

Operation Get Fired: A Chronicle of the Academic Repression of Radical Environmentalist and Animal Rights Advocate-Scholars

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To make reality opaque is not neutral. To make reality lucid, illuminated, is also not neutral. In order for us to do that, we have to occupy the space of the schools with liberating politics. Nevertheless we cannot deny something very obvious. Those who make reality opaque through the dominant ideology, through spreading, multiplying, reproducing the dominant ideology, are swimming with the current! Those who demystify the reproducing task are swimming against the current! Swimming against the current means risking and assuming risks. Also, it means expecting constantly to be punished. I always say those who swim against the current are first being punished by the current and cannot expect the gift of weekends on tropical beaches! – Paulo Freire

The myth of contemporary institutions of higher education is that they are scholarly places firmly grounded in the ideal and practice of intellectual freedom. University presidents, it seems, are especially fond of this ivory tower tale and spend time every year promoting their institutional commitment to advancing tolerance for diverse and marginal perspectives, which they see represented in the larger academic discourse taking place across the disciplines. The imaginative charm of such language is that it functions to evoke college campuses as representative cities upon a hill, places that are capable of modeling for civil society (and other levels of schooling) how enlightened communities should be established and function in their affairs. This romance of higher education tends to represent campus culture as a meritocratic and fertile support for individual excellence and ambition, even as the university is consecrated to the unbiased uplift of all it serves. The myth of academic freedom, then, purposively connotes the spirit of inclusion, of frank and democratic debate, and of administrative transparency and fairness – in short, of the open society (Popper, 1971).

To be sure, higher education *does* allow for a level of debate and ideological inclusion that is certainly welcome, and depending upon where one lives, it may in fact serve as a veritable sanctuary for faculty, students, and citizens who are interested in pushing beyond expected social norms in their research agendas and lifestyles. Moreover, it is undeniable that the academy has historically been a friend, though one neither exclusive nor always discerning, to the political and cultural left; and it continues to offer spaces of collegial support where progressives can organize politically, fraternize with countercultures, and receive a paycheck for engaging the minds and hearts of others in potentially meaningful work.

I myself am an academic and, truth be told, have spent almost the entirety of the last 20 years as either a teacher or a student within the hallowed halls of higher education. But, as Noam Chomsky invariably remarks at every lecture in which he savages the American State for its brutal atrocities and Big Lies, so I am happy to identify as an academic (as well as an American), but this does not mean that I act as an apologist or with blinders on. In fact, the privileges that come with such status as I have been afforded by the academy perhaps place an ethical demand upon me as a scholar – that I undertake an ongoing critique of the limitations and contradictions of my place in society as a professional intellectual, that I attempt to reveal the manner in which the academic experience is neither a friendly nor emancipatory one, and that I interrogate the

larger repressive society itself as ruthlessly as possible. My particular work in the academy responds to this demand: I am a critical theorist of education working within the philosophical tradition known as critical pedagogy, which was founded by Paulo Freire and is broadly carried on today by important figures such as Peter McLaren, Henry Giroux, bell hooks, Antonia Darder, Donaldo Macedo, Douglas Kellner, Joe Kincheloe, Bill Ayers, and others.

As the epigram by Freire at the beginning of this essay makes clear, critical pedagogues view educational institutions as contested terrains that afford the possibility of resistance but which are necessarily related to and work on behalf of the larger society of which they are themselves a part. Thus, one of their dominant roles within the social structure is to serve as factories for the production-line formation of massified values and norms. This is done through the standardization of schooling's hidden and avoided curricula as much as it is through that which is overtly taught and sanctioned as knowledge. In all of its primary curricular modes higher education, no less than elementary or secondary education (and possibly even more so), communicates intimately with the capitalist marketplace and the conservators of social power. Indeed, we are increasingly bearing witness to the rise of what Giroux (2007) terms a "military-industrial-academic complex" in which educational leaders commonly initiate strategic planning to forge deep alliances among the university, the corporate private sector, the Department of Defense and various armed forces services, as well as the security and regulatory apparatuses of the State. This has proven to be an ominous development for those who seek to define education as an avenue for moral progress in, as H. G. Wells once put, its race against catastrophe.

