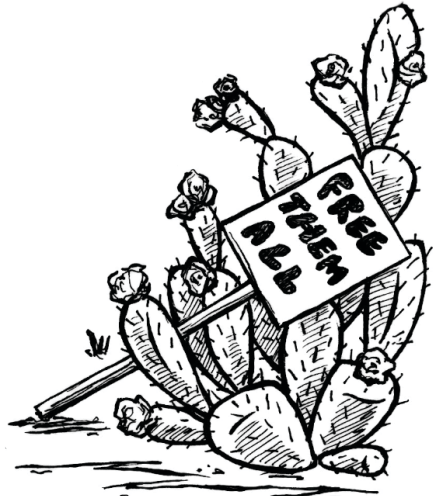


# Out Here For Them

Updates As Prairieland Federal Trial Ends

The Final Straw Radio  
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This week we spoke with AC and E, two members of the DFW Support Committee about the recently finished federal trial for 9 defendants in the terrorism case around the Prairieland Detention Center noise demo in July of 2025.

To recap the case, in the midst of increased racist and nativist rhetoric, ICE and CBP snatch squad deployments ripping apart communities across the US in the first year of Trump 2.0, and the buildup of immigrant rendition and imprisonment in the southwest there was a July 4th noise demonstration called for to happen outside the infamous Prairieland Detention Center outside Alvarado, Texas. During the protest, meant to be loud enough for people held there to hear that they were not forgotten, participants used bullhorns, shouted, shot off fireworks and painted slogans. In response the staff called the Alvarado police and upon arrival the cop drew his weapon and aimed at dispersing protestors. At this point the state narrative and that of the defendants diverge: on the one hand the state argues that this whole event was a planned ambush for law enforcement by a north Texas Antifa terrorist cell in black bloc meant to draw police into a fight and then liberate the prison; on the other side the defendants claim the event was escalated to targeted gunfire by defendant Song meant to deter deadly violence by the cop and allow the crowd to disperse without bloodshed.

This week we you'll read folks from DFW Defense Committee talking about what evidence and arguments were presented in court, what evidence and arguments were suppressed, the strange decisions of the judge in jury selection, venue and other elements effecting the ability of those facing decades in prison to mount and defense and where we're at now with the case. This case cannot be disconnected from the Trump administration's call to name Antifa as a domestic terrorist organization, to tie in projects and movements they consider to be enemies (ranging from Democrats to civil liberties groups, queer folk and immigrants rights advocates to anti-fascists, communists and anarchists and everyone in between) with the goal, some speculate, of more fully capturing the federal government under a white, christian nationalist and fascist regime. More on the case at [PrairielandDefendants.Com](https://prairielanddefendants.com)

#### **A few useful links for the case:**

<https://inthesetimes.com/article/prairieland-antifa-trial-protest-repression-fbi>

<https://crimethinc.com/2026/03/25/handbills-for-no-kings-on-ice-anarchism-and-the-prairieland-case>

DFW Support Committee: <https://prairielanddefendants.com/>

Search for this interview title at <https://thefinalstrawradio.noblogs.org/> to find links to further resources on this topic, featured music, the audio version, and files for printing copies of this episode.

**TFSR: So I'm welcoming back—or I would like to welcome back members of the DFW Defense Committee to talk about the results of a federal trial of the Prairieland case, stemming from a noise demonstration that took place outside an ICE facility near Alvarado, Texas on the evening of July 4, 2025. Thank you both for coming on to talk about this case.**

**AC:** Yeah, of course. We're glad to be back to talk about what's going on. We're not glad about what's going on, but we are happy to be here talking about it.

**TFSR: Perfectly fair. Yeah, of course. So since we last checked in on the case at the end of November, a lot has happened, mostly over the course of one month. Can you talk about how the federal trial went? I know this is like a very big question. It was a very big month, and about how Judge Pittman conducted himself. And any notable takeaways, like give us sort of the bigger-than-bite-size chunk of what we should know to understand where the case is at now.**

**E:** I feel like Judge Pittman was challenging from the beginning. We do want to still be a little bit careful what we say about him, because we still have sentencing coming up, so I'm not going to give too much personal opinion. I'm just going to state facts. He used everything in his power to control the courtroom, to make sure that everything worked in favor of the prosecution and that the defense was hamstrung. I think it started with George Lobb. Do you know of anything before that?

**AC:** Yeah, so early in the pre trial motions, Zachary Evetts' lawyer was putting in a lot of motions for discovery— in part because this is a very standard thing that criminal defense lawyers do, but also because there was a lot of discovery, and it seemed clear that they were not getting all of the discovery they were supposed to be getting. For instance, they never released the medical records of the police officer that was supposedly shot. Also they did not release a list of the people who were in the Prairieland Detention Center—in particular on the side where the noise demo happened—even though the lawyers were asking for that, because they are witnesses to what happened. So those are the sorts of things that McLean was pursuing. And early on, Pittman sanctioned him and fined him \$500 for what he called a frivolous motion of discovery. That was sort of the initial warning shots that this was going to be a very difficult judicial march to the end.

Then we had hired a lawyer named George Lobb, who is a criminal defense lawyer from Austin. He's done a lot of movement cases. There's a number of particularities around the particular jurisdiction that this case took place in. So one of

those particularities is that most federal cases do not take this quick to go to trial. When we had conversations with lawyers nationally, they were often like, there's no way you're going to be going to trial in February. Everyone was just indicted not that long ago. All of the lawyers on the ground from this jurisdiction were like, we will absolutely be going to trial in February. They call this jurisdiction the "rocket docket" for this reason.

