

## The Music Cultures of Radical Environmental and Animal-Rights Activism (REARA)

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### Summary

While most recent research on radicalism prioritizes focus on religious and right wing-oriented radicalism, radicalism and violence are, of course, not the sole domain of far-right political, religious, or racial ideology.<sup>1</sup> This article addresses the most active and musical element emerging from the radical left today within the United States, Radical Environmental and Animal-Rights Activism—a movement for which I have crafted the acronym, REARA.

The first section of this study introduces the movement and addresses the problematic issue of the “terrorism” label when referencing REARA direct action, a label increasingly applied to the movement’s criminality by governmental agencies. Among the many challenges involved in studying the radical left is the fact that groups, eco-animal rights ones included, are often comprised of individuals maintaining vastly divergent and sometimes contradictory ideological commitments. Research suggests that within REARA, the uniformity of ideological motivation comes second to direct action, which defines ideology insofar as ideological inconsistencies among members appear mitigated by a deeper commitment to simply act.

The second section outlines the historical and ideological backgrounds that now root eco-animal rights militancy; it also tackles the use of playful terminology, like “monkeywrenching,” within movement rhetoric and publications that seemingly serves to lighten the severity and destructive impact of the movement’s violence. Additionally, an assessment of REARA’s organizational models is presented, one in which traditional above-

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ground organizations, like Earth First!, are distinguished from leaderless resistance movements, like the Animal Liberation Front (ALF) or Earth Liberation Front (ELF). Such “non-groups” operate under the domain of tactical strategies or direct-action ideology rather than conventional hierarchical models, and disavow figureheads, meetings, or even awareness of other members.

The third and fourth sections of this article consider examples of music cultures within REARA. Earth First!, the first major eco-radical group in the U.S., evidences a vibrant history of musical creation in which acoustic-guitar protest songs largely formed the cultural life of their annual meetings (“Rendezvous”) and have proven central to the group’s longevity and activism. The study closes by delving into the punk, hardcore, and metal music of animal-rights activism, Vegan Straight Edge (xVx). While mostly a musical subculture of personal edification, some bands and advocates of xVx have adopted militant positions on animal liberation and enacted violence to considerable degrees in furtherance of their social politics.

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“...I look forward to our correspondence on the subject  
of music and radical environmentalism/Animal Lib.

This is a subject I really love to talk about  
as music has played an instrumental (no pun intended)  
roll (sic) in my development as an activist.”

E-mail to the author from Walter Bond  
Animal Liberation Front (ALF) Activist

“Civil disobedience  
Has many permutations

You can block the streets in front of  
The United Nations  
You can lay down on the tracks  
Keep the nuke trains out of town  
Or you can pour gas on the condo  
And you can burn it down

So here's a toast to the night  
Three cheers and a grunt  
Hey, hey, hey.  
Unh!

To the Earth Liberation Front"

"Song for the ELF (Earth Liberation Front)"

Singer-songwriter, David Rovics

### ***Prelude, The Sounds of Radical-Left Revolution***

July 28, 2013. Honolulu, Hawai'i. In the second-floor bookstore of a small blue-grey building, set back slightly from the main road, singer-songwriter David Rovics arranged his mic-stand, iPad, and acoustic guitar for a show. Revolution Books, an "all-volunteer, independent, political" bookstore and flagship store for the Revolutionary Communist Party (Revcom), has been operating in Honolulu for over 37 years and sponsored the event, billing it as, "...an event not to be missed! **Seating will be limited so reserve a seat by calling Revolution Books and get on the list.** There will be a potluck supper immediately after the concert. Musicians are encouraged to bring their instruments and jam during and after the supper and we promise a great time. Let's Party!" (bold in original) (Revolution Books online 2013). Chairs were set for about 50 people, but the audience never filled more than half of the seating, no one brought an instrument, and there was no jam.

With red stars dangling from the ceiling, the store hosts a sizeable collection of communist and left-wing political books organized according to subject matter (science, religion, theory/philosophy, racism, Iraq, etc.). Bumperstickers, buttons, and other paraphernalia were also available for sale. Throughout the store, posters and banners promoted the works of Revcom's Chairman, Bob Avakian, and his animated image, looking outward and upward in an iconic posture akin to Barack Obama's famous "Hope" poster, adorned t-shirts and a picture on the wall.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps surprisingly, there was not much music for purchase other than what Rovics had brought with him.

The show started fashionably late by about 30 minutes with a friendly woman named Carolyn making a pitch for future protest events and then introducing Rovics. Over the course of the concert, the audience grew to about twenty-five people. An estimated half of the audience was over 55 years old and women slightly outnumbered the men. A handful of middle-aged adults, three younger adults, and three children (including Rovics's daughter who passed the show from within her headphones, engrossed in an iPad) comprised the rest of the crowd. About a third of the group was Pacific Islander and the rest were white.

There was no sound system at the front of the room where Rovics stood, and a mic-stand holding his iPad—which he used periodically to prompt his song lyrics—was his only prop other than his acoustic guitar. He wore tan cargo shorts and a black t-shirt emblazoned with an arrow pointing to the text "El Tahrir Sq." written in English and Arabic, referencing the homebase of protestors during the 2011 Egyptian Revolution. His set lasted a little less than an hour and consisted of acoustic-guitar music in a self-fashioned "folk" style, invoking the protest tradition of Bob Dylan or Pete Seeger (who Rovics quotes on his website as endorsing his music). This music was first and foremost about voicing a message of protest. With a distinctly nasal singing voice and more than competent guitar playing for the genre, Rovics performed songs with lyrical themes centered on issues of social and political injustice, like police brutality and racial profiling, or songs about politically controversial

individuals, like Trayvon Martin and Bradley Manning, a U.S. Army whistleblower who transferred classified documents to Wikileaks.

Rovics sang these “songs of social significance,” as described on his website, but punctuated his set with humorous numbers, even launching the event with a satirically contemptuous song about NY politician Anthony Weiner’s “weener,” calling him a “racist” and a “bigot” in the song lyrics. Later, he encouraged the audience to sing along with two of his catchy refrains; people swayed in their chairs, smiled or laughed, and sang, “Watch out for the cops,” and “If only it were true”—a song Rovics explains as, “Ever since the rightwing nutjobs started complaining that Barack Obama is a tree-hugging, socialist, immigrant-loving, peace-loving Muslim I’ve thought, ‘if only it were true.’” (Youtube online 2013a). After the show, people loitered about as the potluck was prepared, and Rovics placed a collection of his CDs on a side table, on sale for \$10 each. The potluck included bread, chips, rice, vegetarian chili, chicken and a few other take-out meat dishes, with soda, wine, water, and beer. Most of the audience seemed acquainted with one another, and amidst the conversations, a few reminisced about protests they had attended together. Between songs, Rovics even made a point to recognize different audience members who he knew from previous protests. This was a fairly tight-knit scene, welcoming to newcomers but one in which long-standing friendships and bonds united most people. The event simmered into the early evening with casual conversation and food as the audience ate, chatted, and slowly dispersed over the course of a few hours.

The Revolutionary Communist side of Rovics’s music is just one among many. He travels considerably in radical-left music scenes and his song library caters to diverse issues and audiences. The thematic catalog on his website categorizes his songs according to no less than 49 different topics, although numerous tunes are classified under multiple headings. In this case, the songs were appropriately suited for the venue and listeners—songs concerning protest and political injustice were in abundance for an audience at a Revolutionary Communist bookstore. Yet, Rovics maintains a strong ecological side to his songwriting and

activism as well, having composed twenty-one songs dedicated to the topic of “ecology/environment” and having played at multiple events sponsored by the eco-radical group, Earth First! (EF!). He also participated in two benefit concerts in 2012 to raise funds for Earth Liberation Front (ELF) activist Marie Mason. She is incarcerated presently for admitting to 13 counts of arson and property damages totalling seven million dollars, all committed in the name of defending the environment and animal rights. In addition to the ELF-tribute song quoted at the beginning of this chapter in which Rovics goes on to croon, “...There’s nothing quite so lovely as a Wal-Mart on fire,” he encourages us to “Burn it down,” in the song of that title, “We don’t like the condo (bulldozer, Wal-Mart) and we’re gonna burn it down, Corporate terrorists, drive them out of town, We’ll bring a lot of gasoline, pour it on the floor, Light a match, say a prayer, and run right out the door. Burn it down, burn it down, we’re going to burn it down. Burn it down, burn it down, burn it down.”

This concert and such a seemingly coffeehouse artist like Rovics might, at first, appear a bit subdued to begin a study on radical environmental and animal-rights activism (REARA). There were no distorted electric guitars, screaming vocalists, or moshing, all of which are inseparable from American racist skinhead music festivals. But the intensity of dedication to the cause, the anger at the perceived opposition, and the uncompromising stance with which members hold their views that was on display at this concert rivals groups like the skins. Although the acoustic-guitar songs that characterize a sizeable quantity of radical-left music and eco-animal rights militancy may not *sound* as extreme as the hardcore and punk of the racist skins, these mellow vibrations are equally as potent, at times carrying a radical message promoting violence. And as we will see, REARA possesses a harder edge. A distinct sub-genre of hardcore and punk music, Vegan Straight Edge (xVx), expresses eco-animal rights militancy and appeals to the demographic profile of the movement’s most violent eco-animal rights activists—an interesting correspondance to the audience of racist skinhead music and a clear overlap in genre, one in which eco-militant/vegan hardcore and racist skinhead hardcore are virtually indistinguishable from one another save for the lyrics (assuming one can discern any message at all through the screaming and yelling).

Many subtle points evidenced by this Rovics show in Honolulu and his artistic stance encapsulate broader ideological and musical characteristics of left-wing radicalism and the specific focus of this article, REARA. Contemporary eco-animal rights militancy, for instance, is often contextualized within larger socio-political, radical-left ideologies and ambitions, typically Marxism, communism, anarchism, or anti-industrial capitalism; Rovics's diversity of lyrical themes reflects this range of often-incompatible ideologies. In his songs, Rovics employs humorous mockery and sarcasm, the idioms routinely practiced throughout the movement to express hostility and to downplay the severity of rhetorical and enacted violence. Finally, while this music supports a mostly well-intentioned, peaceful protest subculture, there are disquieting instances when violence and extremism are suggested and endorsed in songs and actualized by member action. These aspects will unfold over the course of the study.

I began studying music in REARA with the intention of broadening the scope of my consideration of music within radical cultures, moving from religious and right wing-oriented radicalism (al-Qa'ida, the American racist skinheads, and radical Christian fundamentalism) to exploring the musical culture of the radical-left side of the political spectrum. It was intriguing to discover that the past and present of left-wing radicalism and violence are just as musical as those of any right-wing or religious group. Just like the KKK re-wrote lyrics to popular songs of the 1920s or the Westboro Baptist Church adapts today's pop songs to express its hateful message, left-wing radical organizations have practiced "contrafactum," the substitution of one text for another without significantly changing the music, throughout their history. Romanian communists of the 1930s, for example, paradoxically changed the lyrics of Romanian Christmas carols (*colinde*) to promote their revolutionary, atheistic platform (Pauta Pieslak 2004: 7). Or, in contemporary South America, the militant Colombian Marxist group, FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia), broadcasts popular Colombian songs with altered lyrics voicing its revolutionary ideas (Nacos 2006: 49). Generally speaking, right-wing, religious, and left-wing radicals are highly musical and all

have recognized the importance of music within their respective strategies of cultural expression and ideological propagation.

As I surveyed the extant scholarly literature on today's left-wing radical organizations, it quickly became apparent that little research has been undertaken on music in these cultures. The general topic of left-wing radicalism is strongly outweighed by the number of studies on right-wing and radical religious organizations. A few examples illustrate this point. In volume 2 of the three-volume set, *The Making of a Terrorist: Recruitment, Training, and Root Causes*, the section on "Case Studies of Terrorist Learning" includes eleven articles with only one addressing a left-wing group. The journal, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, has published 146 original articles since 2009; approximately 49 address specific right-wing or militant Islamist groups, while 10 engage left-wing organizations. Finally, issues of *The Sentinel*, the monthly publication of the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, rarely feature articles on left-wing militancy, instead focusing primarily on Islamist terrorism. This disproportion is not a criticism of these reputable and prominent publications; rather it demonstrates a lack of research (or priority) ascribed to radical left-wing groups. Certainly, excellent studies on left-wing militancy and REARA exist, but the field in general demonstrates a strong predisposition for studying right-wing or religious radical organizations. Such an imbalance is somewhat curious. From 1980–2001, acts of domestic terrorism (345) in the U.S. strongly outpaced acts of international terrorism (136), and by ideological classification, left-wing terrorism accounted for 130 incidents with right-wing terrorism accounting for 85 (Levin 2006: 14–15). During this period, the FBI considered such left-wing radicalism to pose, "the most serious domestic terrorist threat to the United States." (FBI online 2013). Radical violence from the political left has remained highly relevant in contemporary America, even in light of the fact that the foremost period characterizing left wing-motivated revolutionary activity—from the late 1960s to the fall of Communism—has passed.

The following study contributes to this underdeveloped corpus of scholarship by exploring the music culture of one of the most active branches of radical-left oriented extremism today: eco-animal rights militancy. The hate-group watchdog organization, Southern Poverty Poverty Center (SPLC), notably observes that, “Extremists within the environmental and animal rights movements have committed literally thousands of violent criminal acts in recent decades—arguably more than those from any other radical sector, left or right.” (SPLC Center online 2013a). The first two sections of this article introduce the complicated world of REARA, addressing many of the challenges that accompany engaging this topic. My primary focus will be on the Animal Liberation Front (ALF), Earth First! (EF!), and the ELF. These two contextual sections are followed by an investigation into the music cultures of some of the most active and violent left-wing radical ideologies in America today.

