



**Mm**

Freedom for Marius Mason  
June 11th & solidarity with longterm  
anarchist prisoners.



# A Letter from Marius

*Hello and Happy New Year!*

*It's been a little more than a year and a half since I was transferred to the Admin Unit at Carswell. Many folks have written wondering if I was in the hospital here, and no, I am not. The Admin Unit is just part of a larger compound that has a major medical center for the Bureau of Prisons. This unit is completely separate from both the compound and the medical center. It's actually more difficult to see most medical staff from here because of the security detail that must accompany any of us if we leave the unit for any reason.*

*It is a very small world here; only some 20 women are housed here in complete segregation from general population. It is a mixed unit and serves as both death row and as a kind of control unit. We are fortunately not locked down as often as the men's units are, as policy in the BoP is different for male and female prisoners.*

*I have been able to maintain my vegan diet, mostly at my own expense until recently, and will continue to do that. It has been easier to get a more healthy and varied diet here than before. The Carswell kitchen has consistent vegan options for meals with a few exceptions, as beans and rice and vegetables are mostly available.*

*Carswell is far enough from everyone I know that it makes it hard for people to visit. It's expensive to travel, it's intimidating to come here I'm sure...But my family and my friend Julie have all made the trip to get here, things went well and it was good to see my loved ones. Mostly I have been struggling to keep up with folks through mail and email. I have had some trouble these past few years with lost letters and such, but have resolved to track and increase my communication this year. If you have written a letter, or signed one of the wonderful message cards (after an animal rights convention, at the Heartwood gathering, from a prisoner support letter writing night)- thank you so very much and please know how much I appreciated your kind words and encouragement! I've been so happy to hear about walks in the woods (how much I miss being in the forests!), amazing bike rides, photos of animal friends and beautiful natural places and descriptions of all the great campaigns to save forests and animals, to stop nuclear pollution and to halt the Keystone Pipeline project!!!! You all rock with a vengeance!*

*Tomorrow I will turn 50. It's a mile marker and a time to reflect on my life. Like all humans, I've made mistakes and have some small regrets. But I am still an anarchist, a feminist, an internationalist, a Wobbly and community organizer, a passionate Earth First!er, and am still proud to have played my part in the Earth Liberation Front and Animal Liberation Front's work to defend the wild and our non-human brothers and sisters.*

*My life has been spent in many movements, and all seem to be part of the process of necessary change. That experiment in social change is still ongoing and we must all keep trying, keep contributing what we can. My body is trapped here, but my heart is with you still fighting out there. Never give up, never give in, keep your minds open to inventing better compassionate ways to make change happen. And write when you can. I'm a mom, I worry about all of you out there...*

*As Woody Guthrie used to say, take it easy... but take it.*

*Marius*

*January 25th 2012*

# Marius

Marius Mason has been involved in both environmental and labor struggles, has edited many radical publications, and has been involved in water rights, anti-infrastructure, anti-logging and anti-development projects in the Midwest, organizing above ground and clandestinely for the past 30 years. He is a parent of two and companion to many wonderful animals, a militant anarchist, and continues to be an involved member of each community he's lived in over the years.

He had already been subjected to years of harassment from local and federal law enforcement when, in 2008, he was indicted for a string of Earth Liberation Front (E.L.F.) actions that had occurred in 1999 and 2000. The targets included a University of Michigan lab involved in GMO crop development (funded by Monsanto), as well as logging equipment. During his court proceedings, he also admitted involvement with (but was not charged with) 12 other acts of sabotage, including tree spiking in Indiana and the attempted arson of an Ice Mountain water pumping facility near his hometown of Stanwood, Michigan. Marius had been heavily involved for years in above-ground campaigns against these projects of environmental devastation prior to these actions.

His indictment was only possible because of his ex-husband Frank Ambrose's collaboration with the FBI. Throughout 2007, Ambrose travelled around the country on the FBI's dime, wearing a wire and implicating many old friends, including Marius, by recording conversations in which they reminisced about or discussed their past actions. Even though Frank sold Marius and others out for a lesser sentence (he was sentenced to 9 years in a low security facility), Marius remained strong throughout his lengthy, arduous legal battle, implicating no one except himself and Frank, who had already admitted to his own involvement. Two others indicted for involvement in the New Years' arsons, Stephanie Fultz and Aaron Burthwick, also flipped and testified against Mason during this time. Because of continuing pressure and threats of a life sentence in prison, Mason eventually accepted a non-cooperating plea deal with the government in which they recom-

mended a 15-20 year sentence of imprisonment. Citing his actions and his complete unwillingness to collaborate, on February 5th, 2009 the court sentenced Marius to nearly 22 years in a federal facility, which was years beyond what the government had recommended for his sentence.

