

Security Culture: The Puppet Show

CrimethInc.

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Over the past three decades, Earth First! has waged a life-or-death campaign to halt the destruction of the natural environment. Right now, the Earth First! Roadshow is halfway through a five month revival tour across the United States, sharing direct action skills, ecodefense history, and opportunities to get involved in protecting the wilderness. Consult their schedule here to see if they'll be passing through your bioregion before the tour ends at this summer's Earth First! rendezvous in Cascadia. One of the acts on the roadshow, a puppet show teaching basic security culture skills, is especially timely in view of recent government efforts to entrap and frame environmental activists. We've obtained the script and an audio file, and are sharing them here to equip you to put on the puppet show yourself if you so desire. If your community could use a refresher in protecting your privacy and safety against snooping, evil-intentioned G-men, just build some puppets and adjust the show to your local needs! You can even use the audio recording if you prefer not to memorize the script yourself. *The Mysterious Rabbit Puppet Army Presents: Donny, Don't!*

Olivia the Owl: Hello, eco-warriors! We're here today to talk about the for-profit extermination of all life on this planet, and your heroic and sheroic efforts to stop it. We've been noticing that as you good folks become stronger and more effective, those ecocide profiteers and their lackeys in the FBI have been coming down really hard on y'all. They've been exploiting your good nature and trusting community and turning those things into a weakness. So we're taking the day off from eating mice—

Brian the Bear: ...and stealing picnic baskets!

O: —to give you a quick lesson on keeping your community safe. And here to help us are all of our woodland friends. I'm Olivia the Owl and this is Rita the Raccoon, Brian the Bear, Peter the Pig, and Ben the Snapping Turtle.

Ben the Snapping Turtle: What!?

O: And the star of our show: Donny Don't. Peter will be playing a cop.

Peter the Pig: Hey, why do I always have to play the cop?

O: I dunno it just... seems to fit.

O: So! Today's lesson is about security culture.

Ben: AKA common sense 101.

O: So, kids, remember—the name of the game is don't do what Donny Don't does. The first thing we're going to talk about is GOSSIP.

Donny: Hey, did you see on Indymedia that somebody pulled up all the survey stakes at that development on Winding River Road? Y'know, where the winding river used to be?

Rita the Raccoon: Yeah, that's so cool. I'm really glad that happened.

D: Yeah, I bet we know who did that. Last night Ben...

Everybody: DONNY, DON'T!

B: Now, Donny, when you speculate and gossip, you not only put other people at risk, but also put yourself at risk. If the police think you know who did it, they could target you as well.

D: You mean I could go to jail just for knowing something?

O: Yes, the pigs call it "obstructing justice."

P: The cops, you mean.

O: Right. Whatever. The next thing we want to talk about is BRAGGING... Take it away, Donny!

D: Hey, have y'all seen all that graffiti downtown protesting Bank of America's investment in coal?

R: Yeah, I really hate Bank Of America! I'm glad that happened.

D: Yeah, it took me like 5 hours last night to...

Everybody: DONNY, DON'T!

B: While we're all happy that you took action against those heartless corporate monsters, sharing your secrets with other people puts yourself at great risk. Even people who you trust might share your information, or crack under pressure during interrogation. Aside from that, you're also putting your friends at risk, because you're giving them a piece of information that the cops want.

Ben: INDIRECT BRAGGING.

R: Hey Donny, we're having a demonstration against the new Cliffside coal power plant. You wanna come?

D: No, I try to stay away from above-ground demonstrations these days. I'm trying to keep a low profile. It probably wouldn't be a good idea for me to be seen around there. Ya know what I'm sayin'?

Everybody: DONNY, DON'T!

O: Now, Donny, what you just did is called indirect bragging. It's the practice of implying or eluding to things. It's just as bad as bragging. In these situations you should make a clever excuse, like a lunch date or a meeting. Also, you could just not show up, and invent an excuse later. It's not easy having your friends think you're uninvolved in important political actions, but it's also not easy going to jail for yourself or the people who would be supporting you from the outside.