### [1]

#### **Eco-Animal Rights Militancy, Terrorism, and Ideological Diversity: Just “do something!”**

Generally speaking, eco-animal rights militancy involves any illegal or violent act committed in the name of defending the natural environment or animal rights. Beyond this very broad definition, it is problematic to clearly describe eco-animal rights militancy because, like the white-power movement or race-faiths, its terminology, ideology, and histories vary considerably. As in racist skinhead music culture where many names are used to identify the white-power movement, a similar terminological problem of “what do we call this movement?” applies here. I have chosen the label “eco-animal rights militancy,” which I will use interchangeably with my acronym, REARA. Even so, there are points of intellectual distinction, historically and philosophically, that can be drawn between environmental and animal-rights ideologies (Taylor 2003: 143–70, Liddick 2006: 13–38). I will maintain the common scholarly practice of grouping them together because of the considerable overlap in the motivations driving activists—often times militants affiliated with animal rights may be acting concurrently out of consideration for the environment and vice versa, all within the broader context of Marxist, anarchist, or anti-industrial capitalist, socio-political goals.<sup>3</sup>

Others, however, label the actions and actors of this movement as “eco-terrorism,” a distinction that generates considerable objection from movement members and sympathetic scholars (Amster 2006: 287–301, Buell 2009: 155–66, Levin 2006: 59–60, Perlstein 2003: 171–72, Vanderheiden 2005: 425–47). At the heart of the issue is, of course, how terrorism is defined. The “terrorism” classification is highly problematic due to the varied definitions of terrorism used within the scholarly literature, even among U.S. government agencies. There is a considerable lack of consensus among those who study REARA concerning the qualification of the movement’s violent tactics as “terrorism.” The FBI includes acts of sabotage against property in its definition, thereby qualifying most acts by REARA as “domestic terrorism.” Such distinctions are not merely academic, as the FBI’s qualification of the term significantly influences prosecution and sentencing of criminal actions. Those sympathetic to REARA respond ardently to such accusations that the vast majority of violent acts originating from the militant/violent side of the eco-animal rights movement do not aspire to or involve harm to human beings. Rather, they target the products and patterns of what they see as destructive human behavior and often go to significant lengths to avoid injuring living beings. This line of reasoning resounds repeatedly among many of the major eco-animal rights radical ideologies active today, including the ALF, EF!, ELF—a militant branch/offshoot of EF!—and Stop Huntington Animal Cruelty (SHAC). As such, they posit that the “terrorism” label is erroneously applied to the politically motivated direct action they commit, like arson, vandalism, biomedical research destruction, property damage/destruction, break-ins, and animal releases. For them, “eco-terrorism” refers to those who allow and perpetrate acts of violence against the natural environment and animals, a designation demonstrated by the referral to “corporate terrorists” in Rovics’s “Burn it Down” (Buell 2009: 156). The radical action, from their perspective, is one of environmental destruction, not the actions taken in retaliation or defense of nature and animals.

While REARA members and their supporters attempt to distinguish their “direct action” from acts of human-targeted terrorism, researchers frequently engage the threat potential of such groups and ideologies. Often, they discuss the incidents where human beings have indeed been targeted and the infrequent but worrying instances where REARA members have held casualty ambitions. Using the Global Terrorism Database’s definition of terrorism as, “the threatened or actual use of illegal force and violence to attain a political, economic, religious or social goal through fear, coercion or intimidation,” a study of attacks by radical environmental and animal rights groups from 1970–2007 qualified 17% as “terrorism” (Carson, LaFree, and Dugan 2012: 295 and 297). Fairly consistent with this study, criminologist Donald Liddick proposes in his pioneering book, *Eco-Terrorism*, that most crimes committed by REARA activists do not qualify as “terrorism,” with only slightly more than 10% of the crimes surveyed in his study falling into the “terrorism” category (Liddick 2006: 8).

In recent years, though, the FBI and U.S. government officials have asserted a strong threat potential posed by REARA. Oklahoma Senator James Inhofe testified that ALF and ELF members have been responsible for \$110 million in damages from 1995 to 2005 (Inhofe 2005). In statements and printed literature, the FBI has continually emphasized the severity of the potential domestic terror threat arising from REARA (Ackerman 2003: 144, Carson, LaFree, and Dugan 2012: 296). And a new survey found that 75% of state police agencies identify REARA groups in their state and consider them a threat second only to militant Islamic jihadists (Simone, Freilich, and Chermak 2008). Much of the concern stems from the existing, though limited, number of severe attacks against persons, and from the fact that members’ rhetoric has increasingly endorsed violence and targeting humans for the sake of defending environmental or animal rights. Some examples from these troubling incidents and statements include: in 2004 former ELF spokesperson Craig Rosebraugh said that the type of change they seek to enact “cannot be successful without the implementation of violence” and the “...ELF has not displayed any hint of compassion or respect towards its opponents...[ELF’s action] can be reasonably construed as violent in its attempt to force or

coerce”; EF! activist and musician Darryl Cherney said in a 1990 interview with CBS *60 Minutes*, “If I knew I had a fatal disease, I would definitely do something like strap dynamite on myself and take out Glen Canyon Dam. Or maybe the Maxxam Building in Los Angeles after it’s closed up for the night;” ALF co-founder Ronnie Lee responded to the severe beating of Huntington Life Sciences director Brian Cass with pickaxe handles and CS gas (tear gas) by saying that he “got off lightly”; ALF members kidnapped a British journalist who made an unflattering documentary about the group and branded ALF on his back; and in a letter that was forwarded to me, written by an unnamed animal rights activist (affiliating herself with the radical animal-rights group, Negotiation Is Over [NIO]), she wrote, “When I have my name, voice, and presence back online, the first thing I plan on doing is breaking with the ‘hurt no human’ alf credo. And from there, I’m pushing this movement to places the enemy cannot yet conceive of.” (Liddick 2006: 2–3 and 60, Rosebraugh 2004: 248, Vaillancourt letter 2014). Ultimately, I shall leave to the reader the responsibility of qualifying the acts taken by eco-animal rights militants as terrorism. For the purposes here, such violence certainly falls in the realm of radicalism, and the music circulating in this subculture does, at times, clearly endorse and encourage this destructive behavior. In a letter written to me from prison, for instance, ALF activist Brian Vaillancourt handwrote every lyric to the 369-word song, “Stop Talking - Start Revenging!” by the Vegan Straight Edge band, Vegan Reich, “...they don’t deserve our ‘compassion’. What those murdering scum deserve is a dose of their own medicine. So let’s smash them now, once and for all, breaks their walls/skulls. Put an end to their sick reign they’ve carried on for far too long, we know that they’re in the wrong so stop the talking - start revenging and give the filth what they’ve got coming!” (Vaillancourt letter 2014).

A further challenge that arises when addressing eco-animal rights militancy concerns the FBI qualification of REARA violence as “special interest,” a “third category of domestic terrorism” separate from the broader category of left-wing radicalism or right-wing terrorism, because REARA’s ideological platforms relate explicitly to the specific issues of environmental or animal rights defense (FBI online, 2013). For some groups, like NIO, this appears a

reasonable typology. Their violence-endorsing ideological platform is firmly guided by animal-rights defense, seemingly separate from general radical-left ambitions. Yet, REARA's broad diversity of ideological motivations make this classification system problematic (FBI online, 2013). The original ALF logo, for instance, used the iconic encircled A of the anarchy movement symbol as the "A" for ALF, positioning the "L" and "F" within the circle. In his survey of ELF members arrested and convicted of crimes, sociologist Paul Joosse notes a high degree of ideological variety, claiming that these individuals "are surprisingly bereft of long-standing and deep environmentalist commitments", and more often espouse an anti-authoritarian or anarchist orientation than one of eco-animal rights militancy (Joosse 2007: 361). In an ELF propaganda video, the narrator promotes arson as the best viable means for inflicting economic sabotage and to fight profit motive. But his argument for defending the environment is couched within the broader context of attacking the capitalist system, "The capitalist state itself and its symbols of propaganda must also be targeted." (Youtube online 2013b). Fittingly, the video closes with the song, "Nothing ever burned down by itself" ("...every fire needs a little bit of help") by the British band Chumbawamba as its soundtrack.

Finally, a recent study of the most notorious ELF cell, "The Family," (responsible for an estimated \$42 million in damages), provides evidence that members were highly varied in their reasons for taking action, ranging from political activism, social bonds, or "because they like to blow things up." (Deshpande and Ernst 2008: 16). The study suggests that social bonds preceded ideological commitment in the recruiting stages of members. When members of "The Family" were arrested on arson charges, the majority cooperated with law enforcement and testified against other members of the cell—a betrayal they swore never to perform, suggesting that their ideological commitment to environmental defense and even to social bonds cracked swiftly under the weight of potentially lengthy prison sentences. My estimation, therefore, is that it would be misguided to assume that all people who act in the name of REARA do so solely from their commitment to environmental or animal rights, and thus may not contextualize their "special interest" violence within broader aspirations of major socio-cultural or political, radical-left change.<sup>4</sup>

Complicating the issue even more, the ideological orientation of a group may transform over time. The first major eco-radical group in the U.S., Earth First! (EF!), for instance, was forged under the banner of an ideological position that could be reasonably considered “special interest,” but transitioned to a more general radical-left orientation. The movement was founded on the premise that industrialism catalyzed the downfall of the natural world and that their direct actions in defense of the environment were intended to destroy the “system,” not to enact change from within the democratic process. John Davis, the managing editor of *EF! Journal* in the late 1980s, articulated the directive, “we are trying to subvert the system, and when I say system, we’d like to see the system collapse, and when I say ‘the system’ I mean the industrial—modern, industrial system as we know it. And one reason why we see the modern industrial system as being so destructive is because it is based on the premise that human beings are superior and it is for human beings that the world exists.” (Youtube online 2013c). This view of “subverting the system” gave priority to the single issue of environmental defense over other political causes for EF! and largely contributed to the group’s initial growth in so far as membership required only commonality on this one issue.

Yet, EF! adopted the often-appropriated raised clenched fist (in green) as one of their emblems, a symbolic representation of resistance in general but specifically an affiliation with black civil rights and with the symbol’s origin as the 1917 logo of the Industrial Workers of the World (a worker’s-rights union). Surrounding the clenched fist is their motto, “No Compromise in Defense of Mother Earth!” Today, the group appears more rooted in Marxist, anarchist, and anti-industrial capitalist youth culture, with its original, singular focus on biocentrism having been assimilated among many socio-political causes. When I ordered the latest CD from EF!, I was sent a variety of literature on immigration reform and a copy of “the Nuclear Resister,” which included articles on robotic warfare, Bradley Manning, solidarity with Guantanamo prisoners, and the imprisonment of Iraq War protesters. There

was nothing directly addressing environmental defense or that presented this topic at the forefront of the group's agenda.

Perhaps the best way to encapsulate the varying ideological orientations of eco-animal rights militancy was expressed by co-founder of EF! David Foreman when he pleaded to an audience of EF! members during a speech in 1987, "...there is room for inconsistency, but do something!" (Youtube online 2013c). The uniformity of ideological motivation is second to direct action, and one could say that within REARA in general, direct action has defined ideology. This idea has held up over the decades. As we can see from the case of "The Family," regardless of the environmental, social, or pyromaniacal motives involved, members were united by their intent to destroy property; or, to just "do something!" Later in his harangue, Foreman declared that other environmental organizations not defined by action were just "debating societies," a clear derision of mainstream environmental groups like the Sierra Club.

In the following historical, ideological, and organizational description of REARA, we should keep in mind that such histories, philosophies, and structures are fluid and can take different shapes over time. Today's hero and spokesperson may over night become tomorrow's traitor snitch who is now claimed to have never truly represented the organization. Also, the direction of organizations can change rapidly amidst ideological cleavages between important members or when members disassociate themselves from movements. Moreover, patterns of violence that were once acceptable and encouraged might now be villified. Because many of these ideologies tend to (try to) operate under the "leaderless resistance" model—a topic that I will address in the section below—it can be challenging to determine who presently speaks for an organization, who acts in its name, or what music sounds its message. What I present below appears to be the case of what is happening today, but may not be consistent with what happens tomorrow—a caveat seemingly intended to deflect from any just criticism, but a stark reality that accompanies thorough engagement with this topic. The following is drawn from prominent scholarly resources on

REARA and my ethnographic research, providing a concise but formative background that will elucidate music's role in REARA cultures.

## [2]

### **REARA's Roots, Couching Violence in Humor, and Leaderless Resistance**

REARA's roots are found primarily in the 1970s with the establishment of activist-oriented environmental groups like Friends of the Earth (1969), Greenpeace (1972), PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, 1980), and others (Liddick 2006: 1). Disaffected members of these organizations, however, did not find their tactics of mostly non-violent civil disruption and disobedience to effectively catalyze the major changes they aspired to. Over time, as groups like Greenpeace and others became more mainstream and involved in political lobbying efforts, some members formed their own direct action-oriented organizations and progressively radicalized, justifying illegal actions and violence to achieve their goals, as opposed to the relatively moderate levels of civil disobedience and political lobbying that most of their parent organizations undertook (Dehspande and Ernst 2008: 8). This shift away from the tradition of non-violent protest finds expression in EF! activist and musician Darryl Cherney's tune, "They sure don't make hippies like they used to," in which he sings, "No, they don't make hippies like they used to. They used to live in peace but now they're spiking trees. They once were stoned on grass but now they're kicking ass. They used to speak of peace but now they practice what they preach. No, they sure don't make hippies like they used to. No, hippies don't take no shit anymore." (Cherney online 2013).

