



Green Is the New Red: An Insider's Account of a Social Movement Under Siege

Will Potter

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At a time when everyone is going green, most people are unaware that the FBI is using anti-terrorism resources to target environmentalists and animal rights activists. The courts are being used to push conventional boundaries of what constitutes "terrorism" and to hit nonviolent activists with disproportionate sentences. Some have faced terrorism charges for simply chalking slogans on the sidewalk.

Like the Red Scare, this "Green Scare" is about fear and intimidation, using a word—"eco-terrorist"—to push a political agenda, instill fear and silence dissent. The animal rights and environmental movements directly threaten corporate profits every time activists encourage people to go vegan, to stop driving, to consume fewer resources and live simply. Their boycotts are damaging, and corporations and the politicians who represent them know it. In many ways, the Green Scare, like the Red Scare, can be seen as a culture war, a war of values.

Will Potter outlines the political, legal, extra-legal, and public relations strategies that are being used to threaten even acts of nonviolent civil disobedience with the label of "terrorism." Here is a guided tour into the world of radical activism that introduces the real people behind the headlines and tells the story of how everyday people are being prevented from speaking up for what they believe in.

"Will Potter unveils this complex movement with its virtues and its flaws, the courage of a few and the false bravado of others. I see this book as the definitive overview of the genesis of what is emerging as the most important social movement in human history – the war to save ourselves from ourselves." --Captain Paul Watson, Sea Shepherd Conservation Society

"If we are to survive capitalism's death grip on our discourse and on our lives, it will be in great measure due to the work of people like Will Potter. His courage and integrity, which set him apart from most journalists, are evident throughout this important book, and throughout all of his other crucial work. Thank you, Will Potter." --Derrick Jensen, author of *Endgame*

"Part history, part action thriller and courtroom drama, part memoir, *Green is the New Red* plunges us into the wild, unruly, and entirely inspirational world of extreme environmental activism. Will Potter, participant-observer and partisan-reporter, is the perfect guide, unpacking with wit and skill the most elusive concepts. . . ." --Bill Ayers

Potter (a contributor to *The Next Eco-Warriors*) warns that the U.S. government is using post-9/11 anti-terrorism resources to target environmentalists and animal right activists (in some cases for doing nothing but speaking up). . . . Potter warns of the crumbling of "the legal wall separating 'terrorist' from 'dissident' or 'undesirable,'" and concludes his account with a call to action and a decry of the injustice that results in the "terrorist" label being put on those who threaten American corporate interests. Alarming."--*Publishers Weekly*

"In this hard-hitting debut, journalist Potter likens the Justice Department targeting of environmentalists

today to McCarthyism in the 1950s. . . A shocking exposé of judicial overreach." —*Kirkus Reviews* (Starred review)

Will Potter is an award-winning reporter who has written for publications including the Chicago Tribune, the Dallas Morning News and Legal Affairs, and has testified before the U.S. Congress about his reporting. He is the creator of [www\[dot\]GreenIsTheNewRed\[dot\]com](http://www.GreenIsTheNewRed.com), where he blogs about the Green Scare.

Green Is the New Red: An Insider's Account of a Social Movement Under Siege Details

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From Reader Review Green Is the New Red: An Insider's Account of a Social Movement Under Siege for online ebook

Crabby McGrouchpants says

The "terrorism enhancement" is what it's called, post-9/11: the weighing of crimes with additional consequence, to increase sentencing.

In a manner that should surprise no-one, Christian fundamentalists, murderers of abortion doctors, and other racist-and-other-sorts who've shouted at every available opportunity of their intent to *harm others* have somehow miraculously eluded this classification, while so-designated "eco-terrorists" have fallen under this rubric, since their intent to damage property caused *economic losses* to the corporations in question.

THIS is not something you don't want to see coming: with reports coming in about protesters (of whichever anti-Right Wing sort) ending up on "terrorist" lists, be aware this classification has been well-worn in and trod so the avenues are ready and waiting, à la legal "fast track," to put Lefties behind bars — for *nothing* more than stomping around out-of-doors, civil disobedience-style.