One of these other particularities around this jurisdiction is that they have very stringent rules around what's called "local counsel." So you have to live, I think it was maybe 1:00 miles or even closer, right? You have to be a resident of Tarrant County. You have to live in Tarrant County to actually represent people in this jurisdiction, which is pretty unusual. So normally, what happens is if you have a lawyer who's not admitted to the jurisdiction, they ask for a waiver, right? This is how a lot of movement lawyers work. They ask for a waiver to be able to pro hac into the jurisdiction and represent someone, even though they're not "local counsel." Well, this is something that this jurisdiction in particular, and Pittman is very stringent on. George Lobb went to become Maricela Rueda's lawyer, and they're like, "You need to get local counsel." And he's like, "Okay, what if I moved to Tarrant County?" Which he did. He got an apartment, he signed a lease, he registered for the Anglican Church there. He changed his ID. He did all the things you need to do if you're a resident, and judge Pittman refused those things and was like, you still need to get local counsel. So he went and got local counsel. Then Judge Pittman called him into a hearing. In that hearing, he basically had two US Marshals behind him. Judge Pittman was like, "This could be a long hearing or short hearing." And basically let him know that if he continued to be on the case that he would make his job very difficult and potentially put him into contempt. So he withdrew from the case. This happened not that far into when we were preparing for federal trial.

These sorts of things were really clear to us that, "Oh, this is not going to be your normal run-of-the-mill federal trial. We knew it wasn't going to be that anyways, but this is just indicative of what happened throughout the trial. Which was that most of the motions by the defense were not sustained. They were not allowed. For example, it came out in one of the examinations of a prosecutorial witness that the bag search of several defendants was illegal. The officer himself on the witness stand said that he felt that the bag search was illegal. When the defense lawyers objected and asked them for that evidence to not be allowed to be used by the jury, the judge denied it, which is unusual, right? Like usually, illegal searches... The evidence of those are not allowed to be used in trial and in court. That's sort of the tone of what happened throughout the trial.

**E:** That wasn't the only time an illegal search came up in a pre-trial hearing. For Des it came out that the search of Des' vehicle was done illegally. And Pittman's

response—I was sitting there in the courtroom going, “I can’t believe I’m hearing this”—was to say, “Please don’t make me rule against you.” Then he rested for the weekend and then allowed their evidence to be used anyway.

**AC:** Yeah. Even further than that, my understanding is he also felt that the arrest of Des was illegal.

**E:** That’s correct.

**AC:** Yeah, that everything involving Des’s arrest and search was illegal. Yeah, makes you have some feelings. So, by now, folks probably know this. The first week we showed up to do court support to have the trial start. In that first day, it was declared a mistrial because of a t-shirt. A graphic t-shirt that was worn by one of the defense lawyers. It was really clear that there was some potential racial animus involved in that decision. The defense lawyer was the only black woman lawyer, and the t-shirt was in reference to multiple civil rights leaders. This was, I think, either the day of or the day after Jesse Jackson died.

**E:** It was the day of.

**AC:** Our sense of what happened, as people who were sitting in the trial during that period, is that many jurors were pushing back on the judge and were showing that they were not in support of ICE. The jury pool was much more diverse. There was a lot more women, a lot more people of color than normal in a jury pool. It’s our sense that the mistrial was called because Pittman felt that the jury pool and the jury that would come out of that would be too favorable to the defense, so he declared a mistrial.

**E:** It was declared after people didn’t have a problem with other people carrying guns to protests, which came up in the juror questioning. And then suddenly, the shirt that the attorney had been wearing under her blazer for the last three and a half hours suddenly became an issue. When they had the jury leave the room, it was just really clear that it wasn’t the shirt that was the issue.

**AC:** Yeah, so that set the tone, right? We went back. They called a mistrial. We had the rest of the week off. We started trial again, and the judge at that point no longer allowed the attorneys to ask their own voir dire questions, which is pretty unusual. What happened was they had to submit their questions under seal, which means that only the judge can see them, and only the lawyers in the case could see the questions. So as a public, we could not know what questions the judge did not decide

to ask. Then the judge asked all of the questions of the jury and of the jury pool to determine potential jurors. One of the things that our notetakers recognized in this was that every single black juror was struck. So every black person that was a part of the jury pool was struck. One of the lawyers asked to make a motion about that—because that, if you didn't know, is illegal. You're not allowed to do that. The judge refused to put it on the record. From the beginning of the technically second trial already, right? We were seeing things being stacked against the defendants, and then we had the time frame. So folks who are familiar with federal trials— know someone right now who's a paralegal on a federal murder trial, and this murder trial, a single murder is going to take three months. Our defendants were allowed 35 hours to mount their defense, and the prosecution was allowed 35 hours to mount their arguments. They were given—

**E:** —It started at 10, and then they reduced it to eight.

**AC:** Yeah. Thank you. Each defendant's lawyer got eight minutes of opening statements, and then they got, I think, 20 minutes of closing statements. As you can see...

**E:** It ended up just being 15 of closing.

**AC:** Yes. Thank you, fifteen.

**E:** I mean yeah, he kept cutting it.

**AC:** Yeah, he kept cutting it. Because he said on the bench that he had a spring break vacation that was very important to him to get to. But it is highly unusual for a judge to impose this kind of time restraint, especially on a case as complex as this case was. Kind of backing up, if folks don't know this, nine of the defendants... So there's 1:9 defendants. Five of those defendants took plea deals. There's three defendants who just have state charges, and then the nine defendants who didn't plea, who had federal charges left, went to trial together. So they were all indicted together, and in that indictment, everyone had a little bit of a different set of charges. So most folks had several counts of attempted murder and discharge of a weapon in the event of a violent crime. Des had a single charge, which was—

**E:** “Corruptly concealing a document or record.”

**AC:** Yeah. Then him and Maricela had a joint charge just the two of them. that was “conspiracy of corruptly concealing a document.” Then, Ines and Liz Soto and

Savanna Batten, they did not have the attempted murder charges, but they had the charges that everyone else had (aside from Des) which were a count of rioting, use and carry of explosive, conspiracy to use and carry explosive, and then material support for terrorism. That's a real hodgepodge of different charges. It's really interesting that does gets lumped in with all these folks in indictment, because Des doesn't have any of the other protest-related charges. They all were indicted together and then went to trial together.