In 2006, Liddick identified 115 radical environmental and animal liberation movements, but I will isolate our focus to the ALF, EF!, and ELF based on their longevity, size, and frequency of direct action. The ALF was founded in Britain in 1976, splintering from the less radical Hunt Saboteurs Association. It established a U.S. presence in 1981, notably with the release of monkeys from a lab in Silver Spring, Maryland, and has a mission statement "to effectively allocate resources (time and money) to end the 'property status' of nonhuman animals." (Animal Liberation Front online, 2013). The ELF emerged in Britain in 1992, but originated

from the American-born (1979) Earth First! movement.<sup>5</sup> Unlike the ALF, the ELF maintains a connection to its parent organization and represents more of a militant wing of Earth First! than a separate faction; EF! actively supports ELF criminals and even sells ELF-related merchandise on its website.<sup>6</sup> While Earth First! members may choose to involve themselves in actions such as tree sitting/spiking, road survey destruction, the vandalization of property, and publicity stunts like painting a crack in the Glen Canyon Dam (Arizona), the ELF is the affiliation label for those of violent direct action orientation, typically manifest as arson. There are many instances, illustrated by ELF arsonists Daniel McGowan and William “Bill” Rodgers, in which activists became involved with ELF direct-action ideology (arson) through their initial involvement with EF! (Caffrey telephone interview 2013).<sup>7</sup> The ELF’s mission is more broadly concerned with threats to the environment, including animal rights, and thus has analogous stances to the ALF. This has resulted in joint publications and statements of mutual support between the ALF and ELF (and by extension, EF!)

The majority of contemporary eco-militants differ from their environmental and animal-rights activist predecessors in that they no longer see the democratic political process as a viable means for enacting change, and they present a moral justification for the use of illegal actions and/or violence in the name of defending the environment and animal rights. ALF press officer Jerry Vlasik is quoted as saying, “Force is a poor second choice (to non-violence), but if that’s the only thing that will work...there’s certainly moral justification for that,” and Rosebraugh authored the treatise, *The Logic of Political Violence: Lessons in Reform and Revolution*, published in 2004 (Animal Right Extremism online 2013). In its extreme, NIO leader Camille Marino advances the notion of “extensional self-defense,” a concept developed by philosopher Steven Best, which places humans as the “proxy agents” of justifiable violence against animal rights “oppressors” (SPLC Center 2013b). The SPLC correctly draws the parallel that, “This doctrine is virtually identical to that embraced by anti-abortion extremists, who call the murder of abortion practitioners ‘defensive action’ and celebrate those who do it.” (SPLC Center 2013b). Marino posted on the NIO website in 2009, “Animal liberationists are encouraged to pay close attention to the anti-abortionists’

tactics and strategies...the logical extension of their efforts is to expand the definition further to include murder committed in defense of an imprisoned and tortured nonhuman animal.” She went so far as to nickname one of her targets—UCLA professor, David Jentsch, whose research involves animals—after murdered abortion doctor George Tiller, dubbing him David “Tiller” Jentsch.

Even so, not everyone who affiliates with the groups and direct-action ideologies of REARA condones the same degrees of action taken by members. While united in their general passion for defending the environment and animal rights, there exists a broad spectrum of opinions on how direct action should be implemented, ranging from Gandhian non-violence and ultrapacifism to arson and human-targeted violence. Long-time EF! activist Andy Caffrey mentioned in our telephone interview, “There are some people who just will not get into violence at all. And there are others, you know—anybody who has ever fought for Americans has felt that there were reasons to use violence for just cause. Well, it doesn’t take brain size to understand that we could have ecological causes that could be just as righteous.” (Caffrey telephone interview 2013).

The principal ideology that members of REARA claim bellies the movement is perhaps best expressed through a concept known as “deep ecology.” Popularized by the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess, deep ecology maintains a biocentric rather than anthropocentric view of human existence in which ecological and other “natural laws dictate human morality.” (Naess 1989: 16). According to this view, human life is only one component of the natural world and not superior to others, as nature, manifest in sentient and non-sentient beings, has an inherent value and is protected by a higher law beyond that of satisfying the utility of human needs. Another set of writers strongly influential on the animal rights camp of REARA ideology include Peter Singer, author of *Animal Liberation* (1975), and Tom Regan, who wrote *The Case for Animal Rights* (1983). According to these authors, the norms of ethical human interaction should be outspread to include all life forms, most importantly animals. The resulting worldview granting moral consideration, and in its extreme,

equivalency, to all beings explains the sometimes puzzling statements made by movement activists, like equating the meat industry to the Jewish holocaust, the use of animal products to the history of black slavery in America, or the life of an ant to the life of a child (Liddick 2006: 3, Deshpande and Ernst 2008: 9).

While Naess's name and writings are cited across REARA to lend its ideology intellectual weight, the philosophical roots of REARA extend even deeper to the works of American transcendentalist authors like Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, whose writings idealize the natural world and promote a transcendence of material culture (Liddick 2006: 13).<sup>8</sup> Liddick observes that, "...the transcendentalist idea espousing the interconnectedness of natural systems and the inherent value of sentient and non-sentient forms was a direct precursor to modern environmental philosophy and deep ecology—the ideological framework underlying much of contemporary eco-terrorism." (Liddick 2006: 13). But how did this movement become violent? Critics of REARA highlight the obvious contradiction of violently enacting a peace-driven philosophy that entitles moral consideration to all beings. In fact, two important ideologues, Naess and Singer, never advocated violence in their writings. Moreover, one can hold such views and not engage in illicit activities; such ideas form much of the basis for veganism.

In the U.S., REARA's adoption of violence as part of its activist platform can be attributed largely to the influence of Edward Abbey's fictional book, *The Monkey Wrench Gang*. First published in 1975, the novel spins the tale of four sympathetically cast characters who engage in acts of violence or ecological sabotage sometimes termed "eco-tage," in an area of the southwest known as the "Four Corners" (where the borders of Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah meet). The characters vandalize and destroy property affiliated with the hydropower, logging, and construction industries. Literary critic and professor of American literature Lawrence Buell notes that *The Monkey Wrench Gang* not only "...helped catalyze the early and most radical phase of the Earth First! Movement, soon thereafter targeted as the first paradigmatic American ecoterrorist group," but "...it (*The Monkey*

*Wrench Gang*) is one of the few texts in U.S. literary history to have exerted a demonstrable ‘real-world’ environmental impact.” (Buell 2009: 154).<sup>9</sup> Supporting Buell’s claim, one finds that REARA members label and validate vandalism, tree spiking, arson, and many of the practices characterizing eco-militancy, as “monkeywrenching.” Abbey was lionized by the Earth First! movement, appearing at annual meetings and writing the foreword to Foreman’s *Ecodefense: A Field Guide to Monkeywrenching*, a do-it-yourself guide for Earth First! members to enact the kinds of crimes fictionalized (and romanticized) in *The Monkey Wrench Gang*. Even more, the ELF website includes “A Brief History of Ecoterrorism” chart which places the publication of *The Monkey Wrench Gang* as the seminal event (Earth Liberation Front online 2014).

“Monkeywrenching,” though, can be alternatively understood as a playful use of terminology seemingly intended to lighten the severity and destructive impact of the movement’s criminal activity. The term represents a tactic repeated throughout eco-militant publications and music—namely, couching the violence enacted by members as the merry frolic of eco-pranksters in an attempt to temper the gravity of such actions.<sup>10</sup> A playful, humorous, often sarcastic tone is demonstrated throughout movement publications, ranging from the innocuous Earth First! periodical, *Earth First! The Radical Environmental Journal*, informally known as the *Earth First! (We’ll Strip Mine the other Planets Later) Journal*, to the disquieting ALF-ELF and “anti-copyright gang” book, “Arson Around with Auntie ALF: Your Guide to Putting the Heat on Animal Abusers Everywhere.”<sup>11</sup> With an animated cover of an activist in a fox costume holding a match in front of what appears to be the charred remains of a McDonald’s restaurant, the book opens, “Hello, boys and girls, Auntie ALF here with an (sic) handy-dandy booklet for all of you.” Yet, the manual is a step-by-step guide to creating and igniting low-level incendiary mixes, including a recipe for “home-made napalm,” and glorifies previous arsons by including news reports of these incidents. While the book’s stated intent is “...not necessarily to encourage anyone to go out setting fires on their own”, it details how to avoid arrest by explaining how fire investigation units assess crime scenes and offers the advice, “Activists know to TELL NO ONE of their plans and make sure they

LEAVE NO EVIDENCE behind at the scene...LEAVE NO EVIDENCE—always wear gloves and protect your workspace and your materials from hair, fiber, fingerprints, and DNA traces that might lead back to you or your active cell. Good Luck!” (emphases in original).<sup>12</sup> With such guidance and specific explanations on how to craft a variety of makeshift incendiaries, the book’s disclaimer is obviously more tongue-in-cheek than serious.

Such cavalier attitudes about “monkeywrenching” from within the movement can be misleading insofar as they cast those involved in REARA as only jovial mischief-makers—ELF activists are commonly referred to as ELFs or “elves,” or EF! offers an “I’d rather be monkeywrenching” bumpersticker on its website—even though the FBI considers these acts to constitute domestic terrorism (Earth First! Journal online 2013, and Perlstein 2003: 171–72 ). The following ELF communique after the arson of a U.S. Forest Industries office in Medford, Oregon further demonstrates this trend within the movement,

To celebrate the holidays we decided on a bonfire. Unfortunately for US Forest Industries it was at their corporate headquarters office.

On the foggy night after Christmas when everyone was digesting their turkey and pie, Santa’s ELFs dropped two five-gallon buckets of diesel/unleaded mix and a gallon jug with cigarette delay; which proved to be more than enough to get this party started.

This was in retribution for all the wild forests and animals lost to feed the wallets of greedy fucks like Jerry Bramwell, USFI president. This action is payback and it is a warning to all others responsible, we do not sleep and we won’t quit (Rosebraugh 2004: 72).

Besides the dripping sarcasm, it is notable that the author feels compelled to mention the details of the materials used in the arson, while an ideological justification is only briefly mentioned and relatively inexplicit. One may question whether the ideological motivation behind the arson carries as much importance to the author as the anti-authoritarian revolutionary violence glamorized by the act of property destruction.

In finalizing the contextual discussion of this section, it is useful to understand the two distinct organizational models under which REARA operates. The first involves physical groups where advocates participate via meetings, gatherings, and continual communication with other members. This model largely describes EF! and SHAC. While such groups may superficially profess a “leaderless resistance” or consensus/non-hierarchy model, clear organizational hierarchies and “leaders” emerge, especially when protests, direct actions, and illegal activities are planned. Try as they might, George Orwell put it well, “some animals are more equal than others.”

The second model represents independent individuals and small cells acting in the name of a radical political ideology, and determining where, when, and how to attack regardless of a centralized chain of command, hierarchy, or network of support. These activists perpetrate violence in the name of a non-existent “group;” “members” represent individuals who ideologically affiliate and support REARA, but they are not screened through a process of membership nor do they receive personal training. There are no meetings, no leaders, and newly-formed cells strictly avoid admitting future members or communicating with others. Propaganda discourages anyone interested in joining an active cell from seeking contact, alternatively, they are encouraged to create their own autonomous cell. Such a strategy has proven extremely effective at preventing infiltration from law enforcement; the ALF and even EF! have webpages dedicated to identifying and exposing informants—one of the only ways that law enforcement has been able to arrest and prosecute violent activists. Such a model of direct-action (dis)-organization effectively describes the ELF and ALF, and has come to represent the “lone wolf” scenario exemplified by Arid Uka (the Frankfurt Airport shooter), the Tsarnaev brothers (Boston Marathon bombers), and, to a degree, Anders Breivik.

This second “group” model operates according to what historian Benedict Anderson calls an “imagined community.” Anderson posits the idea of “imagined communities” to describe the

sense of social bonding and community felt by members of a nation who perceive themselves as part of a group but who never in fact meet most other members, “the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.” (Anderson 1991: 224). Within REARA, these “imagined communities” characterize ALF and ELF activism insofar as they provide activists with ideological justification, imagined social bonding, and a sense of interconnected empowerment derived from being part of a larger network of people. The “imagined community” enables adherents to act in the name of a group and to commit politically motivated violence under the auspices of leaderless resistance instead of random, un-linked acts of violence. These “imagined communities” within radical cultures have benefited immensely from the Internet, which serves as the virtual meeting ground for activists and radical ideology, and fosters the notion of social bonding and interconnected empowerment in the absence of a physical group.

Joose proposes a compelling argument that the leaderless resistance model has unified violent activists who hold widely disparate ideological orientations and goals. He asserts that leaderless resistance creates an,

‘overlapping consensus’...mobilizing a mass of adherents that would not have been able to find unanimity of purpose in an organization characterized by a traditional, hierarchical, authority structure. In short, in using leaderless resistance, the ELF allows its adherents to ‘believe what they will,’ while still mobilizing them to commit ‘direct actions’ for a specific cause (Joose 2007: 352).

This concept explains how a direct-action ideology comprised of members maintaining vastly diverse ideologies coheres: once activists rally around the platform of destructive intent against mainstream values (the “overlapping consensus”), the specific ideology of REARA provides the justifying cause. In later sections, I will complement this assertion by proposing

that culture, as manifest through music, also elucidates how REARA holds together amidst members' contradictory political motivations.

