

Why 23 Years? Op-Ed piece by Chris Calef *Eugene Weekly* June 9, 2005

Download this article [here](#).

Why 23 years? It's really the only question worth asking in the case of Jeffrey Luers. Some people might want to ask, "Why did he do it?", but for people who've been paying attention to the climatologists, I think it's pretty obvious. Global warming is here. Peak oil is here. We're at war in Iraq to maintain control over an oil supply that from here on out is only going to get smaller. And meanwhile, the economic elite in America still love their SUVs, even if they end up killing us all. Some people just won't get it until you do something that makes them pay attention, and that's what Jeff Luers was trying to do. That's why he did it.

But why did he get twenty-three years? He damaged three SUVs, for a grand total of \$40,000 in damages. All three vehicles were repaired and sold. No one was injured or even put at risk. How did this crime result in a sentence exceeding that of most murderers? What logic could possibly motivate a judge to inflict such a sentence on a 23 year old man with no prior felonies, no history of violence or drug abuse, and no intent to achieve personal gain from his actions?

Jeff Is Not Alone

The answer to this question is not to be found in the details of his crime. It takes only the most cursory investigation into sentences received for comparable crimes to realize that Jeff's sentence blows them all completely out of the water. Nobody gets twenty years for arson, even people who burned down houses with people still in them don't pull that kind of time. To make sense of it, it is necessary to understand that the authorities are afraid, not just of Jeff but of people like him. To put it bluntly, he got 23 years because they decided to "make an example" of him. So why are they so afraid? What is it about Jeff that presents such a threat? If you ask the FBI, they will tell you that there is a growing trend toward "political violence" in this country, with increasing incidence of politically motivated arson, acts of animal liberation, and in-your-face street protest. According to the authorities, this is a disturbing trend threatening the peace and security of America.

The Radicals Have A Point

However, if you ask an environmentalist, you may come away with the distinct sensation that the current status quo represents a greater threat than all the eco-radicals put together. According to all reliable reports, the earth's temperature is increasing rapidly, huge chunks of arctic ice are breaking off and floating away, the planet's supply of fresh water is dwindling, and we are in the midst of a human-caused period of mass extinction rivaling that which destroyed the dinosaurs. Nothing in the current administration's policies gives us any hope of change for the better -- on the contrary, every step the Bush Administration takes is a step in the wrong direction.

Meanwhile, the traditional tools for political change have been subverted and weakened to such a degree as to appear completely useless to anyone who is serious about making a difference. Voting is a meaningless charade in a political climate

where there are no candidates willing to take a stand. Our representatives are either already doing their best (like Pete DeFazio) or else they're already bought and paid for by corporate interests. Either way, calling and writing to them isn't going to do much good. Political rallies and civil disobedience techniques have become so commonplace and boring that they fail to even make the news. So with the traditional options exhausted and the crisis getting more serious every day, it should be no surprise that growing numbers of people are taking matters into their own hands. Whether it be climbing trees, stopping traffic, locking down to bulldozers, or even breaking windows or burning SUVs, more and more people, especially young people, are coming to the same conclusion. If we want the human race to survive on this planet, direct action is going to be necessary.

Sam Bond's Garage, June 12th

So there it is. He did what he did, he never claimed otherwise, but the sentence he got is ridiculous. Come down to Sam Bond's on the twelfth, let's have some fun and give Jeff some love! If you want to see changes in this country, if you believe the system is out of control and want to help reel it in, or if you just think Jeff Luers is a hero who deserves your support... come on down, we'll see you there!