Those who are arguably now at the forefront of attempting to turn back society's trend toward the catastrophic are the activist-educators who are struggling for a new paradigm and a social movement of planetarity – a truly sustainable and ecological world comprised by a diverse range of earthlings, and human and nonhuman species existing (wherever possible and desirable) peacefully together in evolving orders of mutuality. Who are these educators? They are the environmentalists who oppose the globalization of technocapitalism in its many guises. They are the vegan abolitionists. They are the earth and animal liberationists who take up direct action to put an end to violence, as well as all those who recognize that the pedagogy of the oppressed must now be conducted across species lines. They are the activists who recognize that the great emancipation of peoples must occur concurrently with the reconstruction of "personhood" as an ethical category, as well as "community" as an ecological category, lest social justice be a progressive ruse that fails to meet the challenge of an unprecedented mass extinction event and sustainability crisis now underway at a breathtaking pace. As such, these activist-educators swim headlong against the tide of the dominant ideology, not only of the capitalist establishment, but also of the "radical" Left opposition of one type or another, all of whom still all too often share the anthropocentric and speciesist values of capitalism and majoritarian Western society.

Against this truly fundamental critique of the ideologies and lifeways of capitalism and Western culture, the corporate State has reacted with a campaign of terror, a Green Scare, designed to severely punish leading contributors of this oppositional movement for social-ecological change, to generate paranoia and fear amongst its potential sympathizers, and to provide a *causus belli* for a new series of highly repressive laws designed to limit the free speech and civil liberties of the movement's adherents. A centerpiece of this State response has been Operation Backfire, an FBI-led, multi-agency criminal investigation and COINTELPRO-style infiltration of the revolutionary environmentalist and animal rights advocacy communities, whether they be found in the valleys of California, the mountains of Oregon, or the streets of the Twin Cities. Yet, in ideological lockstep conditioned by the chilling post-9/11 atmosphere, the

academy as an institution of social reproduction has followed suit and become involved in this attack on radical environmentalists and animal rightists as well.

This essay, then, will attempt to briefly chronicle the wide range of academic repression that has resultantly taken place against scholars, students, campus activists, and university groups; these are uniquely intelligent and caring individuals who have dared to swim upstream against social hegemony in order to challenge some of the most greedy, corrupt, violent, nihilistic corporate and Statist forces and fight on the side of the Earth and all its oppressed inhabitants. By doing so, I believe readers will ultimately conclude that when those within higher education move beyond the campus proper to challenge the forces behind the Green Scare, the repressive aims of the State are likely to be brought to bear upon their academic freedom in an intrusive and overtly anti-democratic fashion. The academy has itself maintained an attitude of what Herbert Marcuse (1969) termed “repressive tolerance” towards the green and animal rights radicals who work within its midst – creating an institutional cult that mouths the value of tolerance to preserve the status-quo while at the same time trying to block discourse and actions that work outside acceptable levels of controllable dissent. My underlying supposition is that this development is itself intolerable.

The Green Scare Rattles the Ivory Tower

Academics around the world cannot necessarily rely upon their scholarly position to prevent them from being jailed and even, in some cases, forced into exile when their work threatens those in power. Notably, this happened to Freire himself when he worked on behalf of the popular education movement in Brazil in the 1960s. By contrast, while the United States has witnessed periods of governmental attempts to forcibly limit academic voices from being gadflies for social transformation – such as the imposition of faculty loyalty oaths during the Cold War era and the COINTELPRO effort to monitor, undermine, and destroy the student/civil rights movements of the late 1960s – on the whole American academics have apparently been granted greater latitude to act as dissident public intellectuals (Altbach, 2007). Of course there are those, especially those whose stories are catalogued in this book, that might beg to differ. However, even if it is true that the American academic is provided with relatively greater intellectual freedom than others, this means that when academics within the United States begin to experience significant checks upon their ability to champion particular social and political positions, it is *more* worthy of attention than in places where scholars knowingly work under a demand for self-censorship such as China, Iran, or Singapore. In this context, then, it is important to assert that the recent growth of groups that espouse support for radical environmentalist and animal rights ideology in countries like the US and UK has been the occasion for groundswell of State repression against American academics whose work is thought to be encouraging or supporting these aims, or even just describing and analyzing them from a scholarly viewpoint.

One of the most famous and alarming cases of such repression is the case of Rik Scarce, which dates back to 1992, amidst the wave of attacks conducted by the Animal Liberation Front (ALF) against fur farms and animal vivisection labs known as Operation Biteback. At the time, Scarce was engaged in ethnographic doctoral work at Washington State University and researching the radical environmental movement, a project which grew out of his acclaimed 1990 journalistic exposé, *Eco-Warriors*. When ALF members raided and smashed a federally-supported vivisection laboratory at his university, the FBI subsequently sought Scarce for information believing that he had interviewed and knew of relevant conspirators – in particular

ALF veteran Rod Coronado, who had served as his house-sitter. Ultimately, Scarce was brought by the federal government before a Grand Jury to name names (Scarce, 2005). However, in Scarce's opinion, he was bound as an academic sociologist to comply with the American Sociological Association's "Code of Ethics," which mandated he abide by the confidentiality agreements he had made with his research subjects as a precondition to interview them for his dissertation. Thus, he declined to provide evidence to prosecutors, citing his First Amendment rights to guarantee a free press ("press" being interpreted broadly) in order to claim that he was shielded as scholar-journalist from being forced to divulge his sources. Yet, the court system proved hostile to this defense and, consequently, the State found him guilty for contempt of court. Following a failed appeal, Scarce was jailed in 1993. He then remained behind bars for over 5 months, the longest period of time any scholar has ever been imprisoned in the United States for protecting research sources, a practice he continues to this day.