Ben: NEED-TO-KNOW BASIS.

R: Ok, I'm going out to see a movie. See ya later, Donny.

D: What movie? Can I come?

R: Eh, Hoot. Naahh, I think we're just going to go on our own.

D: What theater is that playing in? And why are you wearing all black?

R: Ummm, I'm going to the one downtown. I wear black all the time.

D: Who you going with? Why's your backpack so big? Are you smuggling in popcorn?!

R: Just some folks... Why are you giving me the third degree?

D: Oooooooh. I get it. I see what's going on. You're going to see a "moovooieeee..."

B: Alright, stop right there, folks. Social norms within a resistance movement need to be a little different than other people's. If your friends are acting evasive or don't seem to be forthcoming with information, it's important to trust them and just let whatever it is rest.

O: Being in a community of resistance means having a higher level of trust than many people are used to in a lot of circles.

R: Don't ask, don't tell. It's not just a good idea for vegans eating at restaurants, it's also a great way to keep everybody you care about as safe as can be.

Ben: ENTRAPMENT.

R: Hey, there's that guy Peter who comes to our anti-biotech meetings.

D: I like him, he's really enthusiastic and helpful.

R: I think he's cute.

P: Hey kids!

R&D: Hi, Peter.

P: So, all this protesting we've been doing is great and all...

R: It sure is...

P: I was just thinking the other day that maybe it's time to step it up a bit...

D: Like lock downs and banner drops?

P: Like maybe we should just get rid of that lab once and for all...

R: I dunno...

P: I've got a recipe for plastic explosives and I can pay for the stuff.

D: Sounds like a good idea to me!

Everybody: DONNY, DON'T!

B: Trying to get activists to build explosives and then charging them with possession of un-registered fire arms or conspiracy has become a popular tactic of federal agents in recent years.

O: If somebody you don't know that well asks you to build a bomb, just say no. If you're going to build bombs, build them because you want to, not because somebody else thinks it's cool.

R: Thinking for yourself, now THAT'S cool.

Ben: WHEN THE PIGS COME A-KNOCKIN'...

P: Eh, guys, that's not cool! [Whole cast snickers] (Knock knock knock)

P: Hello, I'm agent Peter Pecker with the FBI. I'm looking for Donny Don't.

D: That's me, what do you want?

P: Your friend Rita may be in big trouble but we thought maybe you could help clear some things up.

D: What are you talking about?

P: Does she talk about Animal Liberation a lot?

D: She talks about it but she'd never—

Everybody: DONNY DON'T!

B: Donny, this is very important. Never ever talk to the FBI or police. If they already knew enough to get you or your friends in trouble, they wouldn't be asking you questions. Does that make sense?

D: But I was just trying to find out what they wanted, or I could have lied to them to throw them off track...

O: These people are specially trained to get you trapped in a conversation, making it harder and harder to stop answering questions. They can observe when you stop answering or which questions make you squirm. They are trained to make you trip up and contradict yourself. Really, avoiding talking to them is the only safe option. They won't be able to scare you, trick you, confuse you, or convince you of anything.

Ben: Just say no, dare to resist Gestapo swine.

P: Oh, cut it out, would ya!? It's not funny!

Ben: New fangled contraptions, technological alienation, social mapping, and you...

D: Hey, did you see the new pics on my Myspace page?

R: No, lemme see what you've got...

D: Check this out!

R: OMG, Donny, what are these? Is that you holding a molotov cocktail?

D: Yeah, and this is all that graffiti from the Bank Of America.

R: Oh, and you've got a whole blog on here about shoplifting and scamming when you travel!

D: Yeah, read the entry about South Florida.

R: Donny, what if the FBI or police read this?

D: I mean, they can't prove anything...

R: Donny, Myspace assists law enforcement with about 150 investigations A MONTH, and in the past, people's Myspace pages and blogs have been used to attack their character in court so that they are denied bail!

D: But it's set to private!

