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And For the Heroes, Something!

The Brilliant

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The past few years have been depressing for those who would shake the world. Our friends have been hunted and jailed and the resistance to this overt state repression has been meager. Those who have noticed have looked around themselves and realized how few others there are. Maybe the rest are on the Internet?

We have stopped believing in resistance. In the days of old, resistance looked like seizing, and breaking, the means of production. It looked like punching your manager in the face. It looked like fighting the good fight with the people who you were raised with and who you lived with against outsiders and fat cats. Resistance was what people did against our class enemies. Resistance was what lit the darkness.

So many have folded under the pressure brought to bear by post-Patriot Act America that it appears that no one even remembers how to stand up. No one is volunteering to take the heat. And can we blame them? Prison isn't sexy. Prisoner support is a thankless task of infinite size and the traditional allies against prisons (workers, Christians, and liberals) have all aged and grown politically feeble. What resistance is there to believe in?

What should we expect from the lonely people who occupy radicalism? The physical and mental health of every member of consumer culture is wretched, from processed foods to television's lens on the world. Feeding the hungry and protesting the war cannot make you strong enough to resist the state. We should expect nothing different from the lonely people who pass through radical circles than we do from the people who deliver our mail, grow our food or serve us drinks.

But sometimes brilliant things can happen. Sometimes, against all odds, individuals resist, for reasons too complicated to understand. They demonstrate that self-interest and disinterest have opponents. In the current case we mention several such figures who are resisting. They resist against several Federal Grand Juries and their stories are worth remembering for any of us who could be called to one.

Grand juries are called as a check against a prosecutor's word that a case should be tried. They decide if a crime has been committed and compel witnesses to testify before them under threat of imprisonment. Their proceedings are secret and the defendant is not allowed legal counsel. Grand juries have been abandoned in the rest of the Western world. By compelling testimony, grand juries have become one more tool of prosecutors, instead of a check on them.

Jeff Hogg has just finished serving six months for refusing to testify before a federal grand jury investigating arsons from the Pacific Northwest. He was released a week after the final four active defendants of the Operation Backfire sweep took non-cooperating guilty pleas.

Josh Wolf continues to serve time for refusing to testify or turn over the raw footage of a video tape of the July, 2005 anti-G8 demonstration in San Francisco. He could continue to be in jail until his grand jury's term ends in July 2007.

Nadia Winstead has unequivocally refused to comply with the animal liberation grand jury, calling it a "modern day witch hunt".

She was found in contempt of the court until the Ninth Circuit court regarded her appeal. It reversed Judge Susan Illston's contempt order but the Ninth Circuit is the most reversed Circuit court in the nation.

These grand jury resisters should not be considered unusual for resisting the state. They should be considered absolutely normal. It is normal to resist coercion. Their behavior should not be unusual, but it is. If we recover half of the fighting spirit of the days of old we would realize that the security that we can provide each other entails total non-cooperation with the state, its functionaries, lackeys and future bureaucrats. We bend our knee to survive being "watched over, inspected, spied on, directed, legislated, regimented, closed in, indoctrinated, preached at, controlled, assessed, evaluated, censored, commanded" (Proudhon) and for the rest we turn to each other.

We are inspired by the example of the Homestead strike. When Henry Frick's hired thugs from the Pinkerton agency came across on barges towards the mill on July 6, 1892, workers and townspeople met them at the banks of the river to repulse them. The spit, sand and stone showered on the Pinkertons is a model of solidarity and shines brightly to us from a time when community stood together and lackeys were forced to throw up white flags.

Our ideas are brilliant. We will wear no masks when we tear your creations asunder. They stand in our way. They stand in the way of the brilliant!