

THE
**Final
Straw**
A WEEKLY ANARCHIST SHOW

The Final Straw is a weekly anarchist and anti-authoritarian radio show bringing you voices and ideas from struggle around the world.

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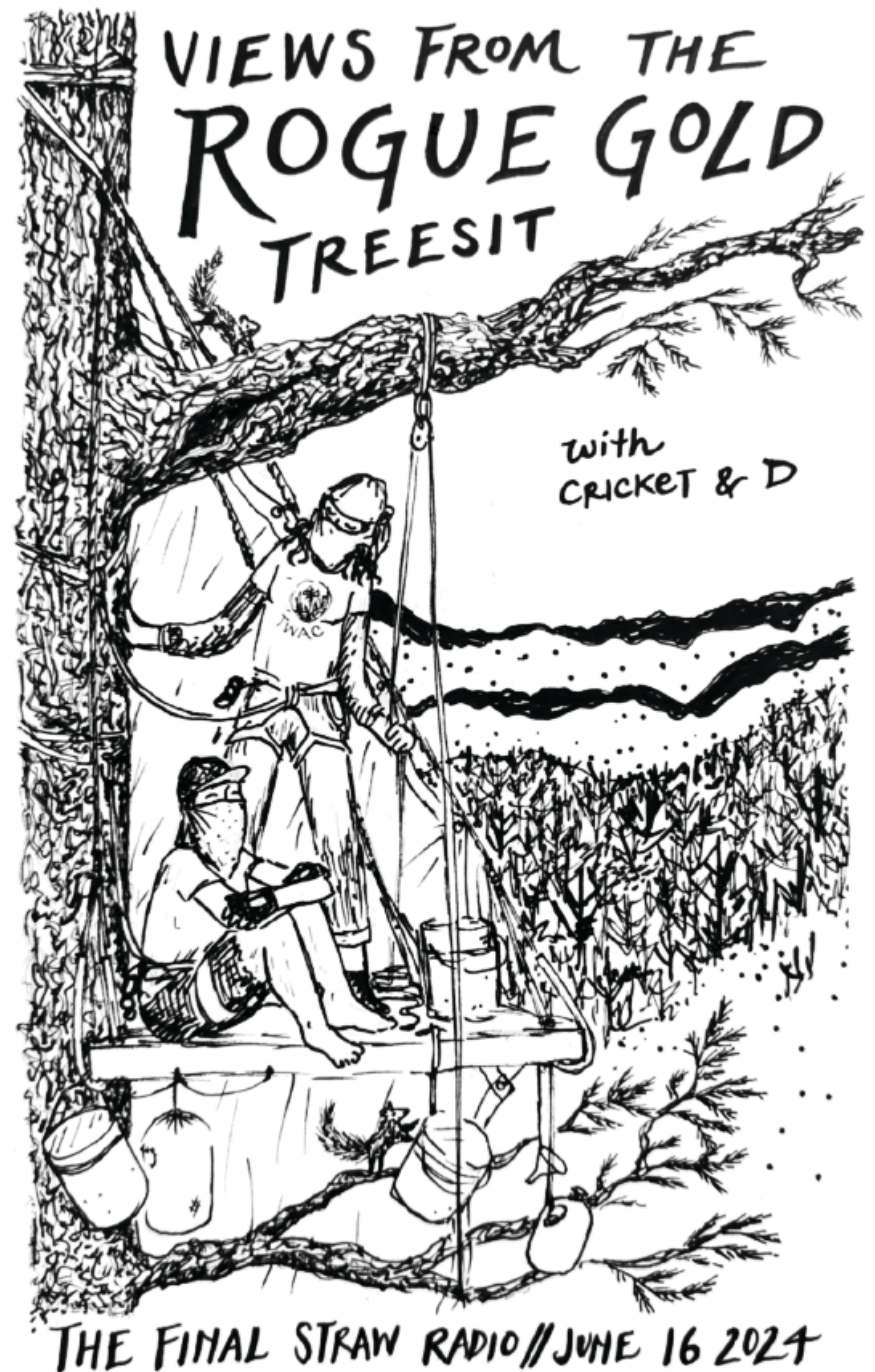
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The following is an interview we conducted with Cricket, a tree sitter in a tree called Goldie in southern so-called Oregon as well as D of Siskiyou Rising Tide. The two talk about the experience and efficacy of tree sits, about the land threatened by the Bureau of Land Management's plan to have Boise Cascade and other timber companies log this area they're calling Rogue Gold, recent success of a tree sit at Poor Windy, revelations of police surveillance and some of the history of forest defense in this region.

You can find more at [TreeSittersUnion.org](https://www.treesittersunion.org), donate via venmo to [@Casca-dia-Defenders](https://www.venmo.com/Casca-dia-Defenders) or see lovely pictures on the instagram account [@TreeSittersUnion](https://www.instagram.com/TreeSittersUnion) or [@Siskiyou_RisingTide](https://www.instagram.com/Siskiyou_RisingTide)

Cricket: My name's Cricket, I use they/them pronouns. I'm a tree sitter and activist in southern Oregon.

D: My name is D, he/him. I'm supporting the tree sit and am a member of Siskiyou Rising Tide.

TFSR: Thank you. D, would you mind saying a few things about Siskiyou Rising Tide, the work that y'all do, and what the Rising Tide network is?

D: Sure, we're a direct action group that originally formed in response to the Jordan Cove Energy Project which was an \$8 or \$9 billion pipeline project that would have run through Southern Oregon, and originally was an import terminal, but then became an export terminal. The project was actually defeated through a couple decades of organizing. It was never built, but Siskiyou Rising Tide originated during that time. The larger Rising Tide network—your listeners may be familiar with North America Rising Tide—has been a pretty big supporter of the MVP pipeline fight and was actually one of the groups that was SLAPP-suited. I think they've been dropped from the SLAPP suit, but basically, it is a network of decentralized, non-hierarchical groups that have done direct action.

There are not so many active chapters these days. The movement was a bit bigger a few years back. It is a network of folks that have been fighting a lot of the critical infrastructure fights that we had in recent years. And since the pipeline fight ended here, we've evolved to stay connected to not only land defense struggles but also housing justice. There were really bad wildfires that came through Southern Oregon, and we were involved in mutual aid and responding to things like that. We've tried to remain flexible as a group in terms of being able to support whatever's needed in a really local and community-based way.

with your friends, talk with your neighbors about the places you love, and don't be afraid to experiment. As Cricket said earlier, they'd never done the media until this week. It's not we're a uniquely special group of people. If you're doing something like a tree sit, it's good to have the technical knowledge to be able to do that safely. You should not be doing things 100 feet up in the air if you're not going to be safe. One of the Earth First! Climbers Guild and the Direct Action Manual have pretty solid climb training information in them, so that's a resource to check out. But you don't have to do a tree sit. If you have people in your crew that are really good at researching, and you like having dance parties, maybe figure out the most fun and disruptive place to have a dance party. This can look so many different ways. We're not a unique group of people. One community might have slightly different ingredients than another, and people should cook what they have based on what's in their garden. These are things anyone can do anywhere and are needed everywhere. Let us know what you're up to.