Nine defendants. Most of the defendants had two lawyers, and then you had legal workers, and then you have a prosecution team, right? That's a very complex case. For that level of complexity of case to be tried in potentially 70 hours is pretty unheard of. That was sort of the tone that's set right from the beginning. It was like, here are all these obstacles. In spite of that, it's really clear from the evidence and the notes in the trial that there is like no evidence to support any of the charges. As a committee, we had people there inside the courtroom taking notes every single day. If anyone is interested, they are all up on our website, and they include a summary, and then we have the raw notes themselves typed up.

**E:** I was just going to say it. I think it's important to point out that when after the mistrial, they moved it to a smaller courtroom, making it much more difficult for people to attend. And then the overflow is in Dallas, which is like 35-40 miles away, and they saved about a third of that seating for police officers. So there were times when family members couldn't get in there, and that was just heartbreaking to see them standing in line and being told they needed to drive to Dallas if they wanted to see anything.

**AC:** Yeah, thank you for reminding me of that. There's so many things.

**TF SR:** **And for the Dallas overflow as you say, like it's a bit of a drive. Am I misremembering that there were also technical difficulties with the video feed into that spot as well?**

**AC:** Yes, there were. So for folks that don't know, it was an hour drive away. On a very busy highway or freeway. Yes, especially during jury selection, there was multiple times when the feed went down, and also just during the trial, right? Because it's very far away, and the tech staff at the Dallas courtroom was not fully prepared to host what they were being asked to host. It also was sort of silly, because there's other courthouses in Fort Worth that are closer, that they could have used. Also, the room that we were in previously that was larger was booked out for the case anyway. So it was really unclear why we got moved. Well, there was not a clear reason given publicly for why we got moved to the smaller courtroom. Our sense is that

the judge commented on how much support was in the courtroom and how much support was outside. It was clear to us that the judge was trying to minimize the amount of support seen in the courtroom by the jury, because one of the things we know as a defense strategy is that packing the courthouse, having a lot of supporters helps humanize defendants and gives them and their lawyers confidence, and also can sort of have an impact on how the jury thinks about the case, right? It seems like the judge understood some of that and did not want to have a full gallery, a larger gallery of supporters in the room.

**E:** We have to remember too that Bill Barr came to tour the courtroom. That's why we couldn't start on Monday. We had to start on Tuesday.

**AC:** Yes, that's right. You know, they claim that they didn't talk about the case, so it's cool. They just hung out. So, one of the things I want to just get back to is—so there's all these sort of... What I would call shenanigans, right? Like the mistrial, all these sort of... The overflow room, the size of the courthouse, all these things, right? So there's like that side of stuff, but then there was the actual evidence presented at trial. There's a number of times in which officers called to the stand could not remember their story. Had to get the written document that they created for their testimony and read it. One officer looked at the written statement and said, "I didn't write this. This is not my statement." There's like that level in which things were happening with witnesses.

The sort of next level, again, is just that the evidence does not equate at all to the verdict of what people received, right? Like Ines, Liz and Savanna. It's very clear from what was in trial: showed up in their blue jeans. Savanna was in her work shirt from Panera Bread. They were not masked. They just showed up. They stood around, and then they left, and they weren't even present when the potential shooting happened, right? That like, Maricela was just on a bullhorn. It seems like, from what was said in court, that one of the cooperating witnesses may have been the main person engaged in graffiti. There's just all of this evidence that isn't really showing that people rioted, that people brought explosives. The state made the case that the fireworks that they bought at a fireworks stand were explosives. Apparently they were so dangerous, that the police left them in the cooler that they were in at least long enough that the fireworks potentially melted from the heat. They also shipped those fireworks through FedEx to one of the other witnesses for the prosecution. So clearly they're very dangerous.

**E:** And they didn't label them as fireworks or any kind of explosive when they shipped right?

**TFSR:** There's gotta be a law against that.

**E:** Yeah [laughs]. There is.

**AC:** That's the level of evidence we're getting from police officers, FBI agents, statements that don't corroborate, just not pointing out what the charges are. You can see that this starts building confidence in the legal teams and in the defendants, and then we get the cooperating witnesses. The cooperating witnesses, were like, Antifa isn't a thing. It's not this national organization. There isn't an Antifa cell. All of them basically said that, I think, aside from Nathan Baumann, Nathan Baumann on the stand said that his lawyer told him that he needed to cooperate and that he should make up whatever he needed to in order to cooperate with the state and get a plea deal. He also came out with some really interesting thing about how people were part of a homosexual, satanic sex cult? No idea where that came from.

**TFSR:** Okay.

**AC:** Right? So, the cooperating witnesses... I mean, their stories really didn't support any of the charges in the stories of the state narrative, either.

**E:** For the most part, they supported the defense,

**AC:** Yeah, even though they're not supposed to. I mean, at some point when Lynette Sharp was describing the conditions in which she was kept in Johnson County, she was talking about... Which were horrible, right? All of the defendants the entire time that they've been held, have been facing horrible conditions. Which is not just them, but the conditions of everyone being held in these jails. In particular, when another defendant was brought in, they brought Lynette out of her cell, and they told her that the deal was off, even though she hadn't made a deal and that she could expect to spend 99 years in prison, right? So she's telling this on the stand. The judge stops her and tells her that she should go talk to her lawyer. Then I think when Baumann went on to the stand, the judge started by talking about the importance of not perjuring yourself on the stand. There's a number of times in which the judge talks about perjury around the cooperating defendants, which is also interesting.