Be prepared, properly allied, and duly wary: These new laws and "inventive" restrictions have been put in place in the recent "who's a terrorist/you're a terrorist" years, and they aren't going anywhere; their application's just being stretched to darn-near-close to "catch all," and the potential is chilling.

Already there are "Communications Management Units" (on-these-shores "Guantanamo Bay"-type prisons) in Terre Haute, Ind., and Marion, Ill., and the prison industry is hungry. As the Republicans in for a majority until 2020 know ... all ... too ... well!

Jason says

A good book. I think the value of this book was its humanization and personalization of a step-by-step account (almost like a journal) of the arrest, repression, trial, and imprisonment of some of the higher profile animal rights and environment activists in recent years in the United States. The reader will get to know the people, as people, who could not just sit and watch as enormous injustices and devastation was constantly happening by corporations and the government. They were compelled to act, not as hardened calculating criminals, but as compassionate humans, in defense of the Earth and animals.

The second invaluable aspect to this book is its thorough descriptions of the secretive and little known CMUs (Communication Management Units) of which there are only two, one in Terre Haute, Indiana and the other in Marion, Illinois. These notorious prisons are meant for "second-tier terrorists" and has some of the harshest restrictions on communication and visits in the prison system. Daniel McGowan, one of the Green Scare defendants, was sent to the CMU in Marion for no known reason.

Definitely worth reading if one isn't familiar with the recent wave of repression in the last decade toward radical environmentalists and animal rights activists.

Josh says

"Although there have been times when activists themselves have made this Green Scare easier, they have not created it: it exists not because of the nature of their words or their actions, but because these movements have grown increasingly effective and accepted. The only way to explain the conflation of mainstream and radical groups as terrorists is to assume that all of it - from ballot initiatives to sabotage - poses a threat."

This paragraph, taken from the last chapter of the book, sums up perfectly what this book is about. Yes, some people involved in the animal rights and environmental movement have made some choices that have come back to haunt them and their movement, but the reality is, on a whole, this movement is being targeted because it is costing multinational companies a lot of money and showing that a better world is possible.

Will Potter's writing is easy to read. This book is a must-read for anyone involved in the animal rights and environmental movement, but it should also be read by anyone that is concerned with civil liberties. I'd recommend that anyone and everyone read this book.

Meghan says

Traces the history of environmental activism and the ways in which activists have been targeted by the FBI in ways similar to COINTELPRO in the 1960s. Potter details the amount of resources devoted to fighting animal activists and the Earth Liberation Front as the number-one domestic terrorism threat - pure insanity. And don't we all love it when undercover FBI agents infiltrate vegan potlucks and try to incite some violence? This book makes me so upset.

Scott Rhee says

Will Potter's "Green is the New Red" is an excellent reportage of how our government continues to tread on our individual liberties, especially if you happen to have pro-environmentalist leanings, and even more specifically if you are an activist for animal rights.

Potter admits early on that while he attempts to be objective, this is difficult for him as someone who considers himself an environmentalist and for an incident in which he was involved that was the impetus for the research for this book.

In 1998, as a new reporter for the Chicago Tribune, Potter offered to disperse leaflets that criticized a company for its many egregious animal rights violations. FBI agents immediately rounded up and arrested Potter and several others passing out literature. During the course of the interrogation (in which Potter was still kept out of the dark as to why he was being arrested), the FBI agents said that he would be placed on the domestic terrorist list if he didn't cooperate in naming names. All this, for passing out leaflets.

Frightened and confused, Potter felt that he needed to dig deeper into what he saw as an insidious trend, since 9/11, of labeling groups of people as "terrorists" for crimes that did not fit into a general consensus and definition of terrorism.

He soon found out that therein lied the problem: an adequate and specific definition of "terrorism" had never actually been stipulated by the government. What Potter discovered was multiple definitions across multiple

governmental agencies, and this was just the federal government. Most if not all states had their own definitions of "terrorism".

He also soon discovered that many of these "eco-terrorists", as they were labelled by government agencies and the media, were often receiving twice or more than twice the sentencing that white supremacists, neo-Nazis, or Muslim terrorists were receiving. Keep in mind, too, that, according to the statistics of various governmental agencies, including Homeland Security, FBI, CIA, and others, the number of human and animal casualties resulting from "eco-terrorist" activities has been, to date, zero.