Since his release, Scarce has publicly wondered why so-called "shield laws" can protect journalists from divulging sources but not academics. Importantly, the latest and strongest shield legislation to date, the Free Flow of Information Act of 2007, harbors bloggers under its protective measures but still fails to provide scholars with the equal right in court to protect the identities of their informants. As faculty must often institutionally attest to uphold the confidentiality of the people that they study in order to be granted the right to conduct research on individuals or groups, the government's retaining of the right to demand such information for prosecutorial purposes obviously presents a major obstacle to doing aboveground scholarship on underground groups, such as those involved in radical environmentalism and animal rights advocacy, and thus constitutes a clear case of a First Amendment right violation.

A more frightening example of State-induced academic repression (as related in the film *Strange Culture*) involves the case of Steve Kurtz, Professor of Art at SUNY Buffalo and a founding member of the Critical Art Ensemble (CAE), an internationally-acclaimed performance art group that uses BioArt to interrogate the dangers of biotechnology in the service of public awareness and debate. The collective has also issued books such as *Electronic Civil Disobedience* (1996) and *Digital Resistance* (2000), and thus urged radical critiques of contemporary science and technology in a way that the research communities and State might identify them as threatening subversives. In 2004, Kurtz and his wife (another Ensemble member) were preparing an exhibit about genetically modified agriculture to be shown at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art when his wife suddenly died of heart failure. In responding to the incident, the police became alarmed by the Kurtzs' installation, entitled Free Range Grain, which according to the CAE Defense Fund "consisted of several petri dishes containing three harmless bacteria cultures, and a mobile lab to test food labeled "organic" for the presence of genetically modified ingredients."¹ Deciding that Kurtz was acting suspiciously, they promptly informed federal officials of the professor's activities. What followed next is a post-9/11 story of how keystone cops stage the war on terror, while nonetheless menacing citizens and repressing free speech rights.

On his way to his wife's funeral, Kurtz was apprehended and detained by the FBI and the Joint Terrorism Task Force who brought serious bioterrorism charges against him, as hazmat agents swarmed his house, condemned it as a potential health risk, and removed its contents as evidence. Amongst the many items impounded by the FBI were a book manuscript Kurtz was at work on and various Critical Art Ensemble pieces dealing with the horrors of transgenic organisms, germ warfare, and seed biotechnology that were worth tens of thousands of dollars in

materials alone. These have never been returned and the book manuscript had to be pieced back together from other notes.

While Kurtz was eventually cleared of all bioterrorism charges, what occurred next revealed that his story had moved beyond being just a tragically unfortunate misunderstanding. Instead, State repression continued to run amok and his nightmare endured, as a federal Grand Jury was convened that indicted him and Robert Ferrell, a Professor of Genetics at the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public Health and CAE collaborator, on two counts each of mail and wire fraud. At stake, the government claimed, was how Ferrell allegedly used his professional position to acquire \$256 of benign bacteria samples from the American Type Culture Collection (ATCC), which he then provided to Kurtz for his art, thereby defrauding the University of Pittsburgh and the ATCC. Under the penalty guidelines of the revamped USA PATRIOT Act, the charges brought against each scholar carried staggering 5 to 20-year sentences! Though both Kurtz and Ferrell claimed their bacteria exchange was simply common academic practice, something perhaps born out by the fact that neither the University of Pittsburgh nor the ATCC ever sought to initiate their own lawsuits against them, both men were put through hell over a line item of a couple hundred bucks and daring to work outspokenly as academics against the leading corporate technoscience of the day. In April of 2008, Kurtz was finally cleared of all charges by a judge who ruled that even if they were true, his actions would not constitute a crime. Sadly, following his initial arrest, Ferrell (undoubtedly due to the tremendous stress of being prosecuted federally and having one's hard-earned reputation destroyed overnight) fell victim to a series of strokes. This led him to accept a plea deal in 2007 in which he accepted guilt for his actions as misdemeanor crimes. The dangerous conclusion of the Kurtz saga, I believe, is that it reveals how the government can selectively use criminal law to intimidate and damage academic researchers. This moral holds especially true for those radical scholars involved in critiquing policy avenues like biotechnology or agribusiness that the corporate State holds dear.