But in general, what they had to say really, like we said earlier, didn't support the narrative of what the state is saying. It was really clear that this wasn't an ambush, right? Like every piece of evidence made it extremely clear that this was not an ambush. It was not a planned ambush. This was a noise demo that was planned by a few people to be like, a very normal noise demo. What came out was

that what happened is, once, I think, they started setting off fireworks, within the detention center, the ICE agents called the Alvarado police. An Alvarado police officer showed up. If I'm correct, I think this Alvarado police officer has a history of...

**E:** Excessive force. There are lawsuits against him.

**AC:** This police officer with a history of excessive force shows up. Within six seconds of showing up, he is drawing his weapon at the back of protesters who are leaving, and it seems that at that point, suppressive fire was shot into the ground. Because it's really unclear. Maybe you could talk about this more, but it seems like he potentially shot first. Suppressive fire is shot. The bullet that is shown that supposedly went through him is pretty dented, the angle made it pretty impossible, right? Like the person who was supposedly shooting, or who's now convicted of the shooting was, in front of him, but the bullet actually went in behind, and it seems most likely like it was a graze and did not actually go into his... Clavicle area, is that what you call it?

**E:** No, no. That would be more like the trapezius.

**AC:** Thank you.

**TFSR:** He wasn't like, targeted for it, right?

**AC:** Yeah, he was not targeted. It's a very clear from what came out in the trial that...

**E:** Oh, they never actually showed us a picture of the wound or any kind of medical evidence that he was actually hit.

**TFSR:** If I can just kick in... So, fireworks are shot off. Which is a pretty regular part of noise demonstrations in order to get the attention of people inside of the facility so they can hear, because the thick walls make it difficult to hear. As far as I understand, in the case too, there was no argument that those explosives were illegal explosives, or that they did any damage to the building or were a danger to the officers who fled inside and called the police right?

**AC:** Correct.

**TFSR: Just to sort of get that out of the way.**

**AC:** They were very far away from the facility. They were like at a fence line, and they were not shot at the facility at all.

**TFSR: The cop shows up, the cop pulls a firearm within a very short time of being there, as you said, points it towards the back of people that are already leaving. Can you talk about what was discussed about the training that law enforcement... like under what conditions and to what ends police officers pull their firearms in situations like that? Like what is the assumed outcome of that circumstance?**

**E:** To me, that's the most bananas thing that was said in court. We had a Texas Ranger tell us that it is completely okay for an officer to shoot an unarmed civilian in the back for any reason.

**TFSR: And that's what their training is. Like, if they're drawing a gun... They're trained to, if you draw your weapon, you are planning to fire it at someone.**

**AC:** Yes.

**TFSR: Or destroy whatever's in front of you. It's not like you pull it, you give orders, or you shoot up in the air, or something else like that. It is...**

**E:** No. It is, if you draw it, you're shooting.

**TFSR: "I am going to destroy this." Yeah. And I think that... Sorry to have just jumped in there. And if you want to continue where you were going with that. I just wanted to get that in at that point. I do have further questions about this part of the scenario, but I'm sorry to slow the roll.**

**AC:** No, it's good. The thing that I wanted to add that we didn't talk about at the front was after opening statements. So Philip Hayes, Champagne Song's lawyer did not make an opening statement. Then very early on, it was clear based on the cross-examination, that Philip Hayes argument was going to be for self defense, but actually defense of a third party. Suddenly the prosecution puts forward a motion to ban self defense and defense of a third party arguments in the case, comparing this case to the case of the Branch Davidians in Waco, Texas. Now, as somebody who's from Dallas, who grew up when that happened, and watched it happen on

TV... When I read that, I can tell you, I was both horrified and confused. Because a noise protest is nothing at all like what happened at the Branch Davidian compound in Waco, Texas. But the prosecution made the argument that it was and the judge agreed and basically allowed the prosecution to deny defense on self defense, or defense of a third party. This, I mean, is insane. But it's also very important, because what comes out in the trial is that it seems very clear that what happened was that the shots that were fired were fired at the ground based on where the police officer was hit. It seems very likely that it was a bullet that was ricocheting and not at all shot at him. There, in fact, is like concrete. There's video in which concrete, or concrete dust is coming off the concrete. There was a picture in which it showed—and they didn't get into this—in which it showed that there was markings on the concrete.

Champagne Song is a former Marine who spent a lot of time in a gun range. The implications of that is this person knew what they were doing with a gun, and they were potentially shooting at the ground to potentially save the life of these two protesters who are walking away having a police officer with a gun pointing at their back. I think the fact that at that point, once that motion was made and allowed right? One of the main motivators, one of the main defense arguments can't be fully talked about. But so all of this points to the fact that, like, nowhere was this an ambush. Nowhere was this narrative that the state created real. Nowhere is this an Antifa cell, right? Really based on the evidence itself, none of this story that the state weaved is real. All of us were stunned when we get a guilty verdict. As the verdict comes down, basically what the verdict says is that Champagne Song is found guilty of attempted murder, and I think maybe one count of attempted murder.

**E:** Guilty on count 7, attempted murder, and 8, 9, 1:0, for discharging a firearm.

**AC:** So no one else gets found guilty of the attempted murder. Everyone else gets found guilty of the protest charges. And then Maricela gets found guilty of the concealment of a document, which we could also go into. I mean, that whole thing, we should probably go back to that and talk about Maricela and Des' case, because it is also nuts.