TFSR: Cool. I'll put links in the show notes for the social media, and Tree Sitters Union has a website too. It's been a real pleasure talking to both of you and thanks for being willing to chat with me on such short notice. Keep up the good work.

C: Thank you so much for having us. I really appreciate the chance to talk about this, and thanks for being patient with me.

TFSR: Of course.

D: Thank you so much for having us.

ways to build cases even off of minor charges. If you have ten prohibited camping cases open against you, it's a misdemeanor, but the cumulative effect is quite stressful on people's lives. All of that is ongoing.

We should always speak out against state repression, and public records requests can be quite fun. It's like going fishing. You get to expose the watchers, and it's another form of cop watch. We think about cop watch in response to sweeps, there's a long history of cop watch on the West Coast, like the Black Panther Party and Berkeley Cop Watch. But public records requests can also be another way of talking about what's going on and help combat... It is incredibly stressful to be surveilled by the police, to be raided by the police, to have the FBI show up at your door over the years. That all is really stressful, and exposing it and helping make sure we're educated about what's going on and fighting back against it is really important and is part of, when we talk about a culture of resistance, sticking together and trying to support each other when we're being targeted. That can look a lot of different ways, and that's part of the struggle that can go on for, as you all know, for out in Appalachia, that can go on for years after the fight is over, right? Whether you win or lose, the repression and the stress of what that meant can continue. But it's also like "Shame on them!" These people get off on watching. Like while the world is burning, they're spending their time surveilling people who love trees. They're spending their time watching the woods to see who loves the forest, instead of figuring out ways to actually protect the forests. Shame on you guys. It's a pretty twisted world where not only are we having to deal with climate change and climate chaos and homelessness crisis, but the people who are trying to find ways forward are then targeted and demonized by the state for that. It's pretty dark, but it's good to have facts about it too because then you can make more informed decisions and figure out ways to keep going.

TF SR: Yeah, for real. Can you tell folks some ways that they can learn more, they can keep up on the struggles that we've been talking about, and how to get involved in supporting it, whether that be resisting Rogue Gold in particular or skilling up to be able to do similar forest events where they're at?

C: Folks can follow us on the @treesittersunion Instagram page. If they want to donate to support the tree sits here, they can do so. The Venmo @Cascadia-Defenders. Those are two good ways to support and also message Instagram if they want to get involved.

D: Yeah. More broadly, people figuring out ways to defend the places where they live. We need people everywhere to be thinking about how we resist extraction, how do we protect our forests and our water and land and people. Get together and talk

TF SR: I would love it if someone could tell me about the land where this tree sit is happening, and who lives there, human or non, a little bit about the ecosystem and the tree that Cricket's currently in. I don't know if it has a name, or if you could tell me about the species, that sort of stuff.

Cricket: This tree is a mature Douglas fir, and I've named them Goldie because this area is the Gold Hill Forest. The timber sale is called the Rogue Gold timber sale, and this forest is in the Klamath-Siskiyou bioregion, which is a border zone between the Klamath and Siskiyou forest regions in so-called Oregon. This area is clearly a place that's been cut before, and in general this region used to have much more oak and madrone, black oak and white oak. Currently, because of the past cuts, it's much more heavily tilted towards softwood trees, fir and pine. In the forest around me now, it's madrone oak, douglas fir, ponderosa pine, I see some spruce. There's also lots of wildflowers here, particularly lilies and irises that I've seen, and tons and tons of birds and deer and bears.

D: I can add a little bit more. Like Cricket was mentioning, this is the Klamath-Siskiyou, which is often thought of in terms of the mountain range, and the Klamath River extends down into California as well. That borderline there is really pretty arbitrary in terms of the actual ecosystem, and it's also talked about as the Rogue River watershed. The "rogue" in Rogue Gold, the timber sale that we're talking about, is related to the Rogue River being down the hill. The Rogue River extends over to the coast at Gold Beach where it goes out into the Pacific. There was another recent tree sit in Wolf Creek called Poor Windy that we may talk about too. These are Jackson and Josephine counties, which would be another way of defining them. Wolf Creek is right at the top of the Rogue River watershed and is also in the Klamath-Siskiyou Mountains.

Traditionally, these are Shasta and Takelma homelands. A lot of the tribes, in my understanding, were more village-based, maybe their identity was more linked to a village, but there was really brutal forced removal from this area. Actually, the name Rogue River, one of the explanations for the term rogue was a slur against the local indigenous populations that were resisting colonization. There's what's called the Rogue River Indian Wars, where people fought against forced removal. There were two phases, originally. People were pushed onto Table Rocks, which is a local space, and then after colonizers broke the treaty, there was a longer war and then a very intense forced removal up into northern Oregon, where local tribes became eventually members of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde and the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz. Actually, in terms of the dark name of Rogue Gold, the gold rush was really there, Gold Hill is one of the towns there. This is all gold rush land. The genocidal violence against local indigenous folks really kicked off with

the gold rush. Originally, it was fur trappers who were the first settlers to come here. So, the history of this place is really connected to extraction, unfortunately.

The towns nearby... Interstate 5 runs right by Gold Hill and Rogue River and then also right by Wolf Creek. Where Cricket is (I'm in town right now) surrounds Gold Hill, Rogue River, and Jacksonville. They are three towns around. One of the interesting things about the Klamath-Siskiyou, there are a lot of endemic plants, wildlife, and critters out here. It's really unique. Sometimes people talk about microclimates. Where we were in Wolf Creek was significantly wetter than down in Ashland and Medford, where the towns are. Between Medford and Ashland, there's a 500-foot elevation difference, but they're 20 minutes away on I5. Klamath-Siskiyou is twists and turns. That's part of what creates this sense of different little regions within one big region. That's partly what contributes to the biodiversity of the places you have. All these little amazing things going on and all these little pockets of different places.

