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RAINFOREST RADICALS

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RAINFOREST RADICALS

**A HISTORY OF
RAINFOREST ACTION
NETWORK AND
TRANSNATIONAL
ORGANIZING**

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Preface

The summer of 2015 was abnormally hot in the Pacific Northwest. I was in Corvallis, Oregon, for the summer to work on a book project covering the heritage of the timber industry in the region. After more than a dozen research trips and conferences to the region, the desiccated landscape was a shock as I visited Oregon communities from Astoria to Powers (just south of Coos Bay) that had hosted significant sawmill operations and several abandoned sites, including some as far to the east as Kinzua and Pondosa. Between the site visits, the hours of research in remote county historical societies, and the collection of a series of oral histories touching on the Veronia Logging Show and Friendship Jamboree (possibly the best name for a local festival ever), I was rapidly developing the framework for the book.

As I spoke with timber industry veterans and dug through the records of extant and long-gone timber companies, it became clear that there was no way to unpack the heritage legacy of the industry without directly confronting the tumultuous last two decades of the twentieth century in the region. At the end of the trip, my wife joined me and we spent a few days at the sublime Opal Creek Ancient Forest Center. After dinner one evening at Opal Creek, I discovered a thickly detailed history of the contentious process that culminated with residents succeeding in winning wilderness designation for the area. There was no eureka moment, but the experience at Opal Creek pushed me to expand my perspective. The veteran loggers I had earlier interviewed surprised me when they put environmental protections well behind mechanization, whole-log export, and poor forest management as a factor in the decline of the region's timber industry. The history of Opal Creek aligned with those assertions and showed the power of grassroots movements to create a new future for the forests.

I returned from that trip with plans to move the project to completion. In the spring of 2016, I was scheduled to present my work as a research fellow. That was when I learned that Randy Hayes, cofounder of Rainforest Action Network, was living in Washington DC, where he was running a new organization, Foundation Earth. Having just completed a successful oral history project in Oregon and seeking material about the late twentieth-century movement to protect old-growth forests, I emailed Hayes to ask if he would meet me while I was in the neighborhood for the conference. To my surprise, he said yes.

The first interviews were energizing. Before the year was out, I completed a research trip to plow through RAN's extensive records at the Bancroft Library at the University of California at Berkeley, returned to DC for more interviews with Hayes, and began interviewing everyone I could who had been involved in RAN's early days. The RAN project quickly overwhelmed the years of work I had already put into the Oregon book. That book remains unfinished. The book that follows is the product of a decade of work.

I hope this book provides valuable insight into an era that grows more relevant by the day.

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Introduction

On October 17, 1998, employees at a newly opened Home Depot in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, watched as a boisterous crowd gathered in front of the building. The demonstrators, clad in homemade costumes representing rainforest birds, monkeys, and jaguars, brandished signs emblazoned with pleas for the protection of rainforests and old-growth forests. Whether shoppers hurried past, stopped to engage, or casually observed the rainforest advocates, the demonstration captured their attention. Once inside the newly constructed temple to domestic improvement, shoppers discovered that the sidewalk shenanigans were only part of a carefully planned action.¹

As do-it-yourselfers searched the cavernous building for copper pipe to replace a leaking polybutylene line or hardware to update kitchen cabinets, they heard an announcement over the in-store loudspeakers: “Good afternoon, Home Depot shoppers. Do you want to see how we’re destroying tropical rainforests in the Amazon? Come see our mahogany doors in aisle seven.” Shocked customers watched the store manager hurry to the aisle, only to find it empty. Moments later: “Good afternoon again, Home Depot shoppers. Do you want to see how we’re destroying the rainforests of Southeast Asia? Come see the wooden dowels here in aisle ten.” The manager again rushed to confront the culprits, who were never there.²