**E:** Definitely.

**AC:** But it really read to us when we heard the verdict that it wasn't about the facts of the case, right? And it wasn't about them thinking this was an ambush, because clearly they didn't believe it was a conspiracy to ambush because they did not find everyone else guilty of it. To us, this read like this jury believes that this group of

people's action and protest around their beliefs is criminal. And that is chilling for all of us, right? And so that piece, I think, was something that we did not expect, because the evidence of this case is so clearly against a guilty verdict. I want to circle back and talk a little bit about Maricela and Des' case, because, again, that's just like another reinforcing of the evidence.

**E:** So the situation with Maricela and Des started after Maricela was arrested, and she called her husband Des to say, "Hey, I've been arrested. I need you to take care of these things for me." She has a bunch of pets that needed to be taken care of. And she went over how each of the animals needed to be taken care of. She had parked her Jeep in Dallas, and she had asked for that to be towed, and that was the conversation. Des did not touch the Jeep. He did go take care of the animals, which included bunny rabbits. These feds, for some reason, thought the rabbits were code for something. The person that was translating the call from Spanish testified on the stand, and their Spanish was so bad that when they were asked to translate just basic things, their translation was so bad that people in the jury who spoke Spanish giggled at them. I don't know how on earth they were translating.

So again, going back to the bunnies, they searched Maricela's house and saw the room where the bunnies lived, and took pictures of it, and Maricela had set up like box mazes for them to play in, and they used the gaps in the boxes to claim that boxes had been removed by Des and when they zoomed in to the pictures, you could see the little nibbles around the edges of the boxes from the bunnies. That point we were just like, minds blown. How dumb are you? But that's what they rolled with to decide to go after Des. When they saw him move a box of his own things from an apartment and take it to another place. They decided that was enough to arrest him. They also decided, for some reason, based on evidence—nobody can say who gave them this information—that it also contained an IED. Then they left the boxes supposedly containing an IED.

**TFSR: An improvised explosive device, correct?**

**E:** Yeah, they left it on the porch of this apartment, completely unattended while they went and arrested Des. Pulled him over for making a wide right turn. They didn't show this in the trial, but in the pre-trial hearing, we saw the video of this wide right turn. The right lane was under construction. It wasn't possible to turn into the farthest right lane. It was completely nuts. Then we have recording of them, their body cams, saying they needed to make up a reason for pulling over and arresting Des, and then they take him in. The Denton police take him in. Then they know that they can do a visual search, and they're looking for a box. They don't find a box, so they just decide that they're going to dig through everything

anyway, and at that point it is where the search becomes illegal of the truck. Then they go back to the apartment, and the box, by that time, has been taken inside the apartment and put away because the person was expecting it. They searched the apartment and claimed that string on a cat toy was potentially a fuse for an IED.

**AC:** We should also add that it is our understanding from the trial that they started surveilling Des before this phone call. So the state's narrative, right, is like, "Oh, you know, they were, like, talking about the community, and that's code word." They were already surveilling Des before this happened.

**E:** Not because of the phone call, just because of the relationship.

**TFSR: Okay, yeah.**

**AC:** When raids happened, several people's partners houses got raided, even though the partner was not at the protest. So it seems like they were sort of like, "Who are these people connected to? We are going to survey them as well." So that surveillance existed, yeah, pre the phone call, because Des and Maricela are legally married. Again, we can look at this example of the bunnies and the poor translation. How do we get to guilty verdicts? Right? If all of us... You can read the notes yourself, we would encourage you to read the notes. It's quite interesting, I think, to watch the state attempt to make this narrative in court without real evidence.

We have to conclude that this was a political verdict, right? We are in a heavily polarized country right now. It seems like one of the things that happened when a new jury pool was drawn is that the judge can draw from different parts of the county. It seems likely that people who were from more rural MAGA-centric parts of the county were drawn on more than Ft. Worth. It's worth noting that this year, in a special election, for the first time in 30 years, Tarrant County elected a Democratic official. I think there is some ways in which the city of Fort Worth itself is changing, and that may have been reflected in the original jury pool that the mistrial was created in order to stop from being the jury for the defendants' trial.

What does this mean for all of us? Well, the DOJ, very soon after the verdict put out a press release in which they just tripled down on their narrative, even though we had reporters from all over the country... from very liberal... like New York Times, Washington Post. Washington Post is not liberal, but very mainstream reporters who were shocked when the verdict came out as well, because they sat in trial the whole time and they were like, "There's no way these people are going to be convicted. Their evidence is just not there." So we have to look at this as the political verdict that it is, and understand what it means for folks who are engaging in activity, right?

I think one reaction to this is to be scared and to believe and to feel that this means people should not go out. I would argue that this means that more people should go out, that more people should be engaging in noise demos, that more people should be engaging in this supposed terroristic activity. To show that that's not what's going on, that what's going on is that people are fed up with people being kidnapped, are fed up with living lives that are unaffordable, not being able to have housing, not being able to feed themselves, like are fed up with the way that our society is going in this moment. What we learned from this is like, you need to be prepared. Because the reality is, you shouldn't stop going out, but you should really be prepared. Because the DOJ is saying, if you're wearing black block, that is potentially a sign that you were a terrorist, if you were bringing a first aid kit, this is what their press release says right? That these are signs of rioting. A first aid kit, black block, masks.

**E:** If you organize rides to get there.

**AC:** Yes, if you organize rides to get there... All of these are signs of rioting, right? Which we know that it's not. I think people have to really be prepared. Our friends were going to a noise demo. They were not thinking that they would be sitting in jail for six months. They were not thinking that they would be found guilty for different federal criminal offenses, potentially facing 60 years in jail. Right? We have a sentencing coming up, and it is really a mixed bag in terms of what their sentencing is going to look like. They could get potentially 60 years in jail, which for Ines and Liz, who are 40 years old, would potentially be a life sentence, right? They would not get out until they're potentially 1:00 years old, you know. So that is a raising of the stakes for what is routine protest.

