

## **Marius Mason's sentencing statement to the Court (Western District of Michigan)**

Lansing, MI

Feb 5th, 2009

Your Honor,

I understand the serious nature of the offenses to which I have plead guilty. I accept responsibility for my actions. At the time, I feared there were dire and immediate threats to both human and non-human lives and that the health and safety of human communities, as well as the ecological integrity of the Earth, were in jeopardy.

I care deeply about my fellow human being and the other living creatures with whom we share this planet. I felt responsible to take extreme action in the hope that it would save lives and halt deadly practices that directly threatened living beings and contributed to the degradation of the environment. I thought that what I was doing would shine a light on these dangerous policies so that an informed public dialogue would ensue and policies would be changed.

In all of my actions, I was present at the moment that property damage was done or a fire was set. I believed that this way I could ensure that no living creature would inadvertently wander into the site and be endangered. At the time, I felt that it was possible to anticipate and avoid any potential threat to life by taking precautions and by being vigilant at each event. This was not possible, despite my efforts.

In particular, the arson at MSU ended up greatly exceeding the scope of my intent, so much so that I almost became the first casualty in these types of offenses.

Even so, other than this one instance of danger to myself, I remained blinded to the risks that others were exposed to during that action. Much later, even years later, I became aware of how other people who came to the scene after I left were frightened and confused. I also found out that students and employees were greatly inconvenienced and lost personal property, that they felt that there might be a continued threat to them. As I understand it now, firefighters entered the building and were also in danger from the fire and the subsequent water damage to the building. I never anticipated or intended that anyone would have been endangered and am truly sorry that anyone's life was put in danger.

For more than twenty years, I participated in every legal avenue open to me as a private citizen to educate and persuade government officials and corporate representatives to reconsider policies. I have also participated in civil disobedience in the style taught by Martin Luther King, Jr. and Mahatman Gandhi, whose non-violent teachings I embraced. Given my commitment to non-violence, it was only under an extreme set of circumstances that I rationalized my actions and put people in danger. I believed that I was taking risks to prevent a greater harm to living beings. I never intended to cause danger of harm to any living thing, and by that standard I failed.

I want to explain that the more I learned of the consequences of deforestation and genetic engineering, the more desperate I felt. I am not opposed to conducting research in the interests of expanding knowledge and bringing improvements to health and well being when it is conducted in a responsible and humane way. But genetic engineering research is often conducted in open-air situations that release contaminated pollen into the environment with devastating effects, as in the case of the terminator seed plants. Communities should have the right to choose or refuse the risks that come with GMO's. What I was more and more aware of in my research and in my dealings with indigenous activists' work around the globe is that the use of GMO's forced on communities by collusion between banks, companies and governments was causing starvation, debt and environmental damage through contact with these GMO's. I felt so much grief for this needless suffering, these needless deaths.

The threat posed to all of us by global warming – for which all of the world's forests act as a buffer against – is direct and dramatic. The increase in catastrophic storms that caused so much death and destruction in New Orleans and in many parts of Asia are attributable to the erratic warming of the planet. Forests sequester carbon and cool the planet. As we lose them, we lose the time we need to find new and more sustainable ways of fulfilling our energy needs before global climate crisis is unavoidable.

But despite my despair, I have never felt entitled to cause physical harm in order to protect life. I have always taken to heart the Buddhist spiritual principle to take no action that would bring physical harm to any living being. Although there were some risks associated with my actions that were unintentional and unanticipated, I had convinced myself they could be eliminated. In retrospect, I see that this was not possible, and I regret it. I acknowledge that greater harm could have happened and that it is very fortunate that no one was physically hurt, and that there was psychological damage done. I acknowledge those risks and knowing what I know now, I would not have taken the same actions.

My actions were individual acts of conscience and I take sole responsibility for them. The property damage was intended to be symbolic and theatrical in nature, not dangerous or threatening to any individual.

I hope to protect my community and the Earth, to respond in defense of the living systems of animals, land and water. I tried to preserve the natural world from destruction because it is all of our home, because its health is necessary for all of use to live well.

I have failed to bring about the changes that I sought and caused harm where I intended none. I am saddened and sorry for that. My hope is that the next generation that inherits this Earth and the responsibility for stewardship will succeed in finding better methods of bringing about the evolution of our society, a transformation that will benefit all those who share this beautiful Earth

Though I have been wrong and misguided in my actions to defend my community and this Earth from harm, I hope to be able to dedicate what's left of my life to service in better ways. I hope to volunteer at a burn center in my community, as some of my past actions risked injuries of that

nature. I have some first aid training from my work experience, as well as training for home health care that might be helpful.

I also hope to be able to contribute to community garden programs, both working with at-risk youth and providing food to distribution programs. These gardens have also been pressed into service to provide herbs to free herbal palliative health care. I have had experience as a volunteer before with these kinds of groups and would be happy to contribute again.

I want to state that I am genuinely sorry to those who have felt personally frightened by my actions. I was unable to see this as a consequence of my actions before, probably as I was so overwhelmed with my own grief and fear that I couldn't empathize with other's perceptions. I meant to inspire thought and compassion, not fear.

I also acknowledge that my actions endangered lives and I am deeply regretful for that. It was never my intention to cause physical harm and certainly not serious injury. I was wrong to believe it could always be avoided. I am and will always be grateful that my actions did not result in death or injury. But I do understand now that the risk was there.

Lastly, I feel that I need to apologize for the expense and suffering that my actions have caused my family, especially my children. I love my family very much and this has been so hard on them. They have been loving and generous in their support for me.

I hope that you will take all of this into consideration as you make your decision, your Honor.