R: Right, because Rupert Murdoch, the owner of Myspace and Fox News, is all about privacy. Y'know, the FBI used to spend a large portion of their budget for tracking activists and social mapping, which means figuring out who knew who and who was into what. Now here's all of your friends across the country. Oh, and a list of your interests; you've done the work for them. In a worst-case scenario, if somebody we know had to go on the run, would it be safe for them to stay with anybody they were publicly networked with?

D: Wow, I hadn't thought of that...

Ben: Electronic Surveillance.

P: Hey, y'all!

R/D: Hi, Peter.

P: Hey, so I wanted to talk to y'all about this idea I had for a great action.

D: Let's take our batteries out of our phones so the feds can't listen in!

P: So, like I was saying, there's this I-69 contractor who has an office downtown...

R: Um, maybe this classroom isn't the best place for us to discuss this, it's pretty well known that we hang out here a lot.

P: Rita, it's not bugged. I'd know if it was bugged, and it's not.

D: Sounds like impeccable logic to me! So, what do you wanna do at the office? Let's fu-

Everybody: Donny, Don't!

O: With the rise of techno-industrial civilization, our enemies are able to carry out surveillance in ways that were unthinkable 50 years ago. There are safe places and unsafe places to talk about sensitive subjects. Safe places are walks in the woods, beaches, and restaurants that aren't well-known hang-outs. Unsafe places are cars, houses, well known hang-outs, or cabins in remote areas, even if your friends say they're safe. It has also been shown in court cases against mafia members that your cell phone can act as a microphone or GPS tracking device, even when it's off, as long as the battery is still in. Even corporate CEOs take their batteries out before high-level meetings sometimes.

B: If something doesn't feel right, it's probably not. Stopping a friend from a dangerous security faux pas doesn't mean you think they're stupid, or a cop. Or a stupid cop. It just means they could make a mistake that could be dangerous for them or for you. Does that make sense?

R: Safety first!

B: Also, folks, it's important to recognize that there is a possibility that even with solid security culture, something could go wrong and you could wind up in interrogation for something you did or didn't do. If this does happen, it's important to remember 2 things:

R: I'm going to remain silent. I'd like to speak to my lawyer!

O: Every question they ask you is an admission that they don't have enough evidence to convict you or your friends. Otherwise, you'd be rotting in a cell, and they wouldn't need to ask you anything. This is where remaining silent during their questioning becomes important. If you start a conversation and then the talk turns in a direction you don't like, it could be more difficult to end the conversation than to have stayed silent in the first place. They'll try to trick you by telling you that your friends have already snitched or they'll be all like it looks bad now, but this is the chance to clear your name. Let's try a role play in the interrogation room.

P: So, your name is Rita Raccoon. And your address and social security number?

R: I'm exercising my right to remain silent and want my lawyer.

P: I'm just trying to clarify a few things, we're not talking about the case here.

R: Right, silent.

P: I mean, I get what you guys are doin'. My daughter works for Greenpeace, and used to lock herself to every damn thing. You guys been into environmental stuff for a while now?

R: Well this one time I was SILENT!

P: You got any tattoos or scars?

R: Siilent night...

P: We're gonna find out eventually, anyway.

R: Is my lawyer here yet?

B: They will do everything they can to shake your faith in your friends, your movement and yourself, but it is so important that we all sit tight and believe in each other and ourselves so that the cops can't break us down.

O: No matter what they promise you, you should know that most people who snitched during the green scare have gotten comparable time in prison to those who maintained their integrity.

B: One last important thing is that while y'all must keep yourselves safe, y'all must also stay visible and get your message out to others. You must learn to publicize your successes through magazines, web pages, press offices and new creative ideas that keep everyone safe while ensuring that the movement doesn't fade into obscurity.

O: It's also very important to deal respectfully with people who know less about security culture or who make an honest mistake. If it's avoidable, don't call them out publicly or make them feel stupid. Security culture makes it very easy to become paranoid and stifle all conversation, which is exactly what the government and corporations want. You must learn to communicate clearly but without endangering yourselves any more than necessary.

R: So remember: No compromise in defense of the earth, stay safe, and be yourself. Good night everyone!

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