So, Muslim terrorists, whose actions continuously result in human casualties here and overseas, are given lesser sentences than activists who have released animals from laboratories and burned down buildings resulting in no loss of life.

Clearly, the value of property is more important than the value of human life to the government. No surprise, since our government is practically run by corporations, many of whom do not like animal rights activists.

This book will make you mad. It should make you mad, especially if you value things like First Amendment rights and the basic freedoms upon which our country was founded.

Potter has done an excellent job revealing an issue that has perhaps been kept hidden from the eyes and ears of the general public by a ridiculously super-wealthy group of corporations (some of which, not surprisingly, own media outlets such as FOX News and CNN) who believe that they can do anything they want, including the needless mass slaughter of animals and the destruction of the environment, not just to make a profit but simply because they can.

Sarahjane says

This book makes me wish I had finished my history PhD. Then at least I could make it required reading for a few college students. It should be required for them all. It gives context to our murky times, where taking moral stands is getting confused with terroristic activity, without oversimplifying what are deeply contested understandings of the path to a better tomorrow. Green is the New Red is an essential text for anyone who believes in free speech, or is interested in the future of American democracy.

City Lights Booksellers & Publishers says

"At times, the reader might mistake this work of nonfiction for a gripping crime novel, only to remember that everything in here is shockingly true. It is in this way that Potter effectively drives his points home and proves his overarching thesis, that the Justice Department's targeting of environmentalists is near identical to 1950s McCarthyism." --Indie Street

"While the link between separating recyclables and hijacking planes is far from obvious, the labeling of 'eco-terrorism' has been applied to many aspects of this social movement. Named the 'No. 1 domestic terrorism threat' by FBI deputy assistant director John Lewis six years ago, Potter argues that the fear tactics involved in applying such an evocative term to radical activism is an attempt to intimidate that mirrors the Red Scare of the mid-20th century (which was in fact the second wave of the government's anti-Communist focus)." --*Austin Examiner*

"An up-to-date crash-course overview of the history of radical environmentalism as well as a study on the scare tactics that the government, the CIA, and several multi-million dollar corporations use against environmental activists, which share certain similarities with tactics used during McCarthyism and the Red Scare. This book is about the Green Scare – this book is at times scary, at times hopeful, and at all times important." --Urchins Movement

"In this hard-hitting debut, journalist Potter likens the Justice Department targeting of environmentalists today to McCarthyism in the 1950s . . . A shocking exposé of judicial overreach." --*Kirkus Review*

"Part history, part action thriller and courtroom drama, part memoir, 'Green is the New Red' plunges us into the wild, unruly, and entirely inspirational world of extreme environmental activism. Will Potter, participant-observer and partisan-reporter, is the perfect guide, unpacking with wit and skill the most elusive concepts--his discussion of 'terrorism' as myth and symbol is the finest I've ever read. He takes us inside the first moments of a movement in the making--idealistic, hopeful, deeply human in its aspirations and its oh-so-human failings--and he reports brilliantly on a ruling power willing to hollow out any sense of authentic democracy in its futile attempt to maintain dominance, privilege, and their arid version of reality. Green is the New Red is an indispensable book that will change the way we think about commitment, the limits of protest, and the possibility of radical change." --Bill Ayers

"If we are to survive capitalism's death grip on our discourse and on our lives, it will be in great measure due to the work of people like Will Potter. His courage and integrity, which set him apart from most journalists, are evident throughout this important book, and throughout all of his other crucial work. Thank you, Will Potter." --Derrick Jensen, author of Endgame and many other books

Dylan says

I hope that this book will be very widely read. Like the revelations of the government's illegal spying, harassment, and bogus convictions that hearings on COINTELPRO brought to light (see Agents of Repression), Potter's research into efforts by industry and government to repress radical environmentalism brings together some poorly understood political issues. Most important of them all, is the fact that activists using traditionally legal tactics have now been convicted on terrorism charges.