C: This is an area that's trying to recover from a wave of really brutal clearcuts in the '50s and '60s. Essentially, this whole area was destroyed, from what I hear from elders in this region, and that very few mature and old-growth forests were left after that. Logging happens on about a 40- or 50-year cycle. A lot of the areas that were logged back then are now going to get logged again. What's happening is some of the last remaining mature and old-growth forests are also getting swept up in this wave of logging that's happening now.

D: Yeah, and you can see there's a very recent clearcut up the road from the tree sit. I believe it's on private timberland, but maybe half a mile, there's a pretty massive clearcut there. Directly around the trees, you can see many stumps from recent, or not that recent because it's a full forest now, but from some of the historical logging that Cricket is talking about there.

TFSR: When folks use the term old-growth, I don't have a fixed number in my head about how long trees have been specifically living in an area. I know a forest is not the trees, but is there an estimate that listeners could understand of how long trees will have been around, an accepted number, and what that level of maturity for that forest means for carbon capture, resiliency, complexity, that stuff?

C: My understanding is that a mature-growth tree is a tree that's more than approximately 80 years old, and old-growth is 120 or 150 years. Old-growth is also sometimes used to refer to trees that existed here before Europeans settled the area, of which there are also still quite a few. There are absolutely species that only live in

You are repeatedly saying, "Hey, you know you're in danger out here, right?"

In terms of the Siskiyou Rising Tide, Natasha Leonard wrote a really great article about the Medford police surveilling groups, including Siskiyou Rising Tide. During the pipeline fight, the Titan Fusion Center, which is like the panopticon of the post-911 surveillance state, to use a lot of big words. They have very little oversight, and they spy on everyone. There have been years of history of local law enforcement coordinating with federal government and private agencies to do everything from funding parts of sheriff's departments in Southern Oregon—that was something going on during the Jordan Cove pipeline fight—to... There's a Medford police officer who's convinced that Derek Chauvin, in the weeks leading up to Derek Chauvin's trial, who murdered George Floyd, the cop, is like, "As you know, Derek Chauvin won't be charged, so we're expecting riots. Can you look around and see what people are planning?" Often it's these fabricated conspiracies that they're then investigating. We've also seen instances of local and federal law enforcement investigating Antifa as being the cause of setting wildfires. Like anti-fascists are doing mutual aid for fire survivors. People aren't intentionally setting them. So there's a really long history of that.

With a fusion center, fusion centers will deny any public records requests. But one of the things folks have seen in our region is submitting public records requests to smaller agencies rather, then having more success getting their correspondence with each other, as well as with federal agents. The feds will deny the request, but you could get the local police correspondence with the feds by submitting the request to the local police. It has been part of the strategy and the way folks have been able to find out about a lot of this. This is why we have security culture. The history of the Green Scare and state repression here, people know that even if we're organizing a rally where some community members wave signs around, the police will probably do some degree of monitoring, at the very least on social media. And that's part of how we organize, with the understanding that those things are going to go on.

The most intense repression we've seen has really been of homeless organizers. There's ongoing surveillance, especially at the social media level. After the wildfires in 2020, there were housing justice fights, especially in Medford and Ashland as well, where homeless folks and different activists and all kinds of different people got together and did different kinds of organizing against sweeps. Of course, this was also during COVID. There were shelter-in-place orders, but sweeps were going on. A real demonization of homelessness after the wildfires, as if homelessness is somehow the cause of wildfires, when we've talked about what the real causes are. So the police have really intensely targeted some of the homeless activists who took stands in recent years against sweeps. Often that's looked like because of the way people are criminalized for things like sleeping, the police can find a lot of

C: Yeah, or it would be really cute if they were doing it as play, as a playful thing. We all as humans have impulses in us towards various things. And if we could see those impulses as things to work with and work through, instead of seeing them as that we should basically rule the world and be in charge and use violence to enforce the status quo, basically violence and the threat of violence. That's so much of what radiates off of these guys is this sense that they are basically the guardians of civilization and that I'm energy of disorder and chaos that they need to stamp out or rein in. Even as we were talking, this truck that they come and film me from every day did another really slow cruise by mean-mugging me.

It's interesting for me because I'm transgender, so I was born female, but I take testosterone and have somewhat of a masculine appearance. I definitely spend a lot of time thinking of gender as a performance or the performative aspects of gender, and it's interesting how much these guys don't see themselves as playing a script, even though they are. They're showing up as "the tough guy." Like "Excuse me, but I need to inform you that you are out of compliance with my reality." It's so rigid and silly. If they goose it up a little bit and understand that it's play... It feels so close to to some campy gay performance, except it's not because they take it super seriously and it's life and death.

TFSR: I hear that, and they get to go home to themselves at night, they have to live in that headspace. Maybe they'll listen to this and shift gears a little bit.

We've talked a little bit about how the police have been showing up, and what appeared to be out-of-uniform, maybe agency-goon-type folks driving around and harassing you. Have there been any independent far-right threats? I wonder if D could talk a little bit about the law enforcement harassment that Siskiyou Rising Tide was facing. Natasha Leonard wrote an article in November in The Intercept about that.

C: Fortunately, there hasn't been any far-right harassment here so far, though they are certainly quite active in this area. I'll let D talk about the other stuff.

D: Just to say quickly, one of the things that Poor Windy, talking about the threats, the sheriff and the BLM guys, when they would come out, they would say, "Oh, watch out for your vehicle. That's a nice-looking Toyota pickup you guys got. You wouldn't want someone stealing that." They kept talking about that. They were fixated on these bridge trolls that were going to come out from wood from Wolf Creek. They're like, "We don't want you guys getting hurt. There's some rough people out here," which we're aware of. We know where we're at. But they said it so many times that eventually you're, "Oh, this is a threat, isn't it?" This is a threat.

mature-growth or old-growth forests. Old-growth trees in particular are a keystone species that the entire ecosystem relies on for its health, and also mature and old-growth trees are in particular important for limiting the risk of wildfire spreading. They've evolved to be fire resistant, and often old-growth trees will burn in a fire, but their canopy will remain intact. Some of the species that rely on old-growth trees in this area are the northern spotted owl, which is endangered, and as an endangered species some forests in this area have been protected as its habitat. There's a bird called the marbled murrelet that's very rare that only nests in old-growth trees near the coast.

TFSR: Generally, what is the Bureau of Land Management's proposal for the Rogue Gold forest management plan? What does that look like, and what are we afraid that the implications of it are going to be?

