimethinc.com/blog/2007/12/22/on-darrenthurston%E2%80%99sstatement-%E2%80%9Cfired-back%E2%80%9D>

WII'NIMKIIKAA PULLS IT'S SITE FROM RESIST.CA

<http://news.infoshop.org/article.php?story=2007082019402750>

LYN HIGHWAY

<http://vancouver.mediacoop.ca/blog/lyn-highway/4412>

VANARCHIVE:

<http://vanarchive.wordpress.com/2010/01/18/darren-thurston-a-history-of-vancouvers-most-notorious-activist-turned-police-informant>

DARREN THURSTON'S SUPPORT:

OPEN LETTER ON GREEN SCARE HEARINGS & RESIST STATEMENT (2007)

(as a comment: A Statement From the Resist! Collective)

<http://news.infoshop.org/article.php?story=20070725131154699>