Joose's assertion nuances why the ELF (and ALF) direct-action ideology can prosper through "overlapping consensus" while EF! has suffered; the following example demonstrates how. In the early 1990s, Foreman left EF! due to an ideological impasse with figurehead Judi Bari, and the organization suffered a severe decline in membership. Caffrey suggested that as many as two-thirds of the membership abandoned the group because Foreman was no longer a head of the organization (Caffrey telephone interview 2013).<sup>13</sup> Obviously, there was a level of "leadership" within this non-hierarchical resistance movement. More importantly, this split signaled a change in the ideological outlook of EF!, which became increasingly concerned with general radical-left political issues (worker's rights, social justice, gender/queer rights, etc.) under Bari's guidance as opposed to the single-focused, "no compromise" biocentrism that defined Foreman and the original EF!, which allowed for highly divergent perspectives so long as members put the "earth first." (Caffrey telephone interview 2013). Here, we can observe how the larger political context of Marxist, anarchist, or anti-industrial capitalist views eventually usurped biocentrism in EF!.<sup>14</sup> Foreman believed that the increasingly Marxist and anarchist tendencies of the group were damaging—a sentiment reiterated by incarcerated ALF activist Walter Bond over two decades later, when he wrote to me in an email, "I have truly come to understand that anarchy is detrimental, divisive and distracting to the movement." (Bond online 2013).

Within the organizational structure of "leaderless resistance," however, the splintering effect such conflicts is mitigated. The ELF (and ALF) continue to operate as effective direct-action ideologies because they widen the scope of necessary consensus among activists, who need only agree on destructive intent and targets. A commitment to revolutionary violence is the more significant issue, not "why" one is motivated to act. "Why" begins a process in which consensus overlap shrinks and may become divisive; Bond believes that the ELF and ALF constitute, "a set of tactical principles. Mainly, to sabotage abusers and those

that profit from Animals, rescue Animals from places of harm, Be Vegan or vegetarian and never harm a human or Animal in the process. After that the size and scope of various ALF groups varies as much as the individuals that comprise them.” (Bond online 2013). The possibility for the factionalization and ideological shifts that have impacted EF! is far less likely to arise in the absence of clearly recognizable leadership, wherein activists need only find commonality with a few others, or with their “imagined community,” in order to take action. The unity of purpose need not be defined beyond the destructive intent of “sabotage” in defense of the environment or animal rights.<sup>15</sup> While such characteristics may prove beneficial, the effectiveness of leaderless resistance is tremendously limited. Allowing little or no coordination of efforts and attacks, this approach lacks the profoundly galvanizing impact of an iconic leadership, and historically speaking, it has never worked.<sup>16</sup>

Literary works, such as *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, *Animal Liberation*, and *The Case for Animal Rights* have shaped REARA ideology significantly, nonetheless it is the movement’s vibrant music culture that sustains and propagates its philosophical underpinnings. If the cultural artifacts of a radical movement provide a lens through which to view its ideology, goals, member recruitment, retention, and motivation for action, then REARA’s characteristics will resound in its music culture. Given its ancestry and associations with the radical left, one might accurately predict that REARA music culture has a strong predisposition for acoustic-guitar based protest songs. While almost all genres are represented in the contemporary landscape of music espousing eco-animal rights militancy, the most prevalent genres appear to be the “folk song” (as Rovics described his music) or protest-song genre, and music categorizable into the hardcore/punk/metal genres. The following sections explore a cross-section of the major artists and groups within these two prevailing styles, highlighting how music operates as a vital cultural component within REARA today.

### [3]

### **An Introduction to Earth First! Music**

Since its founding in 1979, Earth First! has remained one of the most musically prolific REARA groups in the U.S., progressively developing a culture that prioritizes music over other artistic/cultural forms. In a short conversation with Cherney, he told me, "...as far as Earth First! goes, music is number one—and Judi Bari would agree with me about this—if your revolution doesn't have music, you don't have a fucking revolution!" (Cherney telephone interview 2013). Similarly, Marie Mason emailed to me from prison, "Music was and is central to my life, my peace and my fire...My nicest memories of EF! ronds are the campfires where we shared poetry and music together." (Mason online 2014). Even more, Caffrey mentioned, "The music has been the only kind of the solid part of the culture that has been there for us...It is also something that we can sing at the protests, we can build our camaraderie when we go to the Earth First Rendezvous...our ecological consciousness is validated through these songs." (Caffrey telephone interview 2013). This section introduces the musical history and culture of the group.

EF! music culture developed primarily through live performances at multi-day gatherings, called a "Rendezvous," which the group convenes at national parks and nature sites, like the Grand Canyon Round River in New Mexico; Mt. Graham, Arizona; Forks of Salmon, California, and others. Sites are often chosen so as to allow the group to stage a local protest, which represents the culmination of the Rendezvous activities. Among the many outdoors activities, "how to" seminars have been offered on everything from how to defecate in a bucket in the wilderness to how to sink whaling ships and drift netters. Recent lectures and presentations include topics like "Radical Mental Health," "Nuclear Issues in the Southeast," and "Media Liaison and Police Liaison Trainings." (Youtube online 2013d).<sup>17</sup> Music is often played around the "campfire" and during scheduled performances. In a video clip from a Rendezvous sometime between 1988 and 1994, a woman introducing the then-popular EF! musician Robert Hoyt says (after mooning the audience to get their attention), "...I really think it is important that we are not only developing a culture but we are developing music

that people—other people—can relate to. And these same musicians are working as activists.” (Youtube online 2013e).

Music has been essential to the ideological propagation and cultural development of the group since its inception. According to the EF! Speakers Bureau website, “Music is as central to our counterculture as the food in our community kitchens...” (Earth First! Speakers Bureau online 2013). Not more than two years after its founding, the movement published a collection of songs by EF! musicians entitled, *The Earth First! Li'l Green Songbook*, which went through at least five editions (the title refers to “The Little Red Songbook” first published by the Industrial Workers of the World, IWW, in 1909, with mostly labor and industrial worker songs). In the Foreword to the fifth edition published in 1986, EF! activist Jesse Wolf Hardin, aka “Lone Wolf Circles,” writes,

Enter the song as Monkeywrench, tossed out to stop the flow of conceptual reality long enough for new perspectives to slip in; for a heightening of awareness...

In this spirit we present these songs of love and resistance by our Earth First! bards. Sing them at rallies, in stuffy legislative hearings, and around the fires of our gathering tribe. But sing them with *feeling* (Sagebrush 1986: 2). (emphasis in original)

Foreman echoes Hardin’s “feeling”, a bit less poetically, in the Introduction to the *Li'l Green Songbook* where he asserts, “I don’t need to tell you how important music is to our cause...The singers in this book help me keep fighting...In a two-minute song, he (EF! co-founder and pioneer of EF! music Bart Koehler, aka ‘Johnny Sagebrush’) can capture more magic, passion and meaning that I can in an hour-long harangue.” (Sagebrush 1986: 1–3). Likewise, Caffrey commented that, “...(music) wasn’t just sort of a Marxist rant for hours and hours, it was a way of distilling it and also if you keep singing it, you keep repeating the information...it makes us better activists.” (Caffrey telephone interview 2013).

The songbook features a collection of lyrics with guitar-chord changes, including original tunes and contrafactum of serious or satirical topics composed by a variety of EF! musicians, such as Koehler (“Johnny Sagebrush”), Bill Oliver, “Walkin’” Jim Stoltz, Cecelia Ostrow, Greg Keeler, and a few others.<sup>18</sup> In lieu of music notation for the melodies, the reader is encouraged to purchase any of seven cassettes recorded by these musicians and made available by mail order. This points to an increasing trend of DIY (do-it-yourself), lo-fi cassettes (and later CDs) produced by EF! musicians. Cherney, for instance, has released six albums in his music career, and many other musicians have produced self-made and self-financed recordings, which have proven vital to sustaining the cultural life of the movement. The organizers and figureheads of EF! appear to have left the production, distribution, and profit involved in recorded music mostly to the musicians. Unlike the history of racist skinhead culture, where recorded music would prove an enormously profitable venture that allowed groups to grow financially and flourish in terms of membership, EF! never established an in-house record company or distribution label. One might speculate that sales would not have financially sustained the costs associated with recording and producing, or it is possible that a record company may have represented too stringent a hierarchy and visible leadership to be reconcilable with the movement’s “leaderless” ideology. Regardless, the music available today on the EF! Merchandise website includes only four albums, most significant of which are the two albums produced in the last four years, even though there is a plethora of independently-made EF! music and the 1986 edition of the “Li’l Green Songbook” contains no less than 78 tunes.

Acoustic-guitar songs have characterized much of the music at the Rendezvouses, a logical instrumentation given that EF! music culture evolved out of the folk tradition of protest music that mostly employed the acoustic guitar, but also for the instrument’s ease of portability and performance. At the above-mentioned Rendezvous, Hoyt performed a set of acoustic-guitar songs, ranging from the up-tempo “Don’t Wake Me Up in the Morning” and sarcastic “Why Should I Care?” to a ballad-esque tune about clearcuts in northern Georgia (Youtube online 2013e). These songs were met with thunderous applause from the

audience, who excitedly cheered him into an encore on the condition, requested by Hoyt, that his thirst is quenched by a beer. He was promptly offered three beers and the crowd boisterously chanted “three more songs,” but Hoyt only performed a single closing number—much to the chagrin of the audience. As evidenced by the numerous videos of these gatherings available on YouTube, there was clearly a festive atmosphere of drinking at most Rendezvouses; an EF! webpage pronounces, “Along with food, drink and friends, music is at the heart of communities-in-rebellion...” (Earth First! Roadshow online 2013). Such a celebratory eco-radical mood finds manifestation in the Cherney song, “Ballad of the Lonesome Tree Spiker,” with its catchy refrain, “I’ve been a tree spiker for many a year, I spend all my money on tree spikes and beer, I go down to the valley where the tall timber grows, How many I’ve gotten, well nobody knows.”

Hoyt’s set typifies the musical environment at EF! Rendezvouses, with acoustic guitar as the primary instrument, at times accompanied by violin or banjo. In sum, the folk-song tradition largely defines the style, the majority of lyrical themes relate to protest topics or are satirical with often-catchy choruses encouraging audience participation, and these performances remain among the most popular events at the Rendezvous. A note from the *EF! Newswire* describing a 1987 documentary on the group, entitled *Earth First! The Politics of Radical Environmentalism*, fairly accurately characterizes Rendezvous music at that time as, “eco-militancy expressed in Sesame Street-sounding sing-alongs.” (Southwest Earth First! online 2013). Hoyt’s performance has much in common with Rovics’s set, and indeed Rovics has performed in recent years at EF! events. Both are solo acoustic-guitar singer/songwriters who intersperse satirical songs among those of protest themes, encourage audience participation and singing, preface each song with a contextualizing story, and effectively pace their sets with up-tempo and slower songs. Clearly, a set of stylized parameters has evolved from the tradition of folk protest song, and is manifest in EF! music and acoustic-guitar music of the contemporary radical left in general.

The music culture of EF! has been primarily shaped by the live performances or DIY recordings of individual artists. This acoustic guitar-based style has become such a substantial part of EF! culture and so prevalent that Caffrey coined it “Gaiabilly” in 2008, to describe “what we have experienced and loved for decades as Earth First! Music.” In our telephone interview, he clarified that “Gaiabilly” is a combination of “Gaia” and the musical styles of “rockabilly” or “hillbilly.”<sup>19</sup> EF! recorded music and particularly the latest two releases illuminate the transformation of the organization over time. For its 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2009, the group released *Still Wild: EF! 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Compilation*, a collection of new and re-released songs by musicians from a wide range of genres, described as, “...movement-oriented music from the past decade, although there are a few classics in there too. While there are not as many EF!-specific musicians in our immediate circles today as there were in years past, there are countless musicians out there who have supported EF! through playing at rallies, benefit shows and gatherings.” (Earth First! Speakers Bureau online 2013). The album leans heavily towards the “Gaiabilly” genre with ten of the seventeen songs falling more-or-less into the acoustic-guitar category of this style.

The compilation encapsulates and broadcasts certain aspects of the organization, following Foreman’s idea that one can come to better understand the essence of EF! through its music—in this case a 65-minute CD—than hours of talks. The thematic content of the songs, for example, sounds the message of protest in a generally peaceful tone, corresponding to the action-oriented but mostly non-violent civil disobedience stance of many EF! members. In several instances, however, the song messages go far beyond non-violent protest, promoting acts of arson (suggesting and connecting ELF-style direct action) and even human-directed violence. The first song of the album, for instance, rails against residential development, in which Grant Peeples defiantly sings, “They think we’re jokin’, but we’re not fuckin’ around. If they build it, we’ll just burn it down.” It is not coincidental that the first song on the disc encourages direct action—the first song in the *Li’l Green Songbook*, fifth edition, is Koehler’s “Monkeywrenchin’,” a tune dedicated to Edward Abbey, “So pull up those stakes, Close down those roads, And wreck those machines, And you know

everything's, gonna be alright, When we go Monkeywrenchin'...". Action as ideology is the initial message voiced on the album. Later, we encounter Thistle's "BP Song," which villifies the oil company, but hits a disquieting moment approximately two minutes into the ballad-esque song when she sings, "...I say we slit their throats and watch the blood trickle like oil into all of our water." This lyric, corresponding to an almost celebratory move from the minor to major mode, is emphatically repeated with vocal harmony; it is perhaps the eeriest moment of the CD in which one has to question the limits of direct action being advocated by the group. Apologists may explain away such a song lyric as metaphor, symbolism, or a moment of extreme frustration which would never be acted upon, but one cannot posit such a forgiving excuse without approaching the message of other radical groups with such dismissive sympathy.