C: The Rogue Gold forest management plan calls for about 2,000 acres of logging out of the 18,000 or so acres that the BLM holds in this area. The explicit purpose is to meet timber quotas of particular amounts of timber that the BLM is required by its own regulations to log. That timber is pulled from a couple of different designated zones. A lot of the BLM land out here is divided into either LSR (late succession reserve), which is land that is explicitly reserved for endangered habitat for the ecosystem but can still be logged for fire prevention, and some of the land is HLB (harvest land base), which is basically a sacrifice zone that can be logged commercially without regard for the ecosystem. The forest management plan calls for logging in both of those regions and justifies all of the logging as for fire resiliency or because the stands are overstocked. But there's an active lawsuit around some aspects of this, and you can see with your own eyes that the areas that they're trying to log are, for the most part, not overstocked stands.

D: Y'all don't have as much BLM land out in Appalachia. In the West, the Bureau of Land Management is responsible for huge amounts of land. I think Poor Windy timber sale is 15,000 acres. It's not very sexy to think about logging trees that are older than any of our grandparents, older than any person will ever be. So the BLM continually reinvents these new schemes to log. It can get incredibly technical—Cricket alluded to some of the categorizations. But they come up with these euphemisms. A clearcut is where you cut all the trees. In the BLM world, that's called "regenerative cutting" because they plant new trees afterward. There's also this new kind of logging that they've been talking a lot about in Southern Oregon, including out in Late Mungers and Penn Butte, around Williams. I know folks out there talk about it as Swiss cheese, where you go and you cut, I think it's it's up to 1.5 acres you clearcut, but you have these little patches that you're taking everything out,

and that has a different name in BLM land. And as Cricket said, often it is around the rhetoric of fire. We can talk more about what that rhetoric is, but they have quotas, they have agreements, and they have pressure from the private timber industry. In a lot of ways, the BLM supposedly is tasked with stewardship, but really they're working in cahoots with with these extractive industries. They come up with all ways to explain what they're doing. At the end of the day, there always are really significant dollar amounts involved because it's part of a commercial logging scheme. And they try out new names. Now they're talking about "integrative vegetative management." They put out all these new words to explain versions of what they're doing. You can get really lost in the technical details, but it's also important to know that some of it is smoke and mirrors going on.

TF SR: Yeah, that's a really good point. A month and a half ago, I chatted with someone from Feather River Action about logging proposals by the BLM under the auspices of fire management near Tahoe in so-called California, and they spoke about the dangers posed by plans to thin the vegetation, large application of defoliants, clearing out dead foliage from the ground or green matter that enriches the soil, as well as cutting large trees that could survive fires. When I was reading up about this, one of the articles that I found was from 2021 about logging in the Rogue Gold region, as they call it. This BLM report was pointed to, and they even stated themselves that post-harvest forests remained a high fire danger from five to 20 years afterward because of, as Cricket pointed to, canopies and the thickness of trunks. Trees end up getting more resilient towards fires as time goes on. Since fire suppression has been pointed to as a reason that the BLM is giving for this deforestation and these timber sales, I wonder if you all could talk a bit more about the fire dangers and logging and this "forest management."

C: The BLM is essentially making bad-faith arguments. I saw in a newspaper article where a BLM representative was defending the integrative vegetation management that D mentioned and saying, "Every day that we are prevented from implementing this plan trees are dying, trees are suffering." This is the way to create a sense of urgency that's totally disingenuous. There are absolutely forest stands in this area that are overstocked, that could use thinning. Those are areas that are full of young, tiny trees that aren't worth money and that aren't commercially viable. What's in the interest of fire suppression and what's in the interest of profit are actually diametrically opposed, and the BLM is coming from the perspective that they're one and the same. That's not the case.

D: Yeah, and to add to that, we live on the West Coast, in the Pacific Northwest.

concern. Basically, everything that goes into or out of me, other people are aware of in some way or helping me to manage in some way. There's a lot of helplessness. I'd say some consent issues because the police are involved in that. So that's a really pretty hardcore scenario. It's definitely a pretty elaborate kind of opera going on as this web around me. I could see someone doing this as a kink. But also, it's a little too scary to be something that I would totally just do for fun because the stakes are pretty high. It is pretty nerve-wracking, having all of these people who are really angry at me and really don't what I'm doing coming by randomly to interact with me in various ways.

TF SR: I don't want to kink shame anyone, but what kind sicko decides to LARP or cosplay as a cop? I know it's an old thing that's been going on for a long time.

C: Right? They could find healthier ways to channel that energy, for sure. That's part of the beauty of the BDSM scene, people being conscious of that energy within themselves and playing it out in ways that are negotiated and consensual, rather than unconsciously being ruled by that energy.

TF SR: Yeah, there's no safe word in this case.

D: Well, and the cops in the BLM, you have to wonder how much of what they're doing is a performance when they come out and say two completely contradictory things, like Cricket mentioned. "You're breaking the law," but then someone on the ground who is filming them, says, "Oh, this is a First Amendment activity." And you're like, "Yeah, it is a First Amendment activity." Or they turn on their charm at one moment and turn on their "I'm gonna yell and scare this vulnerable person in a tree." It's pretty absurd. Yesterday there were sirens in the woods. We think it was from a ranger, although it was far enough away, we couldn't see the source. But playing a siren out in the woods, you have to assume the goal is to intimidate and harass and scare people, but you don't actually know what's going on because they don't come out and say what they actually think or believe. They're performing being sweet good old boys. When the BLM guys came out to Poor Windy, one of them kept going on about how he used to be a semi-professional football player. But the dynamics, there were people they perceived as femme, they're standing incredibly close in a way is making folks uncomfortable. Then someone they perceive as a man comes out, and all of a sudden, they turn into a good old boy with good country manners. I don't know how much of it they know they're doing, but it's certainly a weird performance to watch, like Cricket is saying. You guys, you could get some better hobbies.

after I started being here, law enforcement started coming by, including county sheriffs, and BLM officers. They usually have Boise Cascade folks with them, and then construction started right down the road, and that's been scary to have really loud noises of construction right where I am, having the police come and yell at me at all hours, and not having a guarantee of privacy because I'm very exposed here on this platform and anyone could show up anytime. While this interview was happening, people in a truck were filming me yesterday, that truck came by. They locked the gate to access this area once they realized I was there. Any vehicle that comes up I know has keys to the gate and is not a friend or supporter of me. There's this constant stress and anxiety.

It's also weird psychologically because usually I'm afraid of heights. Up here, for whatever reason, I felt very safe, very held by the tree, very comfortable. But when the police come to yell at me, suddenly I remember I'm afraid of heights, and I feel scared, and even though I've had lots of negative police interactions on the ground, for whatever reason, even though, intellectually, I know that they can't really get to me up in this tree, I still start to feel scared when they come and yell at me here. That's starting to cool off a little because there is a bit of a comic element where they come and shout up at me that I'm breaking the law and that I'm committing these crimes, but then they just have to leave. They just tell me that I'm breaking the law. I say, "Okay."

