

In Honor of Jeff Luers: 23 year Jail Sentence for An Act of Compassion
by Josh Harper
from [No Compromise](#) magazine

On June 6th a Eugene based newspaper, *The Register Guard*, reported that a man who killed a woman while driving drunk received a 10 year jail sentence. The man was given the sentence because the judge saw him as having no concern for the lives or well being of the other drivers on the road.

Six days later, the same newspaper reported that my friend Jeffrey Luers, also known as Free, had been sentenced to 22 years and 8 months for causing a few thousand dollars worth of fire damage to some sport utility vehicles. This disparity in sentencing is one we should expect from a society whose values are so predominantly capital-centric. Even though the judge admitted that Free had taken precaution against harming people, the value of those trucks has become more important than the value of life itself. Free is now 22 years old. He will spend more time in jail than he has already spent on earth.

The fire Free was convicted of setting was an act of compassion. The gas guzzling monstrosities known as SUV's slaughter more animals each year than the fur industry, emit fumes that harm the well being of plants and animals alike, and take us further down the path of a world without green spaces. As forests, grasslands, and other wild areas fall to make more room for parking lots and freeways, is it any wonder that people are beginning to attack the auto industry?

I've known Free for about 4 years. In that time I have seen him do amazing things. His dedication to the protection of wilderness is almost without peer. He has lived much of the time I have known him outdoors, constantly protecting forests and the animals that live in them. When ever we saw each other he would tell me about his latest arrest, jail time, or the harassment he was undergoing for his beliefs and actions. It seemed like it was never ending, but he never stopped. Even from behind bars he has stood strong and continued to urge others to go on the offensive for mother earth.

I know for sure that even if Free serves every day of his nearly 23 year sentence he will get out and continue fighting. He values life too much to ever give in and become part of a culture gone mad. While he is stripped of his freedom, it is up to us to continue fighting. His sentence cannot become a deterrent to us. If we quit protecting animals, wilderness, and each other out of fear of reprisal then we are cowards. Let Free's bravery stand as a testament to how hard our common will is to break. Don't give up, and dedicate your next victory to Free.