*Still Wild* reflects EF!'s dramatic ideological changes since its first two decades and how the organization wishes to shape its present public image. Among the non-"Gaiabilly" selections, the genre diversity of the album is somewhat curious in that we hear Spanish rap, "street" punk with accordion, reggae, Jarocho Mexican music, and a hardcore metal song, among others. Yet, the tens of hours of video I examined of Rendezvous music present a decidedly more consistent style (i.e. acoustic-guitar "Gaiabilly"), performed by and for a predominantly white audience. Additionally, the *Li'l Green Songbook* is comprised entirely of acoustic-guitar based songs in the folk protest idiom. The genre diversity on *Still Wild* may reflect the ideological shift of the group from singular biocentrism to incorporating, as Foreman supposed when he left, eco-animal rights activism as one part of a larger Marxist or anarchist agenda, in which environmental destruction is viewed as a product of industrial capitalism. As the earth stopped being first, so did acoustic-guitar "Gaiabilly" as the representative musical genre.

The beginning of the article demonstrated through the example of Rovics's performance that many musicians of the contemporary eco-militant subculture are not solely dedicated to environmental causes; they branch out into a multitude of thematic content appealing to

the general radical-left community. Likewise, the range of musical styles on *Still Wild* may represent an intentional strategy to project diversity or to align with other general, left-oriented political ideologies for the purposes of solidarity and increased support. As biocentrism became assimilated into the scope of anti-industrial capitalist or Marxist ideology as one facet of its agenda, the music sounded out this change. For instance, in the *Li'l Green Songbook*, musicians are individually introduced by a short summary describing their involvement with EF!. While *Still Wild* likewise comprises music by long-time EF! members, it also contains songs by musicians who have never attended a Rendezvous or by those whose ideological priority is clearly oriented elsewhere within the radical left and who may only be peripherally connected to the eco-animal rights cause they seemingly endorse on the album. This may elucidate why EF! never developed a music label while other radical left-wing musicians and bands have managed to thrive. By addressing the myriad of issues surrounding the larger worldview of left-wing radicalism, Marxism, anarchism, or general anti-authoritarianism, musicians and record companies appeal to a considerably broader market than by isolating their socio-political directive to environmental or animal rights issues. The irony here is that it represents a far more lucrative endeavor to present radicalism through ambiguous anti-authoritarian, anti-industrial, or anti-capitalist viewpoints than to dig into exactly “why” one is radical. “Why” initiates the process of division, a process that runs counter to the socially forging influence that music provides, as well as a process potentially restricting the profit margin of record companies.

Many independent radical-left musicians performing acoustic-guitar music, like Rovics, make eco-activism one aspect of their thematic catalogs. They tend to focus more heavily on industrial capitalism, primarily because the industrial capitalist system is viewed as the cause of racial inequality, social injustice, environmental destruction, animal abuse, imperialism, etc. Other musicians among many who follow suit, include Acie Cargill and David Lippman. Cargill, for instance, wrote “Defend the Earth” in tribute to ELF activists; the Youtube video for this song presents a photographic montage of clear cuts, environmental destruction, the EF! logo, and pictures of the activists themselves—specifically members of “The Family.”

(Youtube online 2013f). Yet, Cargill maintains no connection to EF! nor does he participate in ELF direct-action ideology. Lippman, on the other hand, has performed at EF! events, although he does not appear to have retained any long-standing association with the group. His career has been forged on satirical and sarcastic songs, performed under a variety of monikers like “George Stump, Moderate Clearcutter” or his present one, “Wild Bill Bailout.” Lippman’s music embodies the themes of satire and sarcasm that run strongly through EF! music and REARA culture in general. Advocates often interpret these musical attempts at humor function as stress releases for activists, who encounter many challenges and frustrations in their attempts to enact change. The members of Citizen’s Band articulate this, writing on their website,

We believe that capitalism sucks and there are all these greedy capitalists bent on ruling the world and destroying all living things. The fight to change all this is long, hard, and sometimes sickening and laughter is the only medicine that everyone can afford. So we go for laughter in quantity (especially since we’re not that good at music). (Citizen’s band online 2013).

Cherney’s albums are rife with satire and sarcasm, including song titles like “Bush It,” “Xerox the Money,” and “This Monkeywrench of Mine” (a satire of the Christian gospel children’s song, “This Little Light of Mine”). In Foreman’s 1987 Rendezvous speech, he said, “...if I didn’t get drunk now and then, if I didn’t have a sense of humor, I’d strap dynamite on myself and go down to Glen Canyon Dam.” (Youtube online 2013b). Thankfully, beer, humor, and music were abundant at the Rendezvous—Cherney threatened to blow up the same dam, but only in the event of a life-threatening disease.

In its most thoughtful manifestations, sarcasm and satire mockingly uncover and criticize the irony inherent in the targets of their scorn, and can elevate contemptuous ridicule to the level of artistic discourse. Caffrey suggested that the humor and sarcasm of EF! music are a way of bolstering confidence and cultivating the boldness to challenge authority (Caffrey

telephone interview 2013). Indeed, one could take such a sympathetic reading of the satire and sarcasm expressed through EF! music, arguing that such devices candidly expose and censure widespread environmental frivolity and destruction at the hands of Western industrialized society as well as the impotence of so-called democracies to enable meaningful change. On the other hand, the sarcasm and humor often expressed in EF! and REARA music might be interpreted as masking an uncompromising (“no compromise”), self-righteous viewpoint and a condescending attitude towards differing views as so self-evidently wrong/racist/oppressive as to warrant mockery. The humor and sarcasm then become a vehicle through which movement members dehumanize challengers, generalize and oversimplify issues, and manifest hostility towards other viewpoints, practices that could lessen the perceived severity of violent attitudes and actions. Musical satire and sarcasm can create a reductive rhetoric, as expressed through song lyrics, of “thought-terminating clichés” (or what we might call, “thought-terminating satire/sarcasm”) in which the enjoyment of musical mockery replaces a critical engagement with differences. A thoughtful analysis of ideological logic and consistency can be effectively cut short by the enjoyment of the tune, and any form of dissent from the ideas being expressed becomes subject to contemptuous mockery as it spoils the fun.<sup>20</sup> Such differences in perspective on the satire and sarcasm of EF! music and REARA in general present challenges, and most likely, a helpful interpretation resides somewhere in between the two extremes discussed above. Regardless of how one may choose to view this satire and sarcasm, music is undeniably one of the glues that unifies and maintains the group. If we are to believe Cherney that “...music is number one...”, then the music culture and resulting social bonds established by those who unite through their shared enjoyment of the music are key factors in rallying members around a unified purpose and building a sense of commonality.

The strong communal sentiments found in EF! are catalyzed by music and correspond directly to the prosperity of the movement. Caffrey suggests that in recent years the musical life of EF! has suffered and been plagued by diminished numbers, “culturally the structure(s) that would hold things together, like the music, are gone, they’re not there. You don’t go to

an Earth First Rendezvous now and have anything like the experience that you would have had in 80s or early 90s.” (Caffrey telephone interview 2013). He followed in an e-mail, “Tree spikes and beer RIP. Nope. None of that atmosphere left,” and, as EF! itself mentioned, “...there are not as many EF!-specific musicians in our immediate circles today as there were in years past...” (Caffrey online 2013 and Earth First Speaker’s Bureau online 2013). Caffrey and others attribute the downsizing of activists and the weakening of EF! music culture to the aforementioned ideological splintering and re-focus of the group. As ideological consistency within a Marxist or anarchist viewpoint became increasingly important, the biocentrism that guided the Foreman-era EF! has gradually been assimilated among many causes. For Caffrey, current EF! activism is “much, much more rooted in the youth anarchist culture and not rooted in biocentrism...you don’t really hear them talk about it.” (Caffrey online 2013). Bond’s view on the contemporary EF! is similar,

The focus of Animal and Earth Liberation should obviously be the Earth and Animals. Not extreme anarchist fringe ideology or agenda. But this is the case especially with the new EF!. It seems that Earth Lib is only important to these people as long as it’s a caboose to their primary political issues. In the process a lot of great people become alienated from (sic) these groups. People like most of society and most of the activist community that they profess to speak for. I have always admired Foreman’s EF! in part because it was so politically syncretic (Bond online 2013).

In EF!, “room for inconsistency” has narrowed considerably. Ironically, the movement’s broadening of its ideological focus to include other causes of radical-left politics as equally (or perhaps more) important to biocentrism has excluded more people than attracted them. The ideological diversity that characterized EF! has been replaced by a set of issues on which everyone must now agree, and if attendance and cultural life are markers, this shift from singular biocentrism politically disenfranchised more people away than it has widened to embrace them.

During the spring and summer of 2009, EF! organizers embarked on a cross-country tour, dubbed a “Roadshow”, to “renew” the movement and address the distancing of activists. According to their description,

We need to reconnect the multi-generational aspect of Earth First! that has fallen by the wayside in recent years. We need to broaden our network’s base—from radical rural grandparents to revolutionary urban youth. We must re-establish lost relationships with scholars and scientists who resonate with us. We must re-inspire musicians and artists to contribute their passion to our battles.

When it comes down to it, solid movements are based on strong personal relationships; and real relationships don’t go very far over the Internet. We need face-to-face interaction to build trust with—and support for—each other (Earth First! Roadshow online 2013).

Such a statement provides a succinct and insightful assessment of how REARA operates (and radical groups in general), underscoring the importance of culture to the growth and endurance of the movement.

In a foreseeable move—confirming Caffrey’s presumption that the contemporary EF! activist scene has indeed shifted ideological focus—EF! released its latest recording in August of 2013, another compilation CD entitled, *No Compromise: A Compilation in Defense of the Wild*. Yet, the CD stands in steadfast opposition to acoustic-guitar “Gaiabilly;” it is an hour-long collection of relentlessly hard-hitting hardcore/punk/metal songs with mostly eco-activist and anti industrial-capitalist themes and yelling/screaming vocal articulation consistent throughout almost all of the 25 tracks. These songs demonstrate a remarkable consistency of style, as opposed to the diversity of songs on *Still Wild*, and are related through heavily distorted electric guitars, aggressive drumming, yelling and/or screaming vocal articulation, unconventional song forms (very few clearly delineated verse/chorus-based song forms), and an overall thrashingly violent style. The album signals a major genre

shift or stylistic re-direction in EF! music, however such a shift comes as no surprise given that radical eco-animal rights activism and militancy have been, for decades, at the heart of a distinct hardcore/punk/metal sub-culture, denominated: “Vegan Straight Edge” (xVx).

xVx has never held a strong musical presence in the broader EF! movement, but the intersection of these two kindred movements was perhaps inevitable.<sup>21</sup> *No Compromise* is not as much a product of EF! culture as it is the groups’s foray into the musical genre that most likely represents the music preferences of a growing number of its constituency. The songs on *Still Wild*, though diverse in genre, retain a thematic focus on the environment, but *No Compromise* branches out into a broader range of Marxist or anarchist issues, among them: anti-bank/corporation, queer rights, gender equality/binary, immigration, even a song with anti-Christian themes. Like *Still Wild* though, this CD demonstrates alarming moments where human-directed violence is encouraged; in the band interviews booklet accompanying the album, a question is posed to the band Cizana, “If a jaguar could leap from its perch and mercilessly attack anybody, who would you pick to be attacked and why?” (No Compromise 2013). “Donny” from Cizana responds, “Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio, Arizona Governor Jan Brewer, and former Arizona state senator Russell Pearce...Ideally, the jaguar would maul each of them, inspiring other colonizers to abandon the state, too.” (No Compromise 2013).

The following section investigates this unusual counterpart to the acoustic-guitar folk music of EF! and REARA. The heavier edge of eco-animal rights militancy comprises a considerable portion of the REARA musical landscape and is arguably of greater significance because it involves a more outwardly aggressive and violence-endorsing musical subculture. While there are no ALF/ELF concerts, gatherings, or protests because these direct-action ideologies do not engage in such above-ground events, many bands openly affiliate with and promote the goals, ambitions, and predispositions for violence that guide these (dis)-organizations from within the xVx musical subculture. Song examples include, “This is The ALF” by Conflict, “Wrath of Sanity” by Earth Crisis, “24 Hour Hate” by Maroons, “Stop Talking - Start Revenging” by Vegan Reich, “Declaration of War” by Green Rage, among many others. An

important difference, though, is that xVx music originates outside the bounds of organizational support or endorsement. The ALF website, for instance, has merchandise for sale, like books and shirts, but no music. Nonetheless, if young eco-animal rights activists are searching for music to listen to and a musical subculture to articulate their views, this is where many of their choices lie. Or vice versa, if violent activists are going to emerge from a subculture with a “no compromise” commitment to the radical messages of its music culture, xVx is where many are likely to originate.

#### [4]

#### **The Heavier and Straighter Edge of REARA Music: Hardcore, Punk, and Vegan Straight Edge (xVx)**

The 2011 documentary, *If a Tree Falls: A Story of the Earth Liberation Front*, interweaves the history of the ELF with the story of activist Daniel McGowan. At the time of the filming, McGowan was under prosecution for his actions as a member of “The Family,” in which he participated in the ELF arson of an Oregon poplar farm in 2001—an arson perpetrated on the erroneous notion that the popular farm was genetically engineering trees. The documentary traces McGowan’s progress of radicalization that culminated with his involvement in eco-militancy and the ELF. As one might predict, the first step along McGowan’s path was taken with music asserting a significant influence, specifically, when he began attending shows at Wetlands Preserve, an activist rock music club in the TriBeCa neighborhood of Manhattan that promoted and supported environmental causes. Although the club closed in September of 2001, its music shows generated over one million dollars in environmental charitable donations over its thirteen-year history.