Also, I've been doing quite a bit of media, which is the first time in my life I've done any media, any interviews, and this is also the first time in my life I've been in a tree. Having all of these cross-currents of different experiences is really novel for me. Before I came here, the last place I was was actually a gathering for people who are called furrries. I don't know if you know that, people who dress up as different animals as a fetish thing. They have a *fursona*, and it's a whole elaborate subculture. The gathering happened to be on the queer land project where I was staying. I was in this very interesting, fetish-oriented gathering of like 100 people all dressed up in their fursuits. So coming directly into this, in a way, this feels like a really elaborate fetish scenario...

TFSR: Yeah, the harness is always there. [laughs]

C: Yeah, uh-huh. [laughs]

TFSR: Way less social, I guess.

C: Yeah, and in a way, it involves quite a large cast of characters and a lot of dependency on other people for my survival, for food and water. Other people having knowledge and tracking of my bodily functions suddenly are a matter of public

These are fire ecologies. Fire is a part of the land here, and I'll say more about that, but part of the way, to zoom out for a moment, the wildfires on the West Coast right now are incredibly intense. It is climate change happening in real-time. In Jackson County, which is the county that Rogue Gold is in, in 2020 there were the Almeda fires and the Obenchain fires, which burned 2000 to 3000 homes. Thousands of people lost their homes. Way more than that had to evacuate in the immediate aftermath of the fire. I know people I work with, people I went to high school with lost their homes. The wildfire stuff is for real, and that's our little tiny county. That's not talking about the Illinois Valley or what's going on up near Klamath Falls or things like that. Part of the way that we got here is through colonization.

This is a fire ecology, and indigenous communities, including in this valley, had relationships with fire. There's this myth that before colonization, the West was a pristine wilderness, and even when we talk about old-growth, when we maybe fetishize old-growth—of course, we should protect old-growth trees. These trees could be hundreds or even thousands of years old, if we're talking about the Redwoods, a little further afield—but there was this myth of colonization that the West was a pristine wilderness that had been untouched. Then people saw that as an opportunity to chop down trees and build the world they wanted to build. When, in reality, all over the West Coast—of course, different tribes had different specific practices—but all over the West Coast, people used fire intentionally. They used it to flush out deer, they used it for forms of communication, they used fire as a way to define where you live, like the place that your family had burned or that your village had burned would be your sense of this is where we live. They also used fire to influence, like Cricket was saying, there can be a shift from oak to mixed conifer, right? So, burning regularly allowed oak trees to stay in an area where, when the burns stopped, then mixed conifers would come in. Burning increased acorn harvests or materials for basket weaving.

There's a great book called *Indians, Fire, and the Land in the Pacific Northwest* that goes through every bioregion of the Pacific Northwest. There's a chapter in there about the Rogue Valley, and compared to further down the Klamath River, the history here in Rogue Valley of Shasta and Takelma and other people is less intact because of how brutal the forced removals were, although, certainly there are still folks from the Rogue River who have this knowledge and practice in these ways. The settlers then outlawed these fire practices, and there's this history of fire suppression and intense logging. We created this mess through... The United States stopped these fire practices, stopped allowing people to tend to the land, and then clearcut. Now we have these forests that maybe are 50 years old, but if mature and old-growth forests are more resilient to wildfire, should we be chopping them down, or should we be figuring out ways to get back to that resiliency? As long as commercial timber and this extractive tendency are at the forefront of shaping how

we're logging, I don't think we're making the right decisions in terms of thinking about what we actually need to do for wildfire resiliency. Here in the Rogue Valley, there are prescribed burn associations that are teaching people how to do that work. There are lots of ways we could think about what actual stewardship of this land would look like, but it's not Boise Cascade. They're not thinking about that. They might use those words, and there might be a side effect, but they're ultimately thinking about how to log this. As long as the main motivation is logging, we're not getting any safer. We're not protecting our communities from these wildfire risks.

TFSR: Yeah, and your point is well taken about the *tabula rasa* —no one was here, everything was wild, or it was “virgin forests,” or whatever creepy terminology our culture seems to dig up for this. But a lot of folks in the audience assume that old growth, because there's a general recognition of the worthwhileness of old-growth, that it would be somewhat protected on BLM or government-run lands, conserved. But there were some of the articles specifically talking about the resistance to the Poor Windy plan, talking about the use of logging road loopholes and “incidental take” and how these shifted... Industry was using this in collusion with the government to get around protected areas or more protected areas. Could you talk a little bit about that?

C: In the case of Poor Windy, it was a very obvious road that was marked to go directly through an old-growth tree grove when there was no reason, in terms of the landscape, that the road had to be in that particular place. Yes, technically, there are certain rules against logging old-growth, and the roads to reach the other trees are one of those exceptions. And it was a very clear example of Boise Cascade placing the road directly in the path of these old-growth trees, specifically because those are the most valuable trees, and economically, that's what makes the most sense. In fact, I believe one of the BLM scientists at one point actually apologized to some people who were involved with the tree sit and said, “This was an oversight. We should have caught this.” There are some situations where not everyone in the BLM unambiguously is cheering on the logging of old-growth through the incidental take, but sometimes these things escape their notice. Likely a situation like that [was one] because ultimately BLM and Boise Cascade agreed to drop that road.

D: I feel like this goes back into this euphemism world where you're not sure what anything even means because you have a scientist coming out and apologizing, being like “Oh, I didn't realize these trees were here,” and you had Boise Cascade coming out, and saying, “Oh, we don't actually need this road.” While some of that is willful ignorance, where that scientist, I think they said—correct me if I'm wrong,

Cop City struggle, the way that people have brought such incredible, not just energy, but also creativity to the fight. All the different components of secondary and tertiary targeting, thinking about these different ways of like, who are the subcontractors? Who's profiting from this? As well as the stories I hear of people having like a rave in the woods, being a part of the struggle, and people planting trees and neighborhoods getting together. Building or coming out of a culture of resistance. I think we need cultures of resistance, not just specific tactics or specific campaigns, even, but we need a broader culture of resistance that's protecting these specific places where we live and love. But also, as Cricket is saying, how do we get out of this settler colonial, capitalist empire? How do we get out of here? Let's experiment in as many ways as we can and push the fight in as many ways as we can because another world is possible and we need to get there. How can we do it?