The energetic protest in the City of Brotherly Love was the latest manifestation of a movement more than a decade in the making. In this instance, Rainforest Action Network (RAN) captured public attention with a coordinated week of action that coincided with World Rainforest Week (October 12–18). During the week, RAN’s Rainforest Action Groups (RAGS) used tactics that included costumes, signs, chants, leaflets, and banner drops to communicate with customers. The in-store announcements were added at the last minute when a Home Depot employee telephoned RAN with

the intercom codes and the tip that every store used the same codes. RAGS conducted similar actions at no less than seventy Home Depots across the United States and Canada. The coordinated week of action within a multiyear campaign was a favorite RAN tactic. RAN lacked the legal, financial, or political power to force large corporations to change, but it was far from powerless. The rainforest defenders mobilized grassroots groups and spent years attacking Home Depot's reputation until the corporation announced it would stop selling rainforest and old-growth products. Lowe's called RAN the next day to make a deal.³

RAN emerged with a 1985 strategy session in San Francisco that Randy Hayes organized to unite Indigenous rights and rainforest advocates. When Hayes announced the new organization, it had a name and mission but no staff or members. The mission was to end tropical deforestation and support the self-determination efforts of Indigenous peoples whose ancestral territory overlapped with rainforests. The attendees agreed to collaborate on four broad campaigns—rainforest beef, Hawaiian rainforests, the World Bank, and tropical timber—and that RAN would coordinate cooperative activities. The group reconvened the following year in Malaysia to support the creation of the World Rainforest Movement. The World Rainforest Movement was one of many allied organizations RAN helped create and a frequent partner in the San Francisco organization's transnational endeavors. Hayes's network of domestic and international activists forced the rainforest movement on the U.S. public, pioneered and refined tactics and strategies that reshaped environmental action in the 1990s, and demonstrated the possibilities of large-scale grassroots organizing.⁴

Well before that strategy session, Hayes and his friend Mike Roselle, a cofounder of Earth First!, envisioned RAN as a radical, grassroots, anticolonial organization to challenge the structures of exploitation that radiated out from the United States. Their alliance began with a shared connection to the counterculture that pulled them to the Glen Canyon Dam for their first meeting. From his childhood in the Ohio River Valley through his undergraduate work at Bowling Green State University and his graduate study at San Francisco State University, Hayes lived through what he remembers as "heavy times." He joined a protest at Bowling Green after the Kent State shootings in 1970 and attended an antiwar rally in the nation's capital, but his

love of Beat poetry was his primary connection to the counterculture. His turn to radical activism only came as he was completing his master's degree in environmental planning at San Francisco State and first met Roselle.⁵

Roselle, born in Louisville, Kentucky, less than five years after and about three hundred miles downriver from Hayes, had a different path. When Roselle's parents moved to Los Angeles, he discovered the counterculture and set out on his own to get involved. He traveled the nation as a hippy, developed a love of wilderness, spent time with the Yippies and the more radical Zippies, and learned about visually impactful and uncompromising protests from some of the most accomplished strategists of his era. Eventually, he decided he belonged in the wilderness, moved to a remote corner of Wyoming, and became a roughneck on an oil rig, the only job he could find. In a case of historical foreshadowing, the company that owned the rig was the same one RAN confronted a decade later in its Hawaiian Rainforest Campaign. Roselle's environmental career began when he joined a movement to oppose his employer's plans to drill in the wild places he loved and met the wilderness defender, Howie Wolke. Less than two years later, Roselle, Wolke, and others created Earth First! and defined radical environmental action in the United States for the 1980s and 1990s.⁶

RAN was Hayes and Roselle's creation, but many others provided early guidance. Thomas Banyacya, a Hopi elder from Kykotsmovi Village, was a renowned advocate of pan-Indigenous solidarity who transformed his home into one of the great organizing loci of the international movement. It was Banyacya and his family who guided Hayes to a nuanced understanding of the ongoing exploitation of Indigenous people and their complex strategies of resistance and persistence.⁷