We're seeing there was a person out of Eugene who either FBI or DHS showed up. He had been posting online some things. I mean, we see this happen. They took his computers and now they're potentially charging him in a similar way. There are some folks from Chicago around the Broadview protests that are getting some conspiracy charges as well. We're starting to see now with this guilty verdict, I think the DOJ, the FBI are going to feel more emboldened. But again, that doesn't mean we shouldn't keep being out there struggling for what we know is right. We know is just. What we know we deserve as people who exist in this world. It just means that we have to think differently about how we are going out. We might need to make sure that we have jail support forms. We might need to make a plan for if we don't come home from the protest, right? Our friends had a cobbler sitting in their microwave that was rotten by the time their family came to their house.

So just thinking about, okay, if I'm going out and I know the stakes are a little bit higher, what do I need to be doing to be prepared for that? Starting to look

at what legal infrastructure do you have? I mean, part of what has been hard about this case for us is that there's not a lot of legal infrastructure for a movement or a political case in DFW, and we really struggle to even find lawyers who are willing to take this case in this jurisdiction. You know, unfortunately, the quality of the lawyers that you have in terms of when you're fighting a legal fight really matters. It matters in terms of your ability as a group of defendants to fight collectively and to create a collective defense, which is what our defendants have wanted to do, and why they have a defense committee and a support committee working with them, right? Its because they wanted to do a collective defense. So these are things that people should start thinking about more urgently. Right, making connections to lawyers, making things bigger, right? More people at more actions. The number of people at a protest acts as the potential security measure. So these are some of the implications of the case without... We are going to see cases. They're going to try and charge everyone with this sort of domestic terrorism agenda, right? This material support of terrorism. So what's unique about the guilty verdict is this is the first time this material support of terrorism has been used in this way. And technically, I'm not the one to talk about material support of terrorism. I think we've talked about it before, but like, it's based on graffiti and property damage as the "terrorism," which what does that mean? That doesn't mean anything.

**TFSR: I wonder if you could tell the audience anything about the defense strategy around calling witnesses, because, as I understand, they didn't.**

**AC:** Yes, the defense did not mount a defense. The defense at the end of the prosecution's arguments in case rested, which means they didn't call any witnesses. They didn't mount a defense. This was a very controversial move, and what I would say is what we have been told, which is there were compelling reasons, including a lot of confidence that the cross examination of the prosecution's witnesses had created enough reasonable doubt for the defendant's case. I think over time... You know, this is the thing. I think as we have more space and time to think about the case, we'll probably have some reflections to share. But at this time, right now, right we are still very deep in the process of filing motions and sentencing and appeal.

**TFSR: Great. Thank you. My understanding is they applied this case from, I think, 1946 or something called Pinkerton vs. United States that makes the argument that somebody does a thing, and if you can pin enough relationship on other people around them, you can say that they collaborated together to do this. This was the basis of the argument that there was a conspiracy, that this was the act of a North Texas Antifa cell. This is why someone is being accused of moving a box of zines while they weren't even**

at this demonstration, and other people are accused of sending instructions about deleting messages from a Signal chat, or someone's facing charges for removing someone from a Discord server. These very much out-of-tune-with-reality connections are made between disparate people who made, in some cases, like different choices. All being pinned on a group of people in order to criminalize an assumed political perspective that's shared among them, right?

**AC:** Yes, that's correct, and particularly the way that they're trying to do that is through that material support of terrorism charge, right? Which is very vague, but it has to be based on an underlying criminal activity. And the challenge becomes, like, if there's no evidence that folks did any criminal activities, how do you charge them with material support of terrorism based on a criminal activity that doesn't exist?

So we have this guilty verdict. What comes next? Well, obviously we are still out here organizing. At this point people will have, it's called a pre-sentencing report. Sentencing in a federal case is very different than in a state case. The probation department looks at people's criminal history, looks at the charges, looks at the notes from the prosecution, and kind of creates some sentencing guidelines that get sent to the judge, then the defense will have an opportunity to object. We have an opportunity to provide character witnesses and character letters to dispute the pre-sentencing report, to try and get the sentencing number down. In June, all of the people who signed pleas.... So there's two people who signed pleas, Rebecca Morgan and Joy Gibson, who did not cooperate. They did not witness. They have not done interviews with the police. And then there's the other set of cooperators that have also signed pleas. They will be sentenced earlier in June, from what we understand, and then the nine defendants from the federal trial will be sentenced later in June.

So right now, lawyers are filing a set of motions, including a motion to vacate the verdict based on the lack of evidence, and also to call for a new trial because of jury malfeasance. There was some strange things that happened in the jury room during when they were...

## **E: Deliberating.**

**AC:** Yes, thank you. We don't know what happened, but it is our understanding that the federal marshals were called to the jury room because something happened. So, you know, I think in terms of a new trial, something like jury malfeasance comes up in a motion for a new trial. We don't feel very hopeful about these motions. Because these motions go in front of Judge Pittman, and Judge Pittman has shown

that he is not very interested in the motions of the defense counsel. So then, after sentencing, the defendants can appeal. The appeals process is, unfortunately very long. There's many different layers of appeal that happen, but we are preparing for that appeals process for these defendants.

Now, on top of all of this, all of these defendants, aside from Des have state cases. There are three defendants, Dario Sanchez, Lucy Fowlkes and Janette Goering, who just have state charges. Dario's trial for his state charges are coming up on April the 20th. Yes, that is 4/20. Johnson County doesn't understand the joke. Dario's case is very specific. His charges are around removing individuals from a Signal group chat in his capacity as the secretary of the Socialist Rifle Association. His trial starts April the 20th. He has a motion to quash, which is a motion to basically stop the trial from going forward that is still working its way through the court system. And then right now, Lucy has not been indicted. We think that she will be indicted next week. Janette Goering has been indicted, and she does not have a trial date set right now. She was supposed to have a motions hearing this week, and it got canceled. She is also still waiting on an appeal for her bond reduction, because she is one of the people sitting in jail on a \$1:0 million bond. Janette's case is tied to what we call "the manhunt cases," which is the set of cases around people who the state claims hid Champagne. We have those three state cases going forward. Des also has an immigration hold, and he is a green card holder. He has a separate defense committee, and they are still looking for an immigration lawyer and raising money for that immigration lawyer so they can fight his immigration case.