I was only faintly aware that animal liberation-type activity has been going on since well before the 1990s--the first instance, Potter claims, occurred in 1977. Even more significant is the fact that by the late 1980s, as the environmental movement became increasingly popular, cool-headed discussions of direct action tactics were appearing in the mainstream media. Until the end of the 90s "eco-terrorism" was explicitly "not on the radar" of law enforcement (55-6). Potter argues that all this changed when politicians got involved. In 1998, the first hearing on "eco-terrorism" was held. And after 9/11/2001, environmental and animal rights direct action came under increasing persecution, soon being elevated to the "top domestic terrorism threat." However, this sudden concern was not explained by any increase in the incidence of the sorts of crimes being targeted.

Recent efforts to disrupt, discredit, and destroy the movements associated with the ELF and ALF use the new legal framework of terrorism instead of existing criminal law. Potter's shows that no valid argument has been made for this change. Counterproductively, this trend marginalizes environmental and animal rights activists in general, convincing more of the moderates among them of the need to radicalize in order to make any real progress because the system seems irredeemably opposed to their values. Just think if all the effort involved in this anti "eco-terrorism" campaign were directed instead toward supporting legal activism and creating new legislation. (Remember the adage, "If you can't beat 'em, join 'em"?) The extreme wing of the movement

would probably not be so desperate that they'd feel the need to resort to property destruction, intimidation, etc. Marginalization leads to radicalization. School shootings, always by unpopular or alienated kids. Germany after WWI. Duh.

While reversing this marginalization would be a far more effective strategy toward preventing the illegal acts in question, the reason that will probably not happen is that proponents of "eco-terrorism" legislation and prosecutions aren't the least bit interested in environmental protection or animal rights--because they are (or are funded or influenced by) capitalist interests who profit from unsound environmental practices or animal exploitation. The movement against "eco-terrorism" is driven by corporate profit and is, therefore, opposed to any obstacles--legal protest or illegal--to doing business. (If you're unaware of the extent of this corporate influence, Potter documents it quite well.) Narrow private interest is not--nor is anything else--a basis for criminalizing a political movement, but the disregard for free speech exhibited by those behind this "eco-terrorism" meme is quite evident.

Potter argues, beyond this political critique, that this conflict of interests is essentially cultural (242-7). Like the Red Scares and COINTELPRO last century, this "green scare" is another manifestation of manipulated fears of a segment of the population who are told the "American way of life" is threatened, as alternative lifestyles and values associated with these movements (vegetarianism, etc.) become more widely accepted. The late Michael Crichton even made (absurdly nihilistic) "eco-terrorists" the subject of a novel. Their fear is ultimately not of "eco-terrorism" but of the shifting of values it represents within modern society. I would add, these shifts are not always perceived to be in the interests of capital, in which cases the new movements become political targets. As this tragic conflict unfolds, let's remember who it's between: people who value capital first and people who value the life of the planet first.

Gemini says

I thought this book was so amazing, not just well written but the story itself. I didn't want to put the book down. I was glad to have been able to hear Will Potter speak when he came to Harvard University. I remember parts of this story but didn't really get the scoop of what happened until a friend told me. I was outraged. I just couldn't believe what had happened. After AETA (Animal Enterprise Terrorist Act) passed people didn't realize what that meant & how it was going to effect them. As an animal rights activist & environmentalist since college, I never knew to what extent people went through in order to save them. I had heard about the various things groups like Greenpeace & PETA had done along w/ Kim Bassinger's fight about the beagles being tested on in Long Island. But what happened here w/ what became known as the SHAC (Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty) 7 was a story that had to be heard by all. I am stunned by the stories of each person & how things transpired. What the SHAC 7 did was heroic but also epic in being able to shut down the mega research corporations. People may not agree w/ their methods of how they did it, but it nonetheless garnered attention that other companies & gov't agencies had to rethink things & come up w/ AETA. It was just complete bs for AETA to even have been a thing, unfortunately only so much you can do about though. Being able to be a pen pal to a few of the SHAC 7 members was also really inspiring to me & how they stuck it out. Reading this book really gave me a different perspective on what they actually endured & how they managed to stay strong throughout the entire ordeal. If I could thank them in person for all their work, I would. They all deserve medals.

Sharlyn says

It's a little embarrassing to admit it took me this long to finally read Green is the New Red, but it didn't

disappoint! I can't really recommend this book enough, even if you think you're pretty familiar with the arguments it is going to make. It's just a really thorough, brilliant, and enjoyable read. (PS: Please double the fervor of this if you're a law student who does civil liberties stuff but isn't familiar with the repression directed at environmental or animal rights movements.)