Other cases reveal the manner in which the government is not content to simply repress academics, but will trespass into the domain of higher education and exert direct pressure on the nature of campus life. Such is the ongoing situation of Steven Best, Associate Professor of Philosophy at the University of Texas, El Paso (UTEP). According to *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, the primary trade publication for US universities and colleges, Best is "one of the leading scholarly voices on animal rights" (Smallwood, 2005). In this capacity, he has not bothered to make his reputation through Cartesian fireside meditations or sterile and abstruse modes of philosophical writing that are alien and obtuse to activist communities and the public as a whole. Rather, in a manner resembling previous critical theorists such as Marcuse and Marx, Best has turned his attention to the engaged students, activists, civic intellectuals, and others who are confronting society over its indefensible speciesist ideologies that inform the brutal exploitation and slaughter of billions of animals. Besides penning numerous critical broadsides for grassroots publications that have explored the relationship between corporations, the government, and the ongoing animal Holocaust, Best has led animal rights groups, co-hosted his own animal rights radio show, served as the Vice-President of the Vegetarian Society of El Paso, co-founded the Institute of Critical Animal Studies (for which he is the Chief Editor of *The Journal of Critical Animal Studies*) and the North American Animal Liberation Press Office. He has also co-edited (with Anthony J. Nocella II) the books which serve as veritable primers for today's animal and earth liberation movements: *Terrorists or Freedom Fighters: Reflections on*

the Liberation of Animals (Lantern, 2004) and *Igniting a Revolution: Voices in Defense of the Earth* (AK Press, 2006). Best has also toured the world (including Russia and South Africa) speaking on behalf of direct action politics, explaining the history, ethics, and philosophy of contemporary animal and Earth liberation movements, and deconstructing the corporate-State discourse of “terrorism.” While quick to deny that he has in any way been involved with underground movements other than to theorize their motivations, philosophies, and tactics, the quality and quantity of Best’s work on this matter undeniably serves to figure him as one of the major theorists of animal liberation and radical ecopolitics today.

In this context, Best was “strongly encouraged” in March of 2005 to “submit” to testifying before the United States Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works by its Chair, Sen. James Inhofe (R-OK) for a hearing on the topic of “ecoterrorism” in May. Not coincidentally, in a clear move to intimidate and jeopardize his position, Inhofe sent his detailed “invitation” letter to Best’s Dean, university President, and the entire Texas Board of Regents. Inhofe, a rabid pro-industry political leader, is also arguably the country’s most brazen anti-environmentalist (Best, 2006) having called global warming “the greatest hoax ever committed on the American people” and remarked that the U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (the world’s foremost body on the science of global warming) and Al Gore’s film *An Inconvenient Truth* have been “refuted scientifically”.² No stranger to the “extremist” views he condemns, Inhofe has also asserted that Gore’s documentary could be appropriately likened to Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* (Connelly, 2008). It was obvious, then, that Best was not asked to Washington D.C. as an explanatory expert to lead an earnest and serious debate about animal liberation and ecological ethics, but rather to be publicly vilified and used as a pawn towards strengthening legislation like the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act.

As Best was already scheduled to be out of the country, he felt no compunction in declining Inhofe’s “invitation.” However, Best’s name was entered into the record of the “ecoterrorism” hearing regardless, with Inhofe openly questioning whether academics such as Best should be allowed to speak on university campuses in ways that defend or support criminal and “violent” elements in society. Additionally, David Martosko, research director of the lobby for the meat, fast food, liquor and tobacco corporations otherwise known as the Center for Consumer Freedom, volunteered to speak to the Committee, and came well-prepared with an insidious and libelous agenda. On live C-Span television, Martosko displayed photos of Best posing with high-profile animal advocates and liberationists in a brazen McCarthyesque guilt-by-association smear tactic. He claimed that Best was a “leader” of the ALF (apparently ignorant of the obvious fact that decentralized movements do not have “leaders”) who “recruits” his students to join him in an underground movement in order to undertake clandestine and criminal sabotage actions! Before powerful Senate members, the head of the FBI, and a roomful of high-ranking head-busting, law enforcement types, Martosko intoned, “Dr. Best’s academic position affords him a position of regrettable influence within the animal rights movement...I urge this Committee to fully investigate the connections between individuals who commit crimes in the name of the ALF, ELF, or similar phantom groups, and the above-ground individuals and organizations that give them aid and comfort”.³