The thing that we don't know about right now is, with the verdict, what's going to happen with the state cases? I think probably it's going to depend on what sentencing people get. I think it's also going to depend on the mood of the state of Texas, right? They have a separate set of terrorism charges on the state case, most of them. This guilty verdict is not going to, unfortunately, help that. That's kind of the frontier for us, is the appeal, but then also dealing with these state cases as they start moving again in the courts. All of those cases, everyone with state cases, has to fight a separate trial in Johnson County. If you think that the stuff happening in Fort Worth is off the hook, Johnson County's got it beat. So we are really preparing for a really interesting and difficult set of trials with the state cases if they move forward. So that's sort of where everything stands.

We are encouraging people right now to take some actions in support of their Prairieland defendants. There is an International Day of Solidarity for them on April 4. In addition to that, we're just asking people to do some things like hold noise demos. Right? A lot of people are being held in detention centers, and a noise demo is a great way to let them know that they're not forgotten, to boost their spirits, to show our support for people that are incarcerated, either in immigration detention centers or also in jails and prisons. So we're asking folks to hold a noise

demo. We're asking folks to do letter-writing events. We have information on our website around people's interests and the addresses that people are at. People will be at these addresses that they're currently at. So five of the defendants are at Wichita Falls. The three in Johnson County are still being held in Johnson County, and then the other defendants are at what's called FMC, the Federal Medical Center in Fort Worth.

We're asking folks to do letter writing. We're asking folks to hold fundraisers. We've been having, every Thursday night, a community dinner fundraiser here. You can have a community dinner. You have a bake sale. People have shows, right? There's all kinds of creative ways. You could have an art show. We were talking about if people wanted to do like a read-a-thon of all the zines that showed up in trial and people like, pledged to pay a certain amount based on how long people could read. You can get creative with the fundraisers. We're also encouraging people to start their own Emma Goldman Book Clubs. We're going to be sort of rolling that out in the summer, but we have compiled a list, and we have a really great zine that has sort of summaries of each zine, but there is a full list of all the zines that were mentioned in trial. So we want to encourage people to start their own book club, to read those zines with people in their lives.

**TFSR: Could you say a thing about what the Emma Goldman book club is?**

**AC:** Yeah, so the Emma Goldman Book Club was started around 2016 and it is not really a book club, in that they don't really read books. What people read are zines. They're mostly reading things that people have created in the present moment. What happens is, once a month, people get together, people decide on what they want to read that's out there, you know, from things like, "If We Go, We Go on Fire," which is about grief and anger... to reportbacks from different protests that have happened... to Sophie Lewis, I think it's called "On Motherhood." Sophie Lewis has a beautiful zine, a beautiful piece of writing about mothers, and the difference between being a mother and motherhood, right? So you get together, and actually we read out loud. The zines get read out loud together, and then the zine gets talked about, and that's what happens, right? This was also a major part of the trial, was all of these zines, and kind of saying that this process of people sitting together and reading—What is arguably protected speech, right?—is like an indication of the Antifa cell. But yeah, so we're encouraging people to start their own Emma Goldman Book Clubs. You could read the zine list. You could just read other things. Right now, there's a wealth of pieces being produced about what's happening. There's some great pieces about what's been happening in Twin Cities. There are zines about the Prairieland case. There are zines that are the transcripts of Final Straw interviews about the Prairieland case.

**TFSR: We did that.**

**AC:** You did that! Yes, very helpful. Also, I mean, you guys have a whole wealth of zines related to your podcast, right? So that's a great resource for people.

Man, there's one more thing we're asking people to do that is like... Oh, share information on social media. We're still getting the word out about this case, even though it's a really big case, it's precedent-setting. The guilty verdict really, I think, increased the profile of the case. There's still a lot of people that don't know that this is happening, and we really need people to know that this is happening. Both so that our friends and loved ones can continue their fight for freedom, but also because this is going to impact every person in this country that's protesting, and we want people to know that this is happening so they themselves can also fight against this precedent. Social media is a way that people can share that.

We have a social media account. We're on Instagram. We're on Twitter, Mastodon, Bluesky and Tiktok. We put out stuff pretty frequently. We love collaborating with people on posts. There's been a lot of people who have been making their own posts, their own graphics, or their letter writing nights, or their own events. We love to boost those. For us, the organizing isn't stopping. We are continuing to be in this fight for our friends and loved ones, and also, like ICE is still out there operating. On either Sunday or Monday, in San Francisco, they arrested people at an airport. Now they're in the airports... it makes us all feel so much safer. Things are not stopping, and there's a lot going on in the world with the Iran war and the energy crisis. It's a lot coming down the pipeline. So people getting out there and taking collective action to build a meaningful, liberated world is what our defendants wanted themselves. So another way of showing them solidarity is it's like continuing what they believed in and continuing that fight on the outside while they're fighting on the inside.

**TFSR: One of the really big things that the Defense Committee has been doing, besides the website that compiles a lot of the interviews and articles about the case and the facts, contact information, social media, how to write people, all that stuff... and this was brought up a few times throughout, is the note taking. For people not in North Texas are there ways for people to plug in and do some of the busy work associated with compiling notes or posting them or anything like that? Are there ways for people to plug in to the court support from a distance?**

**E:** Definitely. We'll need more people when we start taking notes for Dario's case. We'll need those transcribed. Just every time we have a trial we need help with that transcription, because that does take a bit. That helps us be able to communicate

more clearly out to the rest of the world. That is something that can be done by anybody. Again, sharing online, telling everybody. You don't have to be in Fort Worth to share what's going on here. I still feel... I was at the Austin Anarchist Book Fair this last weekend.