Erin says

I've been remiss. I finished this book just before I left for Peru and despite managing to write a review I never posted it. In the interest of full disclosure I received this book from the Good Reads' giveaway program. Regardless, it has landed on my essential reading shelf for a number of reasons.

Maybe you were in a neighborhood where Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty (SHAC) put up posters. Even now, I remember them vividly - charges that they killed puppies. As a jaded teenager, I never paid much attention to them - I figured if they had to use such a sensationalist charge to tug at my emotions the whole deal was probably absurd. Perhaps I was also somewhat offended that they thought they needed such an extreme charge to get me involved.

I like to think that maybe ten years later I'm a little wiser and a little less jaded, but regardless, enter Green is the New Red. I was surprised to find SHAC's story in here, along with a number of other animal rights and environmental activists, specifically those who were a part of ALF and ELF. I also like to think I have a decent awareness of the government's tactics when it comes to social movements - I know they killed Fred Hampton, I know they infiltrate vegan pot lucks with FBI agents, I know they run secret prisons and I know that big money has its tentacles everywhere in politics.

And yet Green is the New Red routinely had me all sorts of shocked, appalled and infuriated. Potter lays out the history of the red scare (I had to stop at this point and let the new information sink in, it just blew my mind.) Another example is something that seems to have currently come on the radar of liberal groups - my inbox is lighting up with emails about ALEC, the group in which corporations pay to be members and then draft legislation that is then presented as legitimate by lawmakers - Potter goes into depth about how ALEC works in the book and I was left feeling infuriated.

There are many, many different threads in this book. Court cases against animal rights activists, a history of the red scare, details about the government infiltration of liberal and leftist groups, corporate influence in government... Despite that, Potter more than manages to make a very convincing argument that Green is indeed the new Red, illustrating that activists that try to change corporate behavior are the new brand of terrorist. Admittedly I probably wouldn't have picked this book up if I felt that it concentrated too heavily on animal rights activists. And despite that being the book's focus, there's **a lot** to learn here - Potter portrays the larger picture just as successfully as his focus on animal rights and environmental activism. And because of that, **EVERYONE NEEDS TO READ THIS BOOK!!!!**

Joseph says

just about to finish reading for the second time.

this book is an excellent expose on the use of fear tactics by the federal government in the wake of 9/11. not just in the area of political dissent, but economic, as well.

moving from history to current events to psychological thriller, Will Potter weaves an engaging story of the dissolution of legitimate freedom of expression by the powers that be, all to prop up a decaying economic/political system. the lesson here is that no one who believes this country is going in the wrong direction is safe from governmental attempts to repress speech to protect the interests of the rich and powerful.

it's frightening, but this is going on as we speak.

Nadia says

A highly insightful and interesting account of the Animal Rights/Environmental Activists Movement under siege in America by a journalist who was part of it. Highly recommended read. You will not be disappointed by the story. For those who know philosophy, Plato's allegory of the cave is mentioned in the book.

patrice says

Essential information within an always gripping, sometimes humorous, and at times heart-breaking narrative.

Will Potter begins this book by sharing his own experiences with the blood-chilling fear induced by a visit by FBI agents wielding the word "terrorist" after he had been arrested for leafleting in a wealthy neighborhood. He then recounts the investigative journey into "terrorism" that fear prompted him to undertake. Along the way we meet smug judges, altruistic anarchists, power-crazed prosecutors, and the corporate cabals whose behind-the-scenes machinations result in nonsensical atrocities like the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act and a special prison for "low-risk terrorists."

If you care about civil liberties or prisons, you need to read this book. If you care about corporate influence in politics, you need to read this book. If you care about the Constitution, you need to read this book. And, oh yeah, if you're an environmental or animal liberation activist--or any kind of activist at all--then, for your own protection, you definitely need to read this book.