Meanwhile, Best began feeling heat from other sources – from as far away as the British Home Office in London, England. After the July 7, 2005 bombings in London, the Home Office created new laws against “the glorification of terrorism.” Yet, they did not apply these first to the radical Muslim clerics shouting “Death to England and Western society!” choosing instead to reach across the Atlantic into the dusty deserts of El Paso to pinch a US professor of philosophy

who dared to condemn vivisection and the UK pharmaceutical industries. In pompous bureaucratese that would be the envy of Sen. Inhofe himself, Britain declared that anyone writing, speaking, teaching, or publishing a website to "foment, justify, or glorify violence in furtherance of particular beliefs" would be either jailed (if a British citizen) or banned (if a foreigner). And so, on official Home Office stationery emblazoned with the ironic letterhead slogan, "Building a Safe, Just, and Tolerant Society," the UK Police State cast Best into the select ranks of a few other US animal rights activists who the year before had received the same fascist punishment. Already branded a "domestic terrorist" by the US government, the UK thereby upgraded Best's status to that of "international terrorist." While Best argued that ALF actions were nonviolent, exposed the hypocrisy of the imperialist British State and empire, and warned of the slippery slope from censoring to outright fascism once philosophers without a criminal record are banned for controversial discourse, the Home Office insisted the exclusion was for life and was non-negotiable.

The pressure to speak before the ecoterrorism committee, the scurrilous and baseless charges of Martosko, and the lifetime ban from the UK were not isolated events in Best's life, but rather integrally related forms of blowback one can expect to receive by waging war on speciesism and defending the use of tough tactics against cold killers and brutal regimes of exploitation and killing. And so it is no surprise that one other payback from the corporate-State-academic complex was delivered in March 2005, when Best suddenly found himself removed as Chair of the Philosophy Department. According to his Dean, the controversy that ensued on an international level was misplaced, as it was really just a "normal rotation of the Chair position" (to which Best quips it was "about as normal as the rotation from John F. Kennedy to Lyndon Baines Johnson in the office of the President"); Best's colleagues, in contrast, averred that the department replaced him due to strong dissatisfaction with his job performance. Best, however, insists he was on the wrong side of a Machiavellian power play, one motivated by resentment of his politics, by selfish concerns that his notoriety might bring problems to the department, and by the irrepressible stirrings of a department cabal to seize control.

One could hardly blame Best's suspicion that the loss of his position was more likely a by-product of the Green Scare and linked to the political nature of his research and activism. For per "normal rotation" protocol, he was in fact due another year as the department head. In addition, the negative performance review that was cited as evidence for removing the Chair from him (a review in which he received a startling score of 0 on a 5-point scale after 4 previous years of consistent 5s) came quickly on the heels of all these events. Moreover, at this time there was also a burgeoning national scandal in the academy over the – ultimately successful – Rightist attack upon Ward Churchill (who had himself foreworded Best's *Terrorists or Freedom Fighters?*), and Best was himself told by UTEP students that prior to the decision against him they overheard professors saying, "If we don't get rid of Best, we're going to have another Ward Churchill on our hands" (Smallwood, 2005).

But, again, this was also a period in which the government was increasingly going public with its concern about the domestic security threat of "ecoterrorism" as part of a campaign for new security and legislative measures (hence, Inhofe's hearing). Years after the fact, it is now known that governmental tip-offs alerting high-ranking university administrators of potentially troublesome and radical faculty in their midst (such as Inhofe's office did with Best) were strategically utilized by the FBI during the 1960s to inhibit the advancement and power of New Left faculty (Cunningham, 2004). Is it really that unreasonable to suspect that during the era of George W. Bush's fascist administration that similar procedures have become reinstated and that

sectors within the government reserve the right to work behind the scenes and assert themselves in academic affairs as they feel necessary? To add fuel to the fire, Best – who boasted a prodigious publishing record, excellent teaching evaluations, and outstanding levels of community service – has since been denied promotion and continues to receive information from trusted insiders that university administrators are actively seeking routes to challenge his tenure and to sever the university’s relationship with him completely. For sure, lacking a smoking gun, there is only rumor, mounting circumstantial evidence and the grounds for paranoia in suspecting a repressive conspiracy at work against him. Notably, however, such rumor and paranoia were themselves a primary methodology and outcome of the COINTELPRO operations as well – a point that should not be taken lightly.

Obviously, what occurred to Best sets a chilling precedent of academic repression for others in at least two ways. On the one hand, repressive “anti-terrorist” legislation such as drafted by the UK Home Office handicaps engaged scholars who must frequently cross borders as citizens of the world if they are to understand and provide a check upon increasingly transnational flows of power and be a viable member of an increasingly global intellectual community. On the other hand, UK radical environmentalist and animal advocacy politics have often been ahead of the scene in the US, resulting in more stringent laws against such politics being advanced there first and then exported as a perverse form of repressive British invasion. Best’s case, then, may serve as a harbinger of potential changes to American law in the future – a cause that should alarm *all* academics, not just those in support of direct action politics on behalf of animals and the Earth.