The documentary presents McGowan as an impressionable youth searching for meaning in a corrupt and greed-ridden society. Once exposed to the music-driven subculture at Wetlands, McGowan’s impassioned activism grew rapidly: he attended an EF! Rendezvous in Crandon, Wisconsin and was arrested during the planned protest, and he later cultivated associations with more violent activists. The music at Wetlands was a far cry from the acoustic-guitar

music heard at an EF! Rendezvous or a radical-left songwriter show, like Rovics's concert at Revolution Books. The bar enjoyed a well-deserved reputation for marijuana and jam-bands, but was also a homestead for many hardcore and punk acts with some groups coming from the U.K. to perform (420 Times online 2013). The degree to which this music influenced McGowan is not entirely clear from *If a Tree Falls*, and McGowan did not answer my request for an interview. Yet, his experience at Wetlands suggests a relationship between a distinct group of hardcore, punk, and metal bands and the message of radical environmental and animal-rights activism. Delving into this more deeply, we find that militant REARA ideology has been running parallel to the lyrical themes of Vegan Straight Edge, a subgenre evolving from the Straight Edge (sXe) hardcore movement of the early 1980s.

xVx is only one among many genres to espouse environmental and animal-rights defense. A landmark, non-hardcore/punk/metal example is the British rock band, The Smiths, and their 1985 album *Meat is Murder*, featuring the pro-vegetarian title track. In fact, PETA lists this song atop their "Top 10 Animal Rights Songs" list (PETA2 online 2013). But reviewing the entire list is illuminating. Of the remaining nine songs, eight fall squarely into the hardcore, punk, or metal genres, with one lone acoustic-guitar song. Reinforcing this, the ALF website includes a music "jukebox" with free streaming and downloads of songs. Of the 53 different tracks, almost all pop genres are represented, ranging from dialogue/spoken word with instrumental accompaniment to pop-rock funk to Electronic Dance Music (Animal Liberation Front online 2013b). Even so, no genre or umbrella of related genres is represented more strongly than the 20 hardcore, punk, and metal songs, with song titles like "F--k Ted Nugent," "Bomb Your Local KFC," and "I Just Want Action." On the ALF site, it is fairly clear that these musical genres are prominently associated with animal-rights activism.<sup>22</sup>

While the animal-rights component of REARA ideology is slightly stronger in the xVx scene, the EF! *No Compromise* CD demonstrates that there is still considerable attention given to environmental activism within the subgenre, along with a variety of socio-political issues, including immigration, worker's rights, the gender binary, etc. Like acoustic-guitar "Gaiabilly"

and the protest song tradition, musicians in today's xVx scene rarely limit themselves to one aspect or "special interest" cause of general radical-left ideology. And regardless of the distinctions we may draw between the environmental or animal-rights causes of different bands or splitting hairs over their categorization as hardcore, punk, or metal, the liner notes to *No Compromise* make it clear that the movement is, in sum, an "anti-capitalist/anti-hierarchy movement" of anti-authoritarian resistance to what is deemed an oppressive, destructive, and "white supremacist, patriarchal society." (No Compromise 2013).

The intersection of environmental and animal-rights radicalism with hardcore and punk music can largely be traced to the Straight Edge music genre. If we posit, generally speaking, that hardcore emerged as an angrier, heavier, and less-catchy manifestation of punk with distinctly screaming or yelling vocals, then Straight Edge retains most of its musical roots in hardcore. Straight Edge, however, did not evolve as a distinct genre through significant musical differences with hardcore; rather, it delineated itself through ideology. In keeping with the general anti-authoritarian attitude that drove punk, but at the same time rebelling against many aspects of the punk subculture, sXe developed as a musical movement opposed to drugs, alcohol, smoking, and sex as a form of gratification conquest. In essence, it rebelled against the "sex, drugs, and rock and roll" rebellion manifest in punk.<sup>23</sup>

Most important to establishing the worldview of sXe was the band, Minor Threat, and their singer Ian MacKaye, who veritably founded—or at the very least codified the movement's ideology—in 1981 with a 46-second song entitled, "Straight Edge" (Haenfler 2006: 7). The anti-drug and clear-headedness message of the song became a defining maxim of sXe,

I'm a person just like you  
But I've got better things to do  
Than sit around and fuck my head  
Hang out with the living dead

Snort white shit up my nose  
Pass out at the shows  
I don't even think about speed  
That's something I just don't need

I've got the straight edge

I'm a person just like you  
But I've got better things to do  
Than sit around and smoke dope  
'Cause I know I can cope

Laugh at the thought of eating ideas  
Laugh at the thought of sniffing glue  
Always gonna keep in touch  
Never want to use a crutch

I've got the straight edge

The movement was forged on these song lyrics as a lifestyle of self-edification.

Mackaye's message of individualism and sober purity quickly spawned an abundance of variants on sXe ideology, resulting in an array of sub-sXe movements. Bands and their fans adopted straight-edge attitudes on almost any issue. For instance, the ideology intersected with religion and produced Christian sXe bands, like those now represented on the Facedown Records label. Sociologist Ross Haenfler—a sXe-er himself and noted scholar on the sXe movement—sheds light on this peculiar ideological partitioning that included a Christian sXe sub-genre, suggesting that, "...sXe's emphasis on clean living, sexual purity, lifetime commitment, and meaningful community was reminiscent of youth evangelical

movements, while the focus on self-control suggested Puritanical roots. In addition to these conservative influences, sXe was, in many ways, a continuation of New Left middle-class radicalism...The movement's core values reflect this curious blend of conservative and progressive influences." (Haenfler 2004a: 416). The movement as a whole rebelled against the sex and drugs lifestyle that characterized punk, but embraced the values of sXe with such fervor that some fans's ideals overlapped considerably with conservative Christian youth. sXe even blended with the Hare Krishna movement, resulting in "krishnacore" bands, like 108 and Shelter. With the movement being a radical defense of virtue, fans could practice sXe as a customized extension of their personal, political or religious beliefs (Haenfler 2004b: 794). This clarifies why fans in the sXe scene are so diverse in their outlook and why the subculture surrounding the music is so varied and fiercely debated. Musical differences among bands may be miniscule, but what their music represents could be polar opposite sides of an ideological spectrum.

In general, two practices of sXe have developed and remain relevant today: "posi" ("positive") and "militancy." "Posi" can be described as more-or-less tolerant and typically does not assume a violent position against those who live outside of sXe values. Rather, it maintains that the lifestyle of sXe is one of individualism and choice, not of imposed values. In an interview, MacKaye said, "Straight edge was just a declaration for the right to live your life the way you want to. I was not interested in telling people how to do that." (Kuhn 2010: 34). While this scene has its share of violence and fights at shows, the "posi" outlook has characterized many in the sXe scene, especially since the mid/late 1980s. On the other hand, certain sXe bands and fans cast their views in terms of moral absolutes. They frequently adopt an inflexible position and act violently against people engaging in activity counter to their worldview. Within this "militant" outlook, violence was morally justifiable as righteous defense, particularly when the offending action—such as eating meat—impacted or harmed other beings.

The world of sXe is complex and often confusing. These two trends should not be understood as mutually exclusive worldviews, but as general tendencies of fan and band attitudes. The sXe subculture is, in fact, largely defined by varying degrees of “posi” or “militant” perspectives on how to live sXe, not with these practices as diametrical opposites leaving no room in between. “Posi” and “militancy,” then, operate as degrees of varying practices within sXe, not as set categories within which all sXe-ers would clearly identify themselves. Adding to this intricacy, “militancy” should not be mistaken for a distinct movement within sXe labeled, “hardline,” an ultra-conservative, right-wing form of militancy that emerged in the early 1990s. “Hardline” was not only vegan, but combatively pro-life and viewed sex only as a vehicle for procreation, which led to a homophobic bent as homosexuality was seen as unnatural sexual deviance with no reproductive goal. The “hardline” label is often applied incorrectly when describing those who are prone to violence in sXe. Especially with reference to militant Vegan Straight Edge, the moral absolutism might be interpreted as a “hardline” attitude. Still, xVx-ers can be critical and condemning of non-vegans but not violent, in which case they represent a more “posi” leaning; or, they may advocate and enact violence, representing “militancy.” But xVx-ers can also be “hardline,” which would position them as violence-oriented on the topic of veganism, but clearly distinguish them from the militant side of xVx because they would also be, for instance, pro-life. As a case in point, the Canadian band, Chokehold, professed violent attitudes about strict veganism and animal rights in its songs, but was adamantly pro-choice. Thus, they were a militant xVx band, not “hardline.” It may be helpful to keep in mind that not every sXe-er is straight edge about veganism, not every xVx-er is militant, and not every militant xVx-er is “hardline.”

While the majority of those in the sXe scene more-or-less aligned with “posi” attitudes, the militant side emerged when sXe became infused with animal-rights and vegan-oriented bands. Haenfler’s work provides an important history of the movement, and he cites the late 1980s and early 1990s as the pivotal time during which sXe developed an animal-rights and vegan orientation (Haenfler 2006: 13). Many of the original animal-rights/vegan bands were

“posi” and adopted an outspoken, but generally non-violent, attitude towards those who did not espouse a similar lifestyle. Youth of Today, for instance, is largely credited with first promoting veganism and animal rights in their song, “No More” (1988) (Haenfler 2006: 13).

Meat eating flesh eating think about it  
 So callous to this crime we commit  
 Always stuffing our face with no sympathy  
 What a selfish, hardened society so  
 No More  
 Just looking out for myself  
 When the price paid is the life of something else  
 No More  
 I won't participate

The militant and self-identified “hardline” side of sXe animal rights and veganism emerged a few years later. In 1990, the California band Vegan Reich released the EP, *Hardline*, a collection of four songs that would codify the ideology of the “hardline” movement, define its violent position, and infuse a more metal sound into sXe music. On the 7” vinyl release, the group included the “Hardline Manifesto,” a concise profession of the ideals of the movement.<sup>24</sup> The track, “This is it,” aptly demonstrates the perspective shift from “just looking out for myself” (“posi”) to “hardline” on the issue of animal rights and veganism.

This is the final solution to mankind's endless transgression,  
 for earth's liberation a vegan revolution.  
 Beyond the confines and false divisions of alignment  
 with color age or fashion no alliance given to any nation  
 to earth alone is our devotion.  
 Guided by the purest convictions to harm no innocent life for our existence  
 self reliant and free of the addictions that lead the weak on a path of destruction.

We've attained perfection in ideology there's no others of comparison.  
The highest stage in mankind's evolution without question is Veganism.  
And with this higher wisdom we offer you salvation but be warned,  
if you refuse it you'll face extermination.  
Cos it's no personal decision nor a matter of opinion  
when the choice you make destroys all life in the ecosystem.  
Your victims have been voiceless so we've spoken for them.  
Now tired of wasting our breath there will be no more talking.  
This is it, no second chances, take heed it's your last warning.  
You'd better lock yourself inside because the storm is fucking comin'

Vegan Reich was perhaps the most important band in establishing the “hardline” movement and was followed soon thereafter by other “hardline” groups like Raid and Abnegation.

The rise of xVx militancy, in which the single issue of violent eco-animal rights defense defined the sub-genre, was catalyzed to a large extent by the band, Earth Crisis. Although groups like Chokehold and Conflict were also influential in pioneering militant ideology in xVx, Earth Crisis was more important in popularizing—if we can use this term for describing such a small group—the movement's worldview. Their album *Destroy the Machine* (1995), for instance, is rampant with lyrics endorsing ALF/ELF-style direct action. The opening lines to their songs, “Destory the Machines” and “New Ethic” read like passages from EF!, ALF, and ELF direct-action essays: “Destroy the machines that kill the forests, that disfigure the earth. Ecotage when efforts to reason fail and no longer have worth. Direct action is the only choice when lands are faced with destruction,” and “This is the new ethic. Animals' lives are their own and must be given respect. Reject the anthropocentric falsehood that maintains the oppressive hierarchy of mankind over animals.” On the 1998 track, “Ultramilitance” from *Breed the Killers*, the group again lyrically endorses EF! and ALF/ELF direct action, claiming that “legal channels have been exhausted” and praising the “salvation of innocents” from mink farms, “Now this war has two sides, Ultramilitance.”

The militant side of xVx, which broke from “posi” attitudes on animal rights and veganism in its advocacy of violent direct action, was more than militant posturing; indeed, many fans enacted these messages. They imposed their dogmatic worldview not only on those outside the movement, but also on those within it, going so far as to target MacKaye. In an interview he recalled,

They were very dogmatic and their main issue, as far as I could tell, were (sic) animal rights. So at one point I received some information from them, a declaration of sorts. It said that all life was precious, and they laid it all out in detail. And the text said, “We will educate you about this, and if you do not accept the education, then you have waived your status as a living thing.” That’s basically what it said. I mean it wasn’t quite as crude but it was pretty fucking close. Essentially, they were saying, “We will give you a chance; but if you don’t agree with us, we’re gonna beat your ass!” (Kuhn 2010: 38).