**AC:** We were shocked at how many people weren't aware of what was happening.

**TF SR: International listeners, that's the same state. It's very far. It's a big state, but that's the same stage.**

**E:** Yeah, it's just like a three hour drive, it's not far, just getting the word out, sharing with people what's happening, and when you share, tell them. Yeah, it can be scary, if you think about it too hard, but the point is, it's scary, but we need that to not stop us.

**AC:** I also think... A lot of people came down for the federal trial. It was amazing, the amount of support we got. We made a multitude of puppets and objects we are not trying to store. But I would encourage people to come for Dario's trial. I would encourage people to think about coming for the other state trials. I think that, as somebody who was a part of the anti-globalization movement, it had a real feel for me, of like showing up to some of those protests, and like getting to meet people, and like the importance of being in support for people who are not in the same place as you geographically. I am sure we'll probably have a form up. So for federal trial, we had a form that people could fill out. I would say the best thing for people to do if they're interested is to go to our website, which is [prairielanddefendants.com](http://prairielanddefendants.com) and there's a Get Involved tab.

But there's also a way to get on our announcement list. And we announce. We're not like spamming you, but we announce a lot of stuff on our announcement list. It's a good way for people to get in contact with us. It's a good way to get involved. We had an announcement go out to get more people who could talk to Lucy and Janet during the day, right? So sometimes we're looking for direct support for defendants. Sometimes we're looking for note takers. We're putting calls out for people to come for court support. We're working on food for Dario's trial right now, and we had amazing food crews come through for the federal trial. So people were fed three meals a day outside the courthouse, which was so awesome. I would say, go to our website, get in our announcement chat, follow our socials, and as the trial gets closer for Dario and the other trials come out, it's a good way to plug in when we're asking for roles to be filled, because there are a number of things that we're always looking for. People to create graphics...

We have a wealth of needs, and we have been so appreciative and lucky of

the kinds and amount of support that we've been getting from people. We can always use more support, because this for some of us, we've been running this sprint since July. The only way we can keep running this sprint and keep things going is by people holding us up in that. If you have not been to a trial before that's a political trial, a movement trial. It's a really good way to learn. It's a really good way to get experience. You know, I think this is a skill set that people feel like is very specific and requires a certain amount of expertise. But for me, it's just that I have been around this since 2009 because people, then in my life, had things happen in terms of repression from the state.

I think this is a skill set that all of us need to have. Coming in person and taking part is a way to build some of that skill set and to learn from other people in a hands on way, which is just invaluable. You know, you can read a lot about things, but until you are in person, taking notes in a courtroom, talking to people on the street about the case, helping with food, seeing how the press works, all of that, right? It makes it very real and just, I think, cements for you what those skills are. That's just to say that.. I think the other piece of this is like, if you are in a community and you can't come, find out if there are political cases or cases that need support, right? There's a lot of cases now coming out of Minneapolis and Chicago. There's been that set of protests in Vermont that looked really intense. Some of the blue states right have been dismissing their cases more, but some of them are going to stick. And those folks also need support, right? If you can't come down to Texas—we would love for you to come, and if you can't—look around you and see what other cases are going on and how you can get involved with court support there, because anti-repression work always needs more support.

**TFSR: Well, I feel like I've kept you both on here for a long time, and I really appreciate it. You got through all the questions. Is there anything that I didn't ask about, didn't prompt about? Any closing thoughts that you want to throw out there.**

**E:** I just think it's important to remind people how wonderful the defendants are. They are the very best of us. They are the people that would help you with anything. They're the people that would fight for you no matter what. They were out there, because they love with their whole hearts, and now they need us.

**TFSR: Thank you.**

**AC:** I think that's beautifully said.

**TFSR: Thank you both so much for being on this chat and for all the work**

**that you're doing with the DFW Support Committee. I look forward to speaking with you again during the appeals process or some time further on the case, because, since it's not ending anytime soon, I'm glad that there's folks that are fighting to defend their friends.**

**AC:** Well, thanks for having us. Again, you guys were the first ones that would talk to us about this case and help us challenge some of the state narrative. So forever gratitude to you for doing that, because everyone else was like, "What is going on?" Thank you for continuing to keep up with the case and telling people about it.

**TFSR: Yeah, for sure.**

**E:** Sincerely.

**TFSR: Yeah, and we're in movement together, right? So like, yeah, it's important—just to soapbox for a second. I see trajectory between Trump 1, the attempted prosecution of J20 and the San Diego antifa case, and, you know, obviously, Stop Cop City. This is like they've been building towards this attempt to create a wider conspiracy among leftists, anti-racists, anti-fascists, feminists, all sorts of sectors of society. Unless we can get together and, stop it at each point that it tries to rear its ugly head... Like, we're gonna lose comrades, we're gonna lose loved ones, we're gonna lose friends and family. But I think we can beat this. We just have to keep fighting.**

**AC:** Yeah, I agree. At some point it might be interesting to think about doing a piece with talking about the comparisons between this and J20 and some of the buildup, because I think that is something I've been thinking about in the long trajectory of this. I think this question of like defending the movement right now and anti-repression work is really important in understanding where it's going and how we can, continue to fight is really important. I'm hoping that this guilty verdict is a wake up call for people, because it sucks. It really sucks, like it's really devastating to all of us. There's so many more potentialities of this case coming out of this. So the tiny light is that people are like, we can't let this continue to happen. Which is like, great, okay, good.

**TFSR: It's a good first step.**

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