- Best also had the distinction of being in attendance at two conferences co-organized by his colleague, Anthony J. Nocella II (a scholar that the David Horowitz Freedom Center’s *discoverthenetworks.org* lists under “Activists Posing as Professors”), in which the State aggressively intervened. The first conference took place at Fresno State University. Entitled “Revolutionary Environmentalism: A Dialogue Between Activists and Academics,” and involved leading activists committed to militant direct action and economic sabotage on behalf of nature and animals. This group included Rod Coronado, Gary Yourofsky (former ALF prisoner and now vegan educator), Craig Rosebraugh (former ELF Press Officer), and Paul Watson (head of the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society), as well as affiliated scholars such as Best, Scarce, and Bron Taylor. Generating tremendous public scrutiny and right-wing outrage – the Center for Consumer Freedom flattered it with a report called *Legitimizing the Lunatics* – a decision was made to close the conference to non-university members and a heavy police presence was ushered in, ostensibly to guarantee the conference participants’ safety (Best, 2003). However, the real issue came after the fact when U.S. Rep. Richard Pombo (R-CA) – whose legacy includes attempting to repeal the Endangered Species Act – and several Republican California State senators began to publicly excoriate the event, with one opining, “They should all be behind bars, not feted at taxpayers’ expense. If Fresno State has so much money as to throw it away on this kind of garbage, then they can obviously stand a cut to their funding”.⁴ This led to a governmental initiative to reduce Fresno State’s funding by the amount it spent on the conference. While only a few thousand dollars, the message provided by government to university administrators spoke volumes: watch what you sponsor because we’re watching you.

Another conference under the watchful eye of federal representatives, in this case the FBI, was the First International Animal Liberation Philosophy and Policy Conference held at Syracuse University in April of 2004. As a personal attendee, I can vouch that the conference was swarming with police and other security agents, unmarked cars following anyone and

everyone, and menacing, dour federal agents taking copious notes on Steven Best's keynote speech, "7 Arguments In Defense of the ALF." It was a truly spooky and intimidating atmosphere, which felt more like a penitentiary at times than a college campus. The repressive height of this event, however, came on April 23 when Sarahjane Blum, a spokesperson for the nonprofit animal welfare group, Compassion Over Cruelty, took the stage to preview a showing of her searing undercover documentary, *Delicacy of Despair: Behind the Closed Doors of the Foie Gras Industry*. The movie revealed an open rescue of ducks at one of the nation's major factory farms for foie gras production, showing "ducks blinded by disease and infection, ducks languishing in their own blood and vomit, and ducks confined side by side with rotting corpses".⁵ Upon finishing, Blum was met immediately offstage by police, handcuffed, and rushed away from the conference to be indicted on felony burglary charges for the acts recorded in her movie. The question of open rescues' illegality aside, especially problematic here was the way in which an academic conference presentation was turned into criminal evidence and an act of self-incrimination. Blum's arrest serves as another precedent for State involvement in surveilling and delegitimizing lines of research involved in eco-ethical and animal advocacy issues.

In closing this section, attention must be paid to the manner in which higher education has now treacherously allowed national security agencies to implode into its institutional makeup. While offices like the CIA have recruited for years from select programs across the country, more nefarious is the growing willingness on the part of university administrations to grant the FBI field offices on campus and to entertain briefings from Special Agents as part of the FBI's Academic Alliance College and University Security Effort program. More egregious still is another FBI outreach effort that resulted in the creation in 2005 of the National Security Higher Education Advisory Board. The FBI-led Board, which is chaired by Graham Spanier, President of Pennsylvania State University, involves presidents and chancellors of 19 of the nation's top research universities as well as the president of the Association of American Universities. According to the government, its mission is to serve the FBI with "a means to open the doors of understanding and cooperation with leaders in higher education on matters related to national security, terrorism, counterintelligence, cyber threats, and certain criminal matters".⁶ More specifically, in his latest editorial Spanier (2008) listed "Threats to faculty members and university property by animal rights terrorists and eco-rights terrorists" as one of the key issues to be addressed of the Board. This is clear confirmation that American higher education is actively supporting and complying with forces attempting to generate repressive policies against the movement of radical environmentalists and animal rights advocates. As I have outlined in this section, such repression can easily become aimed at scholars who focus on these movements as well, which works in ways that serve to damage academia's intellectual and civic mission.

Cases of University Repression of Radical Environmentalist and Animal Rights Advocate-Scholars

As evident in the case of Steven Best, the bureaucratic nature of higher education often makes it difficult to prove where clear repression has occurred and who within a labyrinthine administrative system is calling the shots. Still, in the instance of radical environmentalist and animal rights advocate scholars I think there are some contemporary examples of faculty, student, and organizational removal that warrant concern and are representative of the general tenure of what is taking place today within the academy.