Incidents of random violence followed militant xVx fans and they developed a well-deserved reputation for carrying out group attacks on individuals who were seen drinking, smoking, or otherwise breaking the movement’s core values (Haenfler 2006: 90). These incidents garnered enough attention through their severity and frequency that the movement (often generalized as the entire sXe movement not as the militant xVx subgroup) was placed on the gang lists of many law enforcement agencies. Haenfler reports that officials in Salt Lake City, Utah, where xVx had perhaps its strongest following in the U.S., identified the movement on its list of domestic terror threats during the winter Olympics of 2002. He also cites an interview on ABC’s *20/20* in which a law enforcement officer, Brad Harmon, responded to a question about sXe-ers being comparable to gangs like the Bloods or Crips, “I consider them every bit as dangerous. We see them carry weapons. We see them maiming people. We see them doing millions of dollars of destruction to business people around the city. In other

countries, they call it terrorism. I would say it's about the same thing here." (Haenfler 2006: 90–91).

While we have seen the problems involved in labeling REARA violence as "terrorism," the attacks originating from the militant xVx scene were not solely random acts of violent hooliganism. This movement had an intense impact on listeners, with the music playing a transformative role for some activists. For instance, Rod Coronado is an icon of eco-animal rights militancy and was convicted of crimes committed in the name of EF!, ALF, and the ELF. A recent biography of Coronado claims that he was less influenced by reading Singer's *Animal Liberation* than he was by Conflict's song, "This is the ALF" (Kuipers 2009: 39). Additionally, the book presents an account of Coronado's involvement with an ALF direct-action arson in which the cell members shouted lyrics to this song before they set fire to Oregon State's "Experimental Fur Farm" in 1991 (Kuipers 2009: 114).

In my correspondence with Bond, he directly links his ALF arsons with his involvement in the xVx scene. The following excerpts from our e-mail exchanges clearly document the indispensable role of music in his activism:

As an activist music played (and still plays) a vital roll (sic). I am Straightedge which is a subculture that began in the the punk rock scene on the east coast but quickly became a genre of it's (sic) own. Shortly after I left the slaughterhouse industry and got into Animal Rights activism I stumbled across the album 'destroy the machines' by the Vegan straightedge band Earth Crisis. (sic) which to this day I think has the most amazing Animal and Earth Lib lyrics of anything I have heard before or since. I then became involved in a lifestyle that we used to call 'hardline' which spawned Vegan bands like Raid, Vegan Reich and many others. I was always attracted to how the XVX (Vegan Straightedge) message preached abstinence and compassion form (sic) an aggressive and absolutist point of view. It was the first time that doing what's

compassionate and right was presented to me in a way that appeared, well.... dangerous...

I have noticed however that it's not uncommon to find paraphrased lyrics of songs in ALF communiques. And currently I'm the 7th (that I can think of) incarcerated ALF activist in America that is XVX (Bond online 2013).

Bond's estimated number of incarcerated ALF activists emerging from xVx is significant given that infiltrating and prosecuting eco-animal rights militancy has been challenging for law enforcement. Seven incarcerated xVx-ALF activists may appear little more than a handful, but the North American Press Office of the ALF lists only fifteen people on its lists of "prisoners" and "recently released prisoners". As of the 2006 publication date of Liddick's book, he claims that there were only about a dozen ELF activists ever arrested (Animal Liberation Front Press Office online 2013, and Liddick 2006: 83). It is notable that an increase of ALF activism in North America corresponds with the rise of influential xVx bands and "hardline" in the 1990s (Animal Liberation Frontline 2013).<sup>25</sup> The connection between xVx and REARA—the ALF in particular—is convincing from these accounts. Haenfler mentions, moreover, that, "...connections to the Animal Liberation Front landed Salt Lake City (SLC) sXers on Fox's *America's Most Wanted* program..." and Bond wrote on his blog, "In North America I'm proud to say that the A.L.F. and Vegan Edge have always had a very symbiotic relationship." (Haenfler 2006: 90, and Support Walter online 2013).

The role of xVx in REARA culture and activism is elucidated even further by an exploration of the age, racial, and gender profiles of those involved in arson and the more violent direct actions of REARA. Liddick's study suggests that the majority of eco-animal rights criminality comes from young, white men (Liddick 2006: 82–83). While women are no doubt well-represented in the movement and perhaps constitute a majority in REARA overall, most of the ALF/ELF-style violence and arson is perpetrated by young, white men. In Joosse's examination of the ELF, he remarks that, "given that violent actions are most likely to be

perpetrated by those who are young and male, movements like the ELF which seek to instigate violent actions do best when their propaganda targets those demographics.” (Joosse 2007: 360). It should then come as no surprise that xVx is dominated by a hypermasculine environment comprised primarily of young, white men. In a random sample of seventeen convicted REARA criminals, fifteen were under the age of 30 when they committed their illegal acts. The music’s principal audience is dancing (or moshing) in time with the demographic of those predisposed for much of REARA’s most violent direct action.

Although militant xVx is dogmatic in its message, a few obvious questions arise: if one cannot understand the lyrics due to the yelling/screaming, how much importance do the lyrics really carry? If one cannot understand the ideology from the vocal articulation, what is the role of the message in a scene driven by music? In most cases, the initial point of attraction for sXe and xVx seems to be the sonic, not lyrical, impact of the music. The timbres and sonic affect of these songs create the initial appeal for many fans. They may also be drawn by the general anti-authoritarian themes resonating in the subculture, but it appears that they later come to understand or embrace the specific ideology motivating the music. This stands in stark contrast to the acoustic-guitar music of REARA. Unlike the Rovics concert, the acoustic-guitar “Gaiabilly” music of EF!, or REARA music in general in which the music’s message is without doubt the primary focus, xVx presents its radical ideology in an almost incomprehensible form.

This point is literally sounded out through a brief comparison of the two recent EF! CDs (*Still Wild* [2009] and *No Compromise* [2013]). *Still Wild* leans heavily towards acoustic-guitar “Gaiabilly” and is about the message of the music—one can clearly hear the words, and the clarity and intention of the lyrics purpose the music. Conversely, *No Compromise* consists entirely of hardcore and punk, and is about the sonic impact of the music. With the yelling/screaming vocal articulation, the lyrical message is almost unintelligible. Most likely, the listener would never discern the political motivations of these bands if not for the liner notes. The same could be proposed for the majority of hardcore, punk, or metal songs listed

on the ALF “jukebox.” It is virtually impossible to understand the violent doctrine from the music itself.

The present-day xVx scene has changed considerably according to Bond. “Hardline” has faded into relative obscurity, and throughout our e-mail exchanges and on his blog posts, he repeatedly criticizes today’s xVx bands and fans for losing touch with the founding ideology in favor of popularizing lyrics to attract a larger crowd or posing an xVx lifestyle with no participation in activism,

Back when I was a kid I’d say a lot more kids were into sXe and XVX for the message than nowadays. This is reflected in the lyrics of the bands. Most of today’s sXe bands if you read their lyric sheets at best they will say that that (sic, “they”) don’t like drugs, or they might scream ‘STRAIGHTEDGE’! in a song. But no one really explains why drugs are detrimental to society or get (sic) specific at all about much of anything. Here’s an experiment, look at the old lyrics of bands like youth of today, gorilla biscuits, Vegan Reich or Raid and compare them to any post 2005 American sXe band. The music has become better produced but has so little to say...Today though it’s all about the sound of the music, your friends, and the sound of the music and your friends... (Bond online 2013).

I remember going to a show about 5 years ago...I think it was ‘Shai Halud’ and I was talking to this kid about coming out to the sanctuary to help the Animals and he smiled at me and said, “Walter, you’re so message based,” and then walked away. As I began delving into the lyrics of most so-called XVX bands post 2000, I see a steady trend where it’s cool to get Vegan and Animal Lib themed tattoos, it’s cool to announce in the coversheet that such and such a band supports a Vegan Straightedge lifestyle, and then it’s really cool to never mention any Animal Lib or reasons for Straightedge in your lyrics.

This apathy would be tolerable to me if it was only affecting a music scene. But it's not. It diverts the message that replenishes the underground resistance. As a musician you can have great influence (Earth Crisis ring any bells?) And you also have a level of free speech that cannot be exercised anywhere else. You can sing in a song about shooting vivisectionists in the face or even how to make a car bomb, but I can't write about those in an article. This is why tactically music to go along with the revolution has always been important in every time and place (Support Walter online 2013).<sup>26</sup>

Bond's commentary not only reinforces the idea that the sonic elements of this music seem to be the points of appeal for fans more than ideology, but it is a lucid assessment of music's important role in xVx activism and radicalism in general.

\* \* \*

### ***Postlude, "I'm a better anarchist than you"***

July 28, 2013. Honolulu, Hawai'i. When Rovics was approximately halfway through his set, he again entertained the small audience with one of his satirical songs. But this time, the scorn of his satire was not a political figure or mainstream values. He introduced the tune by describing a man who had driven to Crawford, Texas to support the "Camp Casey" anti-Iraq War protestors who had pitched tent in front of former U.S. President George W. Bush's ranch. According to Rovics's story, the man did not realize that the county was dry and subsequently drove quite a distance to buy some beer for himself and a few fellow protestors. Upon returning from his fatiguing trip, some of the younger protestors apparently chastised him severely for buying non-union beer.

Rovics was so incensed and frustrated by the "ideological purity" of this younger generation that he made them the butt of the joke in his song, "I'm a better anarchist than you." Clearly, he had some complaints about the self-righteous attitudes expressed by the

younger, anarchist faction of the radical left. Ironically cast in a straight-ahead punk style, the song pulls no punches at his anarchist cohorts and lyrically mocks them as being overly sanctimonious on issues like the environment, gender binary, vegetarianism, and direct-action violence. The song is one of his most viewed and “liked” on YouTube, with over 52,000 combined views, 367 “likes” (only 13 “dislikes”), and now is set to animated music video (Youtube online 2013g).

“I’m a better anarchist than you” captures many of the themes that have been running throughout this study. A satirical acoustic-guitar song lyrically mocks those with smug attitudes about a variety of general radical-left, socio-political topics. It also musically resounds the rifts frequently created between incompatible and even conflicting ideologies within left-wing radicalism. Indeed, Rovics may agree with many anarchist perspectives on gender, racial, class equality, or the problems of representative democracy, but he finds their militancy worthy of satirical contempt. In short, he is reprimanding them in this song that there is a time and a place for everything, so chill out. Yet, none of us are without contradiction, and while Rovics may chastise the loud piety of anarchists, one can only imagine their response at seeing the man who wrote a song for Judi Bari and who performed at a Marie Mason benefit eating chicken at the pot luck. A hardlining xVx-er might respond, in kind, with their own song...

“Fuck you, shut your fucking mouth.

We didn’t ask for your opinion.

We’re telling you the way it is so sit back and listen.

Your position is irrelevant to this situation,  
it’s black and white, you’re wrong, we’re right,  
and you’d better come to that realization.

Because it’s murder plain and simple,  
no justification for the taking of a life without provocation.

You’d be guilty of crimes in courts throughout the nation,

if your victim was human you could face execution...

Belsen, Auchwitz (sic), Dachau the similarity is frightening.  
A master race mentality of liberty for those with superiority.  
Your moral civilized society is built on brutality and cruelty.  
Where normality is insanity and sanity is extreme ideology.  
Like the resistance to Nazi Germany, we don't obey laws of brutality.  
So expect no fucking mercy, if you're guilty you will pay.  
No chances to discuss it, you're gonna fucking hang.  
Terrorists and hooligans? Just you fucking wait!  
If that's the image you create of us, you ain't seen nothing yet.  
What did you think this was a college debate?  
This is war so stay the fuck out of the way  
We're coming through that door.  
And once we free those enslaved we'll even up the score.  
Guilty of murder you'll face the new law!"

Vegan Reich, "The Way It Is"

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The following article is excerpted from the fourth chapter of my forthcoming book, *Radicalism and Music: An Introduction to the Music Cultures of al-Qa'ida, the Racist Skinheads, Christian-Affiliated Radicalism, and Eco-Animal Rights Militancy*, presently under contract for publication by Wesleyan University Press.

<sup>2</sup> Revcom fervently opposes the policies of Barack Obama, claiming he is worse than Republican politicians and mockingly referring to him as “O-bomb-a” due to the President’s approval of drone strikes. In general, the radical and militant left views the mainstream political left with strong animosity, appropriately expressed in Rovics’s song, “Democrats Make Me Want to Vomit,” in which he sings, “Democrats make me want to vomit, Liberals make me want to hack, They love to talk like they are friends of you and me, And then every time they stab us in the back.”

<sup>3</sup> Elaborating further, eco-animal rights militancy can be viewed as an intertwined branch on the tree of radical-left politics. While there are groups and musicians singularly oriented to environmental and animal-rights defense, the Rovics concert and his song typology demonstrate how activists and their music more often move among these topical branches, including social injustice, racial equality, gay/queer civil rights, worker’s rights, and environmental and animal rights. Frequently, eco-animal rights militancy is not the sole or even the strongest ideological commitment of REARA members oriented towards violent action. They are more likely to hold fervent anti-authoritarian/government and anti-capitalist/corporate views, but to enact them through the causes of environmental or animal-rights defense. In an e-mail correspondence, incarcerated Animal Liberation Front (ALF) activist, Walter Bond, summarized this point using the example of the hardcore music movement called Straightedge (sXe), “Straightedge (if that’s what you were) was by far the primary issue, Not ‘why’ you were edge.” (Bond online 2013). Being Marxist, anarchist, or anti-industrial capitalist is the “primary issue” or credo of radical-left activism, and the specific cause of an organization (social justice, racial equality, worker’s rights, gender or queer rights, environmental or animal rights) often becomes absorbed within these broader contexts as the effect of capitalism and/or industrialism. Many members and activists within the contemporary movement—as evidenced by the Rovics show—view REARA as one issue within a larger coalition of socio-political issues, with the larger Marxist, anarchist, or anti-industrial capitalist viewpoint holding priority.