TFSR: I'm curious about the day-to-day logistics and experience of tree sitting, things like eating, making sure your stuff doesn't fall off the platform, and interacting with your new neighbors, the birds. I wonder if you wouldn't mind talking a little bit about what that's like, what your view looks like. I know there are some videos on social media, for instance.

C: This is definitely one of the most interesting experiences I've had in my life. I'm on an eight-by-four-ft platform suspended from a dug fir tree by ropes. I'm about 100 feet up. I'm on a ridge line, so I have an incredible view. I can see for miles around, rolling hills covered with forest, also about five or six very dramatic clearcuts. I'd say this experience physically, it's pretty comfortable for me. I'm used to camping. I've got a little stove. I've got some food in buckets. Not as much of a problem with insects getting into it as on the ground. I'm attached to the tree by a rope and a harness that I wear 24 hours a day, I don't take off, as a safety measure. All of the stuff I have up here, water, food, other accessories, basically everything is tied to the tree, to the rigging. Sometimes I think that I lost something because it rolls over the edge, and then I remember that it's tied to the platform, and I can have it back. That's a relief. It's definitely a study in extremes being up here because I'm having lots and lots of beautiful connections with nature. The birds come much closer to me here than they do on the ground and often don't seem to realize that I'm around or aren't really bothered by me because I'm not walking around. Obviously, I'm just sitting here, so they'll fly right past my head. Usually in the morning, I wake up with a caterpillar or two on the platform. Generally, I've learned that they don't want to be bothered, and they usually sleep later than I do. Once they wake up, they go off to wherever it is they're headed.

But then also, in addition to being really close to nature and having really lovely nature experiences, I'm having really stressful human experiences. A few days

they're lying. They're saying they don't log old-growth, and they do. So it is being effective, and getting the spur road dropped was incredible, and those trees will not be cut.

TFSR: I guess when we talk about these bigger systems, and looking at the effects of Boise Cascade and also other companies that are contracting with this, and the government agencies that are complicit or that are facilitating it, it makes me think about other struggles. In our neck of the woods, we've seen a lot of actions pledging solidarity with Free Palestine or against Cop City, from folks, for instance, resisting the Mountain Valley Pipeline, which that struggle has been going on for so many years now. How do you see yourselves in this web of resistance with these or other social justice struggles or struggles against extraction that are going on?

C: It's really important to understand how interlinked all of these struggles are, and that at the core what we're fighting against is empire and [the] extractivist, greed-driven mindset that legitimizes itself or claims to legitimize itself as the authority when ultimately it's greed, violence, theft. I do feel like maybe some of the weakness of the environmentalist movement in the past is the way it was siloed off from anti-imperialist struggle, from anti-racist struggle. I know that, in the past, even some environmentalists came into conflict with indigenous nations and held on to this idea, as D was referencing, that there was a pure virgin wilderness that white people, being environmentalists, move in and [are] like "We are the stewards of this, and we know what's best." Now we're in a really clarifying time of understanding that we always need to respect and foreground the indigenous nations that have been displaced by empire, and that the nature of the system is essentially to wring everything out of the earth like a sponge and bring everyone into systems of domination, in one role or another. I absolutely see what's happening here as deeply connected to what's happening elsewhere in the country and the world. We're all fighting together to try to stand up to extractivist regime.

TFSR: Very well said. D, do you have anything to kick in?

D: A lot of us strongly oppose what the Israeli government is doing in Palestine, the genocide there, and have a strong desire for Palestinian liberation. On A15, the day that there were all these critical infrastructure, highway blockades, and things like that around the country. April 15, we were flying messages of Palestinian solidarity, hanging them from the trees. Certainly, the campaign to Stop Cop City, [we] fully support that. [And it] is a forest defense struggle, too, right? And Palestinian liberation is about land defense or land liberation. I've been really inspired by the Stop

Cricket—they had never visited. They had put a road based on looking at a map and never went and looked where it was gonna go. But for others of it, it starts to feel comical. They're like, "We don't need this road." That was quick! [laughs]

TFSR: What else don't you need?

C: The harvest land base, the HLB zones that I mentioned earlier, is another exception to the restriction on logging old-growth and mature-growth forests because there are lots of old-growth and mature-growth trees in the areas that are designated as harvest land bases. And harvest land base areas, of which I'm in one right now, basically have no legal protections. There's no legal hook to convince a judge that it shouldn't be logged because its very existence is for logging in the eyes of the BLM, and the executive order by Biden against logging old-growth doesn't address that at all or any of the other exceptions.

D: I was talking with one friend who's really map and tree savvy, who really understands a lot of the technical pieces here. They were like, "I wouldn't say it was a conspiracy, but it happens to be that there's a lot of old-growth on the spots of the map where they say there's no old-growth in Rogue Gold." That happens to be the case on this particular one. So make of that what you will. It goes back to the root of the problem, which is, we're not saying, "Stop logging old-growth." We're saying, "We need to stop extractive industries." That's at the heart of it. This capitalist system is at the root of the problem. As long as the capitalist market is driving the logging decisions, we're not stewarding the forest.

TFSR: Does a tree sit stall out the ability to do further damage until other mechanisms can help to stop it? Obviously, we want to save all the trees. The trees are a part of this ecosystem, this living network. I guess this is one front of the battle to stop the ecocide, right? You can't do everything and be everywhere all at once, but you're making it expensive enough that it'll hopefully forestall and save more of the landscape.

C: Yeah, in a situation like this on a harvest land base, there's really no likelihood of a lawsuit succeeding to stop this logging. This is a tactic that has been successful in the past. It can work. They are certainly not working here right now, and they're making it clear they're pretty annoyed about it. It's a way of saying "People are paying attention, people care. You can't get away with whatever you want," and hopefully that ripples out and draws more people into this struggle and brings more attention to the fact that something's happening that the government explicitly says is not happening.

D: The tactic of a tree sit, especially in Poor Windy, did a really amazing job of highlighting the BLM saying “We don’t log old-growth.” Then you have a group of people living in an old-growth tree. At Poor Windy, there was a base camp that really was a community hub for a couple of weeks. We had parties, we had music, we had different events. We had people coming out to hang out in the forest. Wolf Creek is a really incredible place that we can say more about. Part of the tactic of a tree sit there—you all know in Appalachia—tree sits can be long and slow and take a very long time. But in Poor Windy, especially, it functioned as a way to highlight and demonstrate this fundamental contradiction in the rhetoric of the BLM. They say they don’t log old-growth. The Biden administration says they don’t log old-growth. Well, here’s a bunch of people living in and around old-growth that is set to be logged.