As Ward Churchill's suspension and firing from the University of Colorado at Boulder grabbed headlines in 2005, the university's concurrent removal of Adrienne Anderson – an Environmental Studies faculty member since 1992 who was also known to be one of the nation's top environmental whistleblowers – took place much more quietly but no less importantly. Anderson has been likened to Erin Brockovich and Karen Silkwood for her work in the university and as the Western Director of the National Toxics Campaign, in which she has assisted labor unions and poor communities in holding corporate polluters like Rockwell International, Martin-Marietta, and ASARCO Metals (as well as corrupt government officials) accountable for their toxic misdeeds against people. An activist professor who brought her struggle for environmental justice into the classroom, a major goal of her pedagogy was to teach students how to file FOIA and Open Records requests in pursuit of uncovering the social and environmental damage done by government and industry. Her particular pet project was to have students investigate the Lowry Coalition, a collection of some 150 companies uncovered by Anderson who spent years dumping unregulated waste into a Denver metro-area landfill and then worked to cover up the presence of radioactive materials found therein, as the landfill sludge was greenlighted for use as agricultural fertilizer. Anderson filed suit on this matter in 1997 and winningly argued that the Coalition's activities posed significant threats to the public health on numerous levels.

Strongly championed by her students and having received nothing short of exceptional job reviews over the course of her teaching career (despite constant friction by certain university forces), Anderson suddenly found that her department had closed her classes without warning in 2005. While she alone had developed and taught a mandatory course for the major, being untenured and without opportunities to teach, the university happily declared Anderson expendable. Those familiar with her story, though, quickly pointed out that many of the companies in the Lowry Coalition are significant university investors. One – Scripps-Howard, the media monopoly in the Denver-area – also funds a faculty member in her department, who the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) alleges worked to undermine Anderson's reputation with other faculty, as well as to dismantle her appeal for rehiring by leaking confidential and false information about her and her work.⁷ As the AAUP statement makes clear, what occurred to Anderson has broad significance and should be properly seen as part and parcel of a current rightwing attempt to use the University of Colorado as a test case for imposing a corporatist model of education that weakens tenure, faculty governance and due process, as well as academic freedom generally. But it also reveals how the academy can work to suppress crucial environmental research and willingly jeopardize sectors of society in order to protect powerful allied interests.

Such repression is aimed not only at professors, students also are under unprecedented attack from university administrations, such as happened to Valdosta State University, T. Hayden Barnes. Barnes was expelled in October of 2007 by Valdosta State President Ronald M. Zaccari for publicly protesting Zaccari's decision to spend \$30 million dollars of student fees on constructing an environmentally hazardous set of parking garages. Having learned of the decision from the school newspaper earlier in March, Barnes posted flyers around campus detailing sustainable alternatives and listed the contact information for Zaccari and the Georgia university system Board of Regents should anyone want to send opinions regarding the project (something he did himself). Four days later members of Students Against Violating the Environment contacted Barnes to let him know that Zaccari was angry, and in response Barnes removed the flyers. However, he was hardly finished campaigning and, over the next month, he

posted a collage lampooning the parking garage project to his Facebook page, wrote a letter to the editor of the student paper critiquing the proposed garages, and then wrote Zaccari himself to request an exemption from paying the mandatory student fee that was to be contributed toward the construction project. According to the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE), which ultimately took up his case, on May 7 Barnes found a note from Zaccari slipped under his dormitory door which read “as a result of recent activities directed towards me by you, included [sic] but not limited to the attached threatening document [the Facebook collage], you are considered to present a clear and present danger to this campus”.⁸ While lawsuits filed by FIRE and Barnes resulted in Zaccari announcing his early retirement and the Board of Regents overturning Barnes’s expulsion, Valdosta State remains notorious for officially quarantining expressed free speech on its 168-acre campus to a small stage area that must be reserved two days in advance and can only be used two hours each afternoon.⁹ Alarmingly, the university is not unique in this practice.