<sup>4</sup> Many of the perpetrators of violence within militant left-wing groups lack, and have lacked, ideological unity beyond the general notion that the present capitalist, democratic system needs to be overthrown via violent revolution. A good historical case in point of the ideological diversity of the radical left is the Weather Underground (1969–ca. 1981). Members of this organization were responsible for murders, robberies, jailbreaks, and almost two dozen bombings that targeted “symbols or institutions of Amerikan injustice,” according to a “Declaration of a State of War” issued by a then-leader Bernadine Dohrn. Yet, Dohrn’s “Declaration” is a disjointed ramble, weaving together calls for socialist/communist political revolution (including an obligatory Che Guevara quotation), black-power advocacy, marijuana legalization, the end of American imperialism, and twice affiliating hippie drug counterculture with armed violence, “Guns and grass are united in the youth underground. Freaks are revolutionaries and revolutionaries are freaks. If you want to find us, this is where we are. In every tribe, commune, dormitory, farmhouse, barracks and townhouse where kids are making love, smoking dope and loading guns...” Such an example illustrates the multitude of

ideological platforms, even contradictory ones like associating gun violence with hippie counterculture, purported by members of this group; they were not seemingly motivated by a straightforward ideological platform beyond the belief that, “Revolutionary violence is the only way.” This predisposition for violence “by any means necessary”—a phrase reverberating throughout the rhetoric and literature of many past and present radical left-wing groups—aligns them with civil-rights advocacy even if they hold no such political motivation, and seems to be a primary ideological slogan instigating action. The same priority of action-over-ideological-consistency holds true for many in REARA.

<sup>5</sup> The ELF website claims that the movement started in the U.S. in 1977 when John Hanna put home-made napalm bombs on crop dusters in Salinas, California. Even so, the roots of the present ELF clearly trace back to 1992.

<sup>6</sup> A similar relationship exists between PETA and the ALF; while PETA originated after the ALF, it represents an above-ground or legal organization that sometimes provides support for ALF activities—ALF activists charged with crimes have received financial backing for their legal fees from PETA (Liddick 2006: 39–54). SHAC was founded in 1999 in Britain and focuses directly on Huntingdon Life Sciences and its business partners. SHAC has been extremely aggressive in targeting people, including harassment, death threats, and beatings, and developed an active U.S. criminal presence when Huntingdon Life Sciences moved its headquarters to New Jersey in 2002. Their primary mission is to shut down Huntingdon Life Sciences for repeated violations of animal cruelty laws.

<sup>7</sup> Caffrey claims to have recruited Rodgers into EF!. Rodgers went on to lead one of the most notorious arsons in ELF history, operating as the lead for the Vail, Colorado ski resort arson which caused over \$24 million in damages. Rodgers committed suicide while in police custody.

<sup>8</sup> Organizationally speaking, REARA could be traced back to the founding of environmental conservation groups like the Sierra Club (1892) or the Wilderness Society (1935).

<sup>9</sup> Liddick makes the point that a call for “eco-tage,” comparable to “monkeywrenching,” appears in Thoreau, who contemplated on the influence that a dam in the Concord River had on fish, “Who hears the fishes when they cry? I for one am thee, and who knows what may avail a crowbar against Billerica dam.” (Liddick 2006: 13).

<sup>10</sup> Other scholars note this playful use of terminology, Perlstein 2003: 171–72, and Joosse 2007: 360.

<sup>11</sup> Also, see the April Fool’s joke of 2013 in which the *Earth First! Journal* headquarters was claimed to have been burned down by the ELF for the reason that, “In light of global opposition to capitalism, and the murder of our planet at the hands of capitalists, the Journal’s use of capitalization needs to be stopped. We chose this office because it contains the bulk of the machines—the computers and other gizmos—these so called ‘luddite’ office-slaves use to contaminate the radical print industry and enrich a sick and hierarchical grammar that privileges the first letters of sentences, diminishing the freedom and worth of all those that follow, trapped between an opening dictator and a period (or some other sort of end punctuation.)”

<sup>12</sup> The ELF has its own arson manual (without the rampant sarcasm, but still present at times), *Setting Fires with Electrical Timers: An Earth Liberation Front Guide* (“Fierant Collective,” 2001).

<sup>13</sup> Bari was an iconic organizer/figurehead within EF! who died in 1997.

<sup>14</sup> Foreman’s original implementation of biocentrism was as an umbrella catch-all that, like Bond’s statement about sXe, was about being “earth first”, not about about “why” you were “earth first.” Certain aspects of biocentrism ran counter to general radical-left ideology, which eventually held sway over biocentrism in EF!, and the contemporary EF! has become more oriented towards left-wing social issues after Foreman left, to the point that some EF!ers believe the group has lost its focus on biocentrism. In this new view, eco-animal rights activism is contextualized as the product of industrial capitalism, which becomes the more significant issue.

<sup>15</sup> In an interesting twist, the ELF site now claims to disavow violence in favor of working “within the system” to enact change. After decades of endorsing violence “by any means necessary,” the group (or at least its credible, prison-worn non-leadership) appears to recognize the impotence of the leaderless resistance organizational structure and their violent actions. Their rationale is that, while activists may derive inspiration from the “imagined” sense of communal action and an action-over-ideology uniformity of purpose, the sum total impact of their acts is negligible, if not more damaging to the environment as most arson victims eventually rebuild, and perpetrators’ degree of radicalism often serves to discredit the broader environmental movement. Keeping

in mind that the ELF was founded on the premise of militant action, the extent to which this complete reversal will curtail violence committed in its name remains to be seen.

<sup>16</sup> Ironically, the concept of “leaderless resistance” originated in the racist far right and was first promoted in the mid 1960s by radio broadcaster Richard Cotton, a key figure in the National Youth Alliance, which would later become the National Alliance. Decades later, Klansman Louis Beam formalized and popularized the concept. REARA has been far more effective in implementing the strategy originally intended by Cotton and Beam, making cells much less permeable to detection, infiltration, and prosecution.

<sup>17</sup> Andy Caffrey has posted hours of Rendezvous footage on Youtube, mostly dedicated to the music and musicians of EF! from the late 1980s to the mid 1990s.

<sup>18</sup> While other REARA songbook collections have been published, it appears that EF! was one of the first to start this trend. Another collection, “Hootenanny – A Songbook of Radical Campfire Songs,” was published in 2001, featuring many artists, notably among them is Rovics.

<sup>19</sup> “Gaia” refers to the Gaia hypothesis of planetary physiology developed by James Lovelock, which posits that the earth is a unified, evolving system. While the term for Caffrey implies any genre and can be applied to music outside of EF!, within EF! “Gaiabilly” typically manifests as an acoustic-guitar genre. Caffrey’s terminology, specifically “Gaia,” infuses an element of spiritual symbolism into EF! music. “Gaia” invokes the goddess of the earth in ancient Greek religion; she was the primordial mother of all. Even though the group does not have a prevailing religious orientation, some members tend to intertwine elements of eastern religions, particularly Hinduism and Buddhism, or Native American beliefs with their own views on the spiritual essence of the earth. See Bron Taylor’s (2001a, 2001b) work for a more detailed discussion on religion in EF! and REARA. EF! members typically view Christianity with varying degrees of animosity and even mocking humor, as the representative religion of mainstream America. These assertions are supported through songs like, “Smokey Sutra,” a musical setting of the Gary Snyder poem characterizing Smokey the Bear as a manifestation of the Buddha complete with his own Sanskrit mantra; Cherney’s “Spike a Tree for Jesus” and “You Can’t Clearcut Your Way to Heaven,” which sarcastically address the crucifixion and the Christian view of animals and the environment; and Citizen Band’s “Jesus Loves Me (but can’t stand you)” or “Bullshit,” which outright mock Christian beliefs.

<sup>20</sup> “Thought-terminating cliché” is a term popularized by Social Psychologist Robert Lifton in his 1961 book, *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism: A Study of ‘Brainwashing’ in China* (New York: Norton).

<sup>21</sup> Members of Hudson Valley EF!, for instance, held a “punk/metal/folk benefit show” before the 2012 Round River Rendezvous.

<sup>22</sup> SHAC produces a limited number of propaganda videos with musical soundtracks, but there is no specific SHAC-endorsed music or music for sale. Their website includes a variety of what we might consider to be ideological literature that justifies their objectives, but it is not nearly as systematically presented in the form of “ideology” as the material found on the ALF site. In general, the ALF has much stronger Internet presence than the ELF and seems strongly committed to using its website as the primary form of information dissemination, from communiques about recent actions to the ideological justification of violence to videos and music. While the ELF website is a single page in scrolling blog format, the ALF site is so encompassing in its breadth of material that it creates a virtual on-line culture for viewers to explore. As of September 2013, the ALF site had more than 18 million hits.

<sup>23</sup> Black Xs have become a symbol for the movement, stemming from MacKaye’s early experiences in the band, The Teen Idles. Unable to play or attend shows where alcohol was served because they were underage, they convinced club owners to allow them in if they wore large Xs on their hands and agreed not to drink. Since then, the large, black X on one’s hand has become emblematic for sXe.

<sup>24</sup> “HARDLINE MANIFESTO: The time has come for an ideology and for a movement that is both physically and morally strong enough to do battle against the forces of evil that are destroying the earth (and all life upon it). One that cannot be bought, nor led astray by temptation. A movement free of the vices that sedate the mind and weaken the body. An ideology that is pure and righteous, without contradictions or inconsistencies. One that judges all things by one standard and emphasizes personal responsibility and accountability above all else. An overall view on life that not only deals with the external, but also the internal—realizing that a physical entity of oppression, such as the capitalist system (where all life is deemed an expendable resource), is merely

an outward manifestation of the warped values held by the people who run the institutions that control our lives, influence our culture and destroy the earth.

It must also recognize the intrinsic flaw of single issue causes, where the concept of justice is always a selective one (with each special interest group fighting for the rights of those that fall under their personal concern, while neglecting, or in some cases, opposing those rights for others)—moving beyond such failed approaches—to a logical and all encompassing system of thought and program of action, which can and will succeed.

That ideology, that movement, is Hardline. A belief system, and a way of life that lives by one ethic—that all innocent life is sacred, and must have the right to live out it's natural state of existence in peace, without interference. This single ethic ensures that all life, from a foetus, or a grown human (black, white, male or female), to an animal, or it's habitat, is guaranteed equal rights, with liberty for all, regardless of someone's personal bias against them. Under the principals (sic) of the Hardline ideology, all shall be permitted to do as they please as long as their actions do not harm, in any way, the rights of others. Any action that does interfere with such rights shall not be considered a "right" in itself, and therefore shall not be tolerated. Those who hurt or destroy life around them, or create a situation in which that life or the quality of it is threatened shall from then on no longer be considered innocent, and in turn will no long have rights.

Adherents to the hardline will abide by these principals (sic) in daily life. They shall live at one with the laws of nature, and not forsake them for the desire of pleasure—from deviant sexual acts and/or abortion, to drug use of any kind (and all other cases where ones harms all life around them under the pretext that they are just harming themselves). And, in following with the belief that one shall not infringe on an innocent's life—no animal product shall be consumed (be it flesh, milk or egg). Along with this purity of everyday life, the true hardliner must strive to liberate the rest of the world from it's chains—saving life in some cases, and in others, dealing out justice to those guilty of destroying it.

Only with this dedication, and conviction—living a life that is in harmony with our stated goals and beliefs, gaining strength from out purity of body and mind, while actively opposing those who are guilty destroying the world with their poisonous thoughts, deeds and pollution, can we be victorious in the struggle.

<sup>25</sup> Bond felt so deeply affected by Earth Crisis that he had matching Earth Crisis emblems tattooed on either side of his neck. These tattoos, a crossed wrench and tomahawk, reference the long-standing EF! symbol of a pair of crossed wrenches—an obvious nod to *The Monkey Wrench Gang*. Remarkably, the admiration has been mutual. The circumstances of Bond's first arson from 1997 became the subject of the Earth Crisis song, "To Ashes." Bond claimed that a local warehouse was being used as a meth lab and the drug dealers were selling to his brother. When he allegedly confronted the dealers and alerted police, nothing was done. Determined to help his brother and stop the meth dealing, he burned down the warehouse and served four years in prison for arson. Lionizing Bond's action, the band recorded the song on their 2009 album, *To the Death*, and produced an official music video.

<sup>26</sup> One might compare the ideological shift in xVx towards what Bond describes as a general radical anarchist agenda to the re-orientation of EF! ideology. My speculation regarding the xVx scene today is that it has been assimilated into the larger framework of "politically correct" sXe or general Marxist/anarchist/anti-industrial capitalist values. As Bond points out, there are not too many people talking about or involved in animal liberation these days in American sXe. The same thing happened to EF!. Once the left-wing generalists—those broadening the scope of purpose to a more left-wing socio-political agenda—gained momentum, EF! lost its biocentric focus. There is an irony here: by trying to broaden the scope of inclusion to embrace a variety of causes (left-wing causes like worker's rights, racial equality, social injustice, gender/queer rights, etc.), these movements actually narrowed the scope of their appeal because everyone had to agree on more issues. In response to my hypothesis, Bond replied, "I agree with you 100% on this." (Bond online 2013).