When we talk about tactics, I think, people love tree sits. It was one of the things that were really exciting about Poor Windy was all of the Gen X folks who’d been a part of forest defense in the early 2000s before and after the ‘90s and the 2010s who were so excited and coming out of the woodwork to drive out supplies and sharing stories of, “Here’s what we were doing” at the Biscuit or in Williams or these different kinds of stories. We could say more about this, but I really think we need a broader diversity of tactics and strategies to think about how we... including private timber. Maybe we could talk more about what’s going on with private timber in the state of Oregon on privately owned land. But I do think that we should look at the the scope of tactics that are on the table should be much more than tree sits, but the tree sit is functioning in a particularly unique way in this current moment of Northwest forest defense.

TFSR: Yeah, could you all talk a little bit more about the Poor Windy success, generalize what happened, what tactics were employed? It seemed, at least from the point that there was tree sit that seemed to be pretty quick before industry and BLM were, like “Okay, we give up,” which is pretty amazing. But I’m sure there was a lot in the lead-up to that.

C: I know that there was quite a lot of scouting before the Poor Windy tree sit to make sure it was the right location. Once it was decided on, some forest defenders set up a platform there. It was still more or less winter at the time that the tree sit went up. I believe, in late March, the forest defenders there got snowed on, and were in storms. It’s a very high altitude. As D mentioned, there was a base camp, and it did become a community hub. Lots and lots of people came through. There were concerts and get-togethers. Wolf Creek is an area with a long history of local activism and counterculture mixed with activism, and a lot of local elders got emotionally invested in it. I know that the trajectory of what happened at Poor Windy

about who are the different subcontractors, there is different mapping we can do, and think about different points of intervention and stages of intervention too. I’m shouting that out to folks as people think about their own fights.

Boise Cascade, they were very involved. They’re involved in private timber as well. Last year in Portland, there was an annual conference called Who Will Own the Forest. They may have renamed it, but that’s been the name of the conference for about 20 years. It’s an annual conference that is Wall Street and timber executives, and I don’t really understand how the ins and outs of the stocks work, but apparently you can invest in private timber as a way to bolster your stock portfolio. Private timberland is really where we see in Oregon the most brutal clearcuts, as well as really intense aerial spraying. One of the things that you would do—a timber company, I would never personally do this [laughs]—is after they clear-cut land, they then replant a monocrop of trees. They then kill everything else. They poison the animals and the water to prevent any other tree species from growing or to prevent animals from eating the baby tree roots. This has a really devastating impact, not just on that land, but if there’s aerial spraying going into the water and that affects the the nearby communities.

We can talk about carbon too. I think carbon can be a little abstract. In Southern Oregon talking about wildfires, you understand wildfires are happening, whereas carbon can be a little abstract. Private timber is actually one of the largest causes. Forests hold carbon in the ground, and when you cut the forest, the carbon goes into the atmosphere and contributes to climate chaos and all that. Private timber logging is actually, I think, the largest cause of carbon emissions in the state of Oregon. It’s certainly up there in terms of being one of the largest. Another reason, it’s important to talk about old-growth and talk about private timber. Boise Cascade is also involved in all that private timber and Wall Street money and things like that.

With the Who Will Own the Forest, it was really inspiring, I think it was the first time in that conference’s 20-year history there was a really organized opposition to it last year. There were timber executives and the brokers who were bird-dogged as they went to and from meetings. There was a communique that came out claiming responsibility for some windows being smashed in the conference center. There was a public rally with a lot of amazing people speaking. There was a diversity of tactics and it was decentralized. It was all these different groups doing different things to protest. That was exciting. Hopefully, this tree sit is doing this piece here, and hopefully people will continue to organize on these other fronts against companies like Boise Cascade because they’re deep in the capitalist system. That’s part of what we need to be going for the roots of the problem here. A spur road is a relatively small thing. There was a huge amount of media related to Poor Windy and a fair amount now related to this Rogue Gold tree sit. It’s partly because

still a big base of support and emotion around trying to unify living a spiritual life, living an activist life, living a life outside of the conventions of society. It's a very unusual place. It's also a very small town that also has a lot of racism, a lot of homophobia, a lot of violence, but also this network of land projects and queer folks who are exploring different ways of existing in society.

TFSR: That's really exciting. Thank you for sharing that, both of you. Boise Cascade has been mentioned a couple times, definitely in terms of Poor Windy, when the sheriff showed up with someone from Boise Cascade, but also in terms of Rogue Gold. Can you talk about that company or any other companies that are looking to profit from this with this possible cut?

C: Boise Cascade is a huge business that's located here in Medford, I believe, the nearby biggest city. It's both a logging company and a lumber mill. They do both things. I can hear them going away at it right now from where I'm sitting. I don't know much about how long they've existed or who started them.

TFSR: I've been hearing, and I couldn't tell if it was construction nearby or not, but trucks backing up. Is that coming off of your mic?

C: Yes. It's interesting because when I wake up at 5:30 in the morning, there's all this beautiful bird song around me, and then at 6 it gets drowned out by dump trucks and bulldozers. They're doing work fairly near to where I am.

D: Boise Cascade is, I think, an \$8 billion company. They've been around since the '50s. They're one of the big players in terms of Northwest Timber. I believe, often with these BLM [plans], there's the Rogue Gold management plan, and then there might be individual timber sales. Sometimes there could be, [for example], Murphy has these acres, and Boise has these acres. There are also other subcontractors. Like right now, what Cricket's describing, they're doing road construction, they're laying gravel. There's a company that's moving the gravel, and there's maybe another company that has the dump trucks. There can be these different subcontractors. In general, where Cricket is blocking what's proposed as road construction to some timber units. Road construction is a great time to intervene in timber sales. We often hear about direct action when it's the ground fight and they're cutting trees and people are stopping [it]. Which they are. There's active logging going on up there. Right after Poor Windy, right after our tree sits came down, they logged another portion, they did pretty brutal logging. There was a local conservation org that went out and documented that they had, in fact, cut old-growth trees. So there is active logging going on. But I also mentioned road construction, or thinking

was that first some BLM officers and Boise Cascade folks always tend to show up together, which tells you something. First, they showed up and said, "Oh, we weren't going to cut down these trees anyway." That was the first day—they denied that they were going to cut the trees, even though they were very clearly marked as being in the middle of the road. Then every day thereafter, law enforcement and other officials visited the camp. Wolf Creek is quite an isolated area, and it's pretty rare to see law enforcement there, so they had to drive a long way, and they came every day. One day, they brought health inspectors, and they started issuing tickets and ramping up the charges that people were facing. Then finally, after about a month, the officials from Boise Cascade and the BLM showed up with a contract affirming that the road spur was being canceled out of the blue.