Although the University of California system is not amongst those with designated public free speech zones for political expression, it has moved to enforce a ban on a wave of ongoing protests by both legal and extra-legal animal rights groups against primate vivisection practices taking place on some of its campuses. Though framed as a defense of faculty research and an attempt to preserve academic freedom from direct action militants who targeted the property of specific vivisectioners in recent years, flagship campuses like UCLA, UC Berkeley, and UC Santa Cruz are actually involved in deploying repressive tolerance. UCLA, in particular, is considered to play a leading role in developing national academic security strategies. As a member of the National Security Higher Education Advisory Board, working in concert with the FBI and other agencies after a supposed ALF hit on a researcher’s home in 2006, UCLA has moved to check animal advocacy on campus by barring student activists from entering university buildings during demonstrations, by coordinating information about student groups with law enforcement, and by increasing its powers of surveillance generally. Moreover, it has sought and won court injunctions against the websites of legal organizations such as the UCLA Primate Freedom Project (founded by a UCLA student), and has suppressed the public speech rights of numerous individuals. Such anti-activist actions as the university are engaged in are now promoted as "Best Practices for Protecting Researchers and Research" by the Society for Neuroscience (Murr, 2008). The demented idea of standardizing protocols which serve to make animals as vulnerable as possible to the unnecessary needles and knives of vivisectioners reveals the manner in which corporate science and the security State have come together to set higher education policy, with UCLA presently serving as the principal model for other academic institutions to redraft their policies in similar fashion.

While other academic institutions such as the University of Utah have similarly worked with government officials to legislate the criminalization of protests within 100 feet of faculty residences, recent legislation crafted by the UC system related to its lawsuit against animal rights activists has moved beyond the anti-democratic and into the realm of the unconstitutional. Specifically, the measure AB2296, submitted by Assemblyman Gene Mullin (D-San Mateo), was created to forbid political activities targeting corporate researchers on campus; with its initial aim being “to restrict public access to information about academics who do animal research and to make it illegal to post personal information about them online” (Krupnick, 2008), such as their names, addresses and photographs. Although the bill’s language was scaled back slightly when passed into law in October, 2008, it is revealing that as originally drafted it attempted to exempt requests about university research from public records requests, In other

words, those in charge of the UC system unabashedly sought to create a non-transparent situation for university research in which it would be legally impossible to have civic oversight over the public university system's work. While the immediate aim may have been to block the names of laboratory vivisectionists from animal advocates, this legislation would have also shielded all manner of military, biotech, and other forms of ethically dubious experimentation from public inquiry. The University of California's repression of animal rights activists and student groups is therefore an affront that should concern all people, and it is crucial that it be challenged appropriately as such repression serves not only to blunt moral progress but the realization of a more democratic science of the people in the process.

Closing Remarks on Greening the Academy

I am an ethical vegan who has openly supported the animal and Earth liberation movements for a number of years, but never engaged in any illegal actions. Yet I have been the target of gossip and innuendo by faculty in my former doctoral program. During the height of Operation Backfire, unmarked cars sat outside my home and I recognized that I was under observation by the authorities. For my own good, friends in the academy have on more than one occasion advised me to strike the topic of animal advocacy, or anything of an overtly radical political nature, from my work and vita. As an untenured faculty member, it is entirely plausible that I could be jeopardizing my own future career opportunities in the academy by not following such advice, so that I can pursue my inherent interest to theorize and comment about these vital social, political, and environmental issues and the most dynamic struggles of the day, in as unencumbered, non-anxious, and free a manner as possible.

I hope *not* to be another casualty of what amounts to Operation Get Fired. I do not expect an all-expenses paid cruise to the Cayman islands, nor do I hold any revolutionary fantasies about being a victim of and martyr for State and university repression, so I that too can be crucified by the likes of Sean Hannity. Still, it is my belief that if we are to have a more peaceful, sustainable, and free world in the coming decades, it will not happen without the concerted effort of committed scholars in the present. The price paid by the academics whose accounts I have provided here, as well as by activists such as Judi Bari, Ken Saro-Wiwa, Chico Mendes, Tre Arrow, Kevin Jonas, Josh Harper, Rod Coronado, Barry Horne, Jill Phelps, Jerry Vlasak, and Pamelyn Ferdin means that the least I can do is to help spearhead efforts to develop the radical environmentalist and animal rights advocacy movement's cognitive praxis within higher education. The only way forward is to push and be pushed back, to take a risk with our work to aspire to the ethical transformation of the world. It will not be easy. Nothing worthwhile ever is.

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¹ See <http://www.caedefensefund.org/faq.html>.

² See <http://thinkprogress.org/2006/07/24/inhofe-third-reich/>.

³ See http://epw.senate.gov/109th/MARTOSKO_TESTIMONY.pdf.

⁴ See http://www.academia.org/campus_reports/2003/mar_2003_3.html.

⁵ See <http://www.gourmetcruelty.com/news20041202.php>.

⁶ See <http://www.fbi.gov/pressrel/pressrel07/nsheab100307.htm>.

⁷ See <http://www.aaup-cu.org/whatwedo/anderson.html>.

⁸ See <http://www.thefire.org/index.php/article/8531.html>.

⁹ See <http://www.thefire.org/index.php/article/9440.html>.