Since his incarceration, Marius has suffered health problems, partly due to lack of adequate nutrition (he has been a committed vegan for over 20 years and was constantly refused vegan food in Waseca Prison, even with the intervention of a nutritionist and his insistence that his diet is part of his religious practice.) He has been harassed and threatened regularly and after originally being placed in a low security facility in Waseca, MN, Marius was later re-located to FMC Carswell near Ft. Worth, Texas (nearly 1,200 miles away from his family in Michigan). In the unit he resides in, his communication with the outside world is extremely restricted; he can only write to a pre-approved list of people and his phone and visitation time are limited.

While Carswell Prison is not officially a Communications Management Unit (CMU),<sup>1</sup> Marius' conditions resemble those of other political prisoners who are kept in CMUs. He is not allowed to interact with general population, and is confined to his cell block of 20 women. His incarceration is a very literal wall of separation between him and his family, friends, and the wilderness he ceaselessly fought for.

This year Marius Mason publicly shared his new name and use of male pronouns that better reflect his masculine gender identity. To quote his lawyer, Moira Meltzer-Cohen who is assisting with the legal aspects of his transition, Marius is someone "whose courage and integrity are made even more salient by the fact that his own liberation and autonomy have long been severely circumscribed." In the face of a world that systematically subjects trans people to violence, isolation and abuse, we hope that everyone shows their support of trans liberation by supporting Marius and the many imprisoned trans folks. This struggle should extend beyond mere fundraising. Trans prisoners are struggling not only for the material necessities of existence, but are also struggling against systems of domination which will stop at nothing to prevent them from simply being who they are. Our solidarity needs to be as creative and varied as the state's tactics are cruel and oppressive.

# The Green Scare

Marius' arrest is just a single facet of a broader plan of repression by the U.S. government known by anarchists as the "Green Scare," an allusion to the Red Scare of the 1950s in which communists in the United States were harassed, blacklisted and even deported. Environmentalist anarchists and animal rights activists in the U.S. have faced a similar brand of harassment since 2001, being named the #1 domestic terrorism threat in the United States, even though their actions (through their careful planning and caution) have never harmed a single human or animal.

In 2005, the government's "Operation Backfire" plan ripped open the underground E.L.F. movement in the northwest United States. Subsequently, many more anarchists and environmentalists, including Marius, have been targeted for two apparent purposes: to completely wipe out the E.L.F. in the United States and to terrify broadening circles of people into compliance and inaction. The state's tactics have been fairly successful: the culture of fear around anarchist and radical circles has indeed intensified, thanks to tactics such as extensive surveillance, infiltration, wiretapping, and clever prosecution, aided by laws such as the A.E.T.A.<sup>2</sup> anti-mafia laws, conspiracy charges, and terrorism enhancements.

In the years leading up to and since his arrest and imprisonment, Marius and those close to him have experienced this increased repression firsthand. Even before his indictment, Marius' daughter found Feds attempting to place a GPS tracking device on Marius' car. Since then, all attempts to humanize his conditions have been sluggish or impossible, continuing to leave him vulnerable to continued FBI harassment and intense control on his communications and his connections with the outside.

Marius has been behind bars for five years now, but the government will never be satisfied with the 22-year sentence that has been handed down to him. He continues to face harassment and isolation, and is clearly being singled out as an example. The government has a message: do not go about things too intensely, do not live your lives as if something is at stake, the way

that Marius did. Prison is not the worst they can do.

•••

Practically speaking, Marius' last legal appeal attempts have failed. Since he accepted a plea bargain, he cannot appeal his conviction, only his sentence, and his last sentencing appeal has been denied. The only remaining legal option seems to be to seek a presidential pardon, an endeavor both costly and extremely unlikely to succeed, as no politician wants to be labeled "soft on terrorism." Of course, every effort made towards Marius' freedom or improved conditions is necessary and important. Given these circumstances, however, we feel that it's time to start imagining solidarity that doesn't rely on the legal system we hold no trust in, to think beyond strategies that center around constant fundraising to pay lawyers (although money is always needed to help Marius meet his basic needs for survival in prison, to help him get vegan food and maintain his minimal lifelines to the outside world.) This also includes fiercely supporting his efforts to transition inside prison, to get hormones, access to medical services, and more.