D: The tree sit was the main tactic. There was also quite a fun office demo at the BLM office in Grants Pass, which is the small city/large town nearest to Wolf Creek. It was a bird-themed protest, but then there was a faction of cats who showed up, and it was a dance party outside of the BLM office there. The BLM office shut down completely. They even closed the blinds. There were a couple dozen cars in the parking lot, but there was not a sign of life inside the building. A field manager who kept walking around, keeping his distance of at least a block away, but filming. It was a dance party, so the birds and cats theme included. I think there was a cut from Cats the musical. I don't remember what else was in there. There was also a phone zap that, apparently, included Tracy Stone-Manning, who's the head of the BLM at the federal level, and a couple other folks at that level, which apparently was quite distressing. I don't know, really, what those people do or think, but apparently, they were quite upset about it.

One interesting thing about Tracy Stone-Manning, the current head of the Bureau of Land Management: She's a snitch. She was involved in Earth First! circles, I think, in the late '80s and early '90s, and in tree spiking, and sent in a com-muniqué about tree spiking, and then rolled on her friends. I'm sure that was the end of their friendship, but she turned on them, and I believe she got immunity and the other guys went to prison. Yeah, fun fact about her. Talk about someone who should not be trusted that their own ideals are real. You're willing to do anything to save your own hide. That's the behavior. So, no wonder the BLM principles, no wonder what they say, it doesn't really mean what it's supposed to mean, when at the core, you have someone who can't even take a hit that they chose to... whatever.

One thing to say about the legal strategies, with Poor Windy there are conservation orgs in Oregon, and they're always tracking timber sales, and they do a lot of really good work. There was a conservation org that had gone through years of legal back and forth around the Poor Windy timber sale, and at the point of the tree sit, they were saying there were no more legal options that they were able

to pursue. In Rogue Gold, there is a lawsuit going on right now, but it's focused on those late successional reserves that Cricket was talking about, rather than the HLB. It's a lawsuit for part of the timber sale, but not the full timber sale. There is a version of forest defense where direct action is an auxiliary to legal strategies. A lot of the really great forest defense successes over the decades involved some legal or legislative component, like the Redwood Summer or Warner Creek. Sometimes there were these salvage riders where it was like "This new legislation goes into effect on this date," or "This lawsuit will be settled on this date," and then the timber companies rushing to log before the lawsuit was settled, or before the legislation came in. There has been a history of direct action postponing to that point, and then the law takes effect. If the cutting was postponed through direct action, then it's still there. If it wasn't, there are also times when the companies logged and then lost the lawsuit, but they'd already logged. In Southern Oregon, there was some big history of that too.

There's also a big history of forest defenders, like the Elliott State Forest on the Oregon coast, or White Castle was a tree sit. Both of those were in the last decade, where the conservationist lawyers said, "Oh, there's no legal strategy here to protect these forests." And rowdy forest offenders said, "Well, that doesn't matter. We're not going to let the marbled murrelets in the Elliot die. This is a beautiful place. We're not going to let it get clear cut." Actually, the forest offenders through long campaigns, then the lawyers and the conservationists said, "Oh, well, maybe there is something here" and then got involved because of the direct-action kids that kept doing the thing or had to convince lawyers to take things on. In White Castle, they had to really convince lawyers. There was a tree sit for about a year before the lawyers said, "Okay, maybe we can find some way to deal with this." That's all-important to say. Hopefully, folks hearing this, it's not just interesting about what we're up to, but it's also inspiring that people might consider ways that they can protect forests near them. It's good to say, don't believe everything a lawyer says, and don't do everything a lawyer says you shouldn't do it because it can be a helpful component of these fights, but it's not the end all be all.

TFSR: Jumping around a little bit...because y'all have talked a little bit about some of the history and some of the folks who are in the area who have been involved in different campaigns, or some of the influence of past resistance in the area. I wonder if folks want to talk a little bit more about what force defense you're aware of in the area, and how you see this as a part of that lineage.

D: There's a really long history of forest defense in Southern Oregon and the Pacific Northwest. Once upon a time, a lot of that was under the banner of Earth First!

One of the first forest defense blockades that Earth First! did was outside of Grants Pass, right around where all the areas we're talking about. That was Bald Mountain in 1984. A lot of these tactics were developed by people from Warner Creek. Also, of course, the Humbolt Redwood Summer, people like Judi Bari and Darryl Cherney. This region is one of the places where the Earth Liberation Front was quite active in the '90s and 2000s. Medford, which is the biggest city near Rogue Gold, where in '98 the US forest industries headquarters was burned in an action claimed by the Earth Liberation Front. That history is here. The Biscuit was a campaign that I think is the most recent direct action campaign that used a lot of civil disobedience and the blockades that MVP folks have used quite a bit of, literally getting in the way of logging trucks or machinery, doing the hard blockades we talk about. I believe there were monopods and tripods and things like that. There was a bridge that was shut down, called the Green Bridge, that folks might know of. That was about 20 years ago.

In Wolf Creek, at some point there were tree sits to block aerial spraying. There was also a lot of organizing against aerial spraying in Williams, which is Josephine County. These are all neighboring areas to what we're talking about. A really incredible history here. Also, the state repression in the Pacific Northwest following a lot of the most vibrant periods of forest defense, what we talk about as the Green Scare. The repression was quite severe. Some former political prisoners are now out about town in Southern Oregon. There's some history of that and people who are involved in prisoner support during the Green Scare. So there are both beautiful things to be inspired by, and there's also collective trauma and pain from the way that state repression can really fracture communities and create trauma like that. Those legacies are also around. Cricket, I don't know if you want to share, but there's also some really incredible land project and queer history in Wolf Creek specifically that felt very present, at least to me, during the Poor Windy tree sit. Do you want to say anything about that?

C: Sure, in Wolf Creek in the '70s, at least half a dozen queer land projects started up, if not more, and some of them still exist in one form or another. Those land projects are also really tied to political radicalism and political activism. There have been multiple printing presses for radical publications in Wolf Creek in the '70s, at least one of which still exists. I've learned about Poor Windy because I've been very closely involved with one of those queer land projects, which also had a very strong spiritual bent. It's a queer spiritual center that in the '70s was a refuge for queer political activists. There was a conference called Faggots in Class Struggle that was held there. Some of the queer people who were drawn to that area in the '70s have stuck around. They're still there, and they were involved in forest defense work in the '70s and '80s, and I know that Poor Windy really got them excited. There's