Tinea says

[I won a free copy of this book]

First off, hoorah for this book and Will Potter's reporting. This is a critical living history, a first attempt to pull the last decade of eco and animal rights action and repression into one cohesive analysis. Read it for the narrative. Read it for the names and the individual stories, the Green Scare and particularly the Operation Backfire and SHAC7 defendants; for the explanation of US policy and lobbying record; for the breakdown of legal jargon; for the synthesis of many events into a posited whole. It is critical that we know these stories, tactics, legal proceedings, repression, and laws. At times Potter's book feels rushed, and he sometimes dips in and out of present/past tenses making it hard to know what happened when. But that's because Potter's book *is* rushed. He has captured and collected an ongoing historical event and attempted to present it as completely as possible to an audience that is still enacting it. Activists, read it to help reflect on your own experiences.

This Green Scare history is set within the context of the post-9/11 War on Terror. Potter covers the language and rhetoric of "terrorism" and the ambiguity and evolution of that word's definitions. Potter asks why the label "terrorist"-- and its related sentencing enhancements-- are being applied to environmental and animal rights activists engaged in non-violent civil disobedience, and to those who have caused property destruction but have never injured humans or animals, who went out of their way to ensure they did not harm living creatures. Why isn't the word "terrorism" applied to rightwing ideologies whose adherents have actually killed people, like women's clinic bombers and racist or anti-immigrant militias? Potter argues, "The [US] government treats attacks on corporate property more seriously than violence against doctors [i.e. George Tiller] and minorities not because of the nature of the crime but because of the politics of the crime. The government's domestic terrorism operations are more about protecting profits than protecting people" (p.47). Potter then follows the money back to the machinations of agro-industry to insert "terrorism" into media reports on petty vandalism and into bills like the "Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act," laws that impose harsh sentencing upgrades and harsh (super max!) prison conditions on people convicted of non-violent crimes.

The book's biggest weakness is its narrow focus; like his blog by the same name, this book lacks an intersectional foundation. Potter writes a book about terrorism in the post-9/11 era and yet rarely connects the demonization, surveillance, and repression of eco and animal rights activists with that of anti-war, Palestinian, and global, social, and environmental justice activists, and Muslim and Arab people generally. At one point (p.109) he recounts how a group of sharp-dressed, mostly (all?) white animal rights defendants gathered outside court were asked by a passerby if they were law students. "*No, [SHAC defendant] Gazzola says, smiling, without hesitation. 'We're on trial for terrorism.'*" A cute story, sure, except that it's inclusion and other similar comments implies that, *haha! of course cleancut white kids aren't really terrorists! Doesn't their appearance make the absurdity of the charge poignant and clear?* ...But where does that leave someone else who *does* fit the social construction of what a "real terrorist" looks like? Potter's narrow lens creates (or enhances) a false split between those who fight for earth & animal justice and those who fight for human social, economic, and environmental justice. It ignores that these are often the same people. It creates a huge gap in his analytical paradigm, ignoring the connections between capitalism's colonial exploitations of people and land. It hangs entire groups of people out to dry.

Potter did make some overtures to other movements vilified by the "terrorist" label in the chapter on prison conditions, though others have done a better job. Of those writing on the issue, notable is SHAC defendant Andy Stepanian, who was housed in a quasi-legal, ultra-harsh Communication Management Unit prison as a "balancer," a white person brought in to decrease the overwhelming majority Muslim population held in these awful conditions (p.215).

The other major weakness of this book was Potter's decision not to question or complicate the tactics of the activists he writes about. His repeated insistence that no animal or eco activist have "harmed" a human being rings false when some of their tactics have targeted individual people with stalking, economic and social sabotage, and direct threats of injury or death (regardless of whether they were carried out). These are not the same tactics as corporate property destruction, just as property destruction is not the same thing as non-violent civil disobedience, and separate too is publication of completed actions from publication of home addresses. Potter weakens his credibility by refusing to acknowledge these distinctions-- if he really believes they are equivalently nonviolent, then he should address this issue head on and break it down for the reader. Me, I don't see it.

Bonus quote from a Homeland Security report:

Animal and eco rights activists success "not only would fundamentally alter the nature of social norms regarding the planet's habitat and its living organisms, but ultimately would lead to a new system of governance and social relationships that is anarchist and anti-systemic in nature." (p.245)

[Review written 1 month after finishing the book, because my original review was swallowed whole by the internet monsters]