# June 11: A Proposal

In beginning to talk about new strategies, we might draw inspiration from the case of Jeff “Free” Luers, another environmentalist who was imprisoned for an E.L.F. arson against an SUV dealership in 2000. While initially sentenced to 22 years in prison, Jeff was released after 10 years in part because of an ongoing campaign of support and solidarity; early release of this sort is very rare in the U.S., especially for prisoners labeled as “terrorists.” While Jeff was imprisoned, June 11th, the day he was sentenced, became a yearly day of solidarity events and actions, to ensure that he was not forgotten in prison. Since Jeff was released in December 2009, there has been momentum towards June 11th becoming an international day of solidarity with both Marius and Eric McDavid,<sup>3</sup> as well as other longterm anarchist prisoners.

Many of us with experience in supporting comrades who’ve been imprisoned are familiar with the challenges of shorter-term imprisonment, but feel that new considerations have to be discussed now that our comrades are regularly receiving 20-year sentences rather than 5- or 10-year terms. Marius’ 22 year and Eric’s 20 year sentences are clearly outrageous, but we can’t forget that sentences exceeding this length are fairly common in the U.S. prisons system, and are currently being served by many black and indigenous liberation prisoners, as well as countless others. The government imprisons our comrades and others as a way to erase them, and it is crucial that they do not succeed in this sinister task. If we take one day a year to shout our comrades’ names from the rooftops, to write them on the walls and share their stories with each other, then not one year will pass when we will not take action for our friends in prison at least once. This is at most, a minimum for those of us who daily remember and feel the pain of our comrades who sit behind bars, but we hope it will serve as a starting point for others, and as a helpful point of focus. As a first attempt (for these people, in this form,) June 11th, 2011-2014 were huge successes, with actions and events happening in dozens of cities all over the U.S. and the world. Funds were raised, information was distributed and mischief was managed, as arsons and attacks took place along with benefit movie screenings, community

dinners, and info-nights.

June 11th can and should be an opportunity for conversations around the conditions of long-term imprisonment. As longer sentences for us become increasingly common in the U.S. and other countries, the importance of talking about these conditions as anarchists becomes apparent. By calling an international day that focuses on long-term anarchist prisoners, connecting lines can be drawn between our experiences in the U.S. and those of anarchists in other places, regardless of the separation that borders and languages impose upon us. We cannot and will not sit back passively as these measures are imposed upon us.

Certainly we don't want June 11th to be monolithic or official; we recognize our strategy proposal as one aspect of a struggle that necessitates many approaches. There are a number of ways in which people are supporting Marius through his imprisonment, including his family's and close friends' constant and unwavering commitment to helping him meet his practical needs in prison. If we are truly committed to our comrades' freedom, we must be open to the necessity of a multiplicity of approaches.

So plan something for June 11th, whether it's raising money or awareness for Marius and Eric McDavid, reaching out to them personally, helping their friends and family maintain their legal and day-to-day needs, or continuing their projects of defending the wild and waging war on the existent. The best solidarity we can offer Marius and Eric is to continue in their struggles and in our own.

# A Few Practical Ideas for Supporting Marius

***Avoid the trap of renunciation. Honor him publicly:*** in the context of universal condemnation of Marius' actions from the state and media, public statements denouncing his actions play into the police strategy of isolating and cutting Marius off from his friends and supporters. Against this moral and legal condemnation, we can openly demonstrate the pride we feel for his actions and principled stand.

***Communicate:*** write to Marius, especially if you are an old friend. Send pictures and poetry, drawings and dreams. He may not be able to write back because of his communication restrictions, but letters are his window to the outside world, and he thrives on them.

***Push harder:*** develop new methods of spreading information about his case and raising money for his legal and life expenses. Organize an event or action or happening on June 11<sup>th</sup> to keep his name on everyone's mind.

## ***Suggestions and Starting Points:***

- Info nights
- Microphone demos<sup>4</sup>
- Other solidarity actions (Have fun and be safe)
- Hanging banners and putting up posters to spread an understanding of his case.
- Take seriously the radical transformations this world will need to experience before Marius could be freed. Work towards ending society that spreads prisons and ruins wilderness. *This is the project that Marius has contributed to for decades, and its fulfillment is now the best guarantor of his future freedom.*

# Endnotes

1. Communications Management Units (CMU) are special prison units used to house prisoners with political or extremist connections, including many Muslim prisoners. As the name implies, communication in these units is incredibly restricted within these “prisons within prisons.” Daniel McGowan, an anarchist who was charged with E.L.F. actions during Operation Backfire in 2005, was housed in a CMU in Terre Haute, IN and Marion, IL, until his release in 2013. Daniel has been working to create a great deal of publicity around these sketchy and secretive units. For an extensive archive of investigations into CMUs, visit <http://www.supportdaniel.org/cmu>
2. The Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act is a federal law that prohibits any person from engaging in certain conduct “for the purpose of damaging or interfering with the operations of an animal enterprise.” Passed in 2006, the law is an extension of the Animal Enterprise Protection Act, and has been used to target primarily above ground animal rights activists and classify them as terrorists. For more info see [shac7.com](http://shac7.com) and [aeta4.org](http://aeta4.org).
3. Eric McDavid is an anarchist who was arrested in 2006 on charges of planning attacks against environmentally devastating projects. He was entrapped by a young informant called ‘Anna’ who encouraged him, even providing recipes and materials on the government’s dime. Even though he carried out no actions, he was sentenced to nearly 20 years in prison, forced to serve as an example for those who dream of a better world. We connect his case to Marius’s because of their long sentences and our affection for them. Eric was recently released well before expected thanks to some heroic research by him and his supporters, but still needs plenty of support & cash transitioning to the outside world. For more information, visit [supportrric.org](http://supportrric.org).
4. see <http://anarchistnews.org/content/3912-demo-fourth-anniversary-marius-arrest>

# Writing to Marius

*Letters for Marius can be sent to:*

Marius Mason #04672-061  
FMC Carswell  
Federal Medical Center P.O. Box 27137  
Fort Worth, TX 76127

*This address is current as of 4/21/2015. Marius can be moved at any time, so please check [supportmariusmason.org](http://supportmariusmason.org) for his most recent address. Currently mail addressed to Marius, not Marie, is getting through, but if your mail is returned try addressing the outer envelope to Marie and the letter inside to Marius.*

*Marius' mail is heavily scrutinized, so please refrain from mentioning illegal acts as this endangers both you and him. However, do not let this stop you from writing to him—he loves to hear about walks in the woods, daily activities and projects, and many other things. All letters must be in English to get in, and we highly recommend writing his full name, number, and address on each page of the letter, as authorities have a tendency to “lose” envelopes and forget where letters are going.*

*Funds raised for Marius should be sent directly to his support fund. Please don't deposit money into his commissary account yourself; a percentage of his commissary account will be deducted toward his massive restitution if the amount of money in the account gets too high. Make checks or money orders out to “Support Marius Mason” and send to:*

*Support Marius Mason  
POB 201016  
Ferndale, MI 48220*

*or visiting [supportmariusmason.org/support](http://supportmariusmason.org/support) for Paypal information.*

# Further Resources

## Interwebz

[supportmariusmason.org](http://supportmariusmason.org) - *Marius' support website*

[june11.org](http://june11.org) - *Info about June 11th, international day of solidarity with longterm anarchist prisoners.*

[greenisthenewred.com](http://greenisthenewred.com) - *Reporting and analysis about the Green Scare.*

[supporteric.org](http://supporteric.org) - *Eric McDavid's support website.*

[ecoprisoners.org](http://ecoprisoners.org) - *Eco prisoner support information.*

## Articles and Zines

Reed, Henry: *Between Orwell and McCarthy :The Crucifixion of Marie Mason*. Fifth Estate #380, Spring 2009

McGowan, Daniel: *Exposing Little Guantanamo: Inside the CMU*. NY Anarchist Black Cross. Spring 2009

*Solidarity with Eric McDavid* (pamphlet) as well as many other printable materials by and about Eric, available on his support website

*Transition: The Struggle's Not Over*. 2015 call-out, available at [june11.org](http://june11.org)