David Brower, one of the most important environmentalists in the post-World War II United States, was running Friends of the Earth when Hayes rented a desk amid the ambitious environmentalists in the NGO's offices. Brower's influence on Hayes is reflected in RAN's pursuit of the radical systemic change that Friends of the Earth pushed in its early years. Hayes and Roselle first formed the idea of RAN while sitting at that rented desk. They named their new organization as an homage to the work of Monica Moore, who rented a nearby desk. Moore created the Pesticide Action Network in 1984 as a U.S.-based NGO engaged in international action, and her organization followed the example of the agricultural reform, Indigenous

rights, and women's rights organizations she found collaborating against pesticide harm during her work on the issue in Brazil and Malaysia. The international and inclusive vision of Pesticide Action Network, as well as the name, is easily recognizable in RAN.⁸

John Seed and Herb Gunther were two other significant sources of inspiration for Hayes and Roselle. Seed began his journey into environmental activism when he joined what is generally identified as the first civil disobedience campaign for environmental protection in his homeland of Australia. The campaign moved Seed to create the Rainforest Information Centre, one of the world's first rainforest conservation organizations, and launch the Rainforest Beef Campaign he brought to Earth First!. Seed's example awakened Hayes to the power of radical, nonviolent civil disobedience in defense of rainforests and Indigenous communities. Gunther added another warp thread to the tapestry of RAN's strategies. When Hayes left the Friends of the Earth offices, he found a new home for RAN at Gunther's Public Media Center. Gunther guided Hayes on how to use the media to his advantage, build RAN's membership, and raise enough money to keep his new organization afloat. RAN's staff, allies, RAGs, and opponents were also important shapers of the organization. Their contributions are discussed throughout this book.

Two core concepts emerged from those influences to shape RAN's significance. The first was a belief that all Indigenous people deserve the right to self-determination. This cause was Hayes's first love and what he had planned to devote his life to before Roselle. Seed, and others pulled him into the world of environmental organizing. The second was the power of, and need for, radical, nonviolent civil disobedience to effect change. Hayes was born amid rural poverty, came of age during the turbulent late 1960s and 1970s, and was among the millions of Americans who lost faith in the nation's political and economic elite, who seemed to be the cause of problems rather than the solution. A grassroots movement that utilized direct action was the answer. These core concepts established RAN as an avatar of the possibilities and limitations of radicalism and grassroots transnational organizing.⁹

During RAN's first years, Hayes recruited local groups, hired staff, and developed connections with schools, NGOs, Indigenous leaders, and the media,

all as he tried to square the circle of empowering local grassroots groups while creating an organization capable of challenging the world's most powerful corporations and institutions. During its infancy, the organization consisted of Hayes, his staff in San Francisco, and a largely independent set of allied small groups (the RAGs) that tended to view RAN as a source of inspiration or an older sibling. Before the end of 1989, RAN declared victory in its campaign to force Burger King to cancel its contracts for rainforest beef from Costa Rica, began working with Native Hawaiians to protect a sacred rainforest, supported several Indigenous and traditional communities threatened by World Bank–funded infrastructure projects, and joined local and Indigenous-led efforts against fossil fuel corporations in the Amazon. Then in 1989 the rainforest movement burst into the public consciousness with RAN as its most visible champion.¹⁰

Hayes's charisma was critical in the early days, as the organization formed around the personal relationships he created. Highly charismatic founders, when successful, attract and motivate members and donors, grow their organizations, and shape cohesive campaigns. When less successful, they corrupt the grassroots mission through heavy-handed direction or create an unstable organizational structure that collapses with their departure. Under Hayes's guidance, RAN developed many positive characteristics of a grassroots organization with a charismatic leader but was not free from the associated drawbacks. The discussion that follows will explore examples of each.¹¹

RAN's increased visibility at the end of the 1980s attracted new staff, RAGs, and allies, which swelled the network's capacity. The added visibility also brought heightened scrutiny and criticism. Bill Gifford, writing for *Outside* magazine in 1990, opined that Hayes created RAN because Friends of the Earth refused to launch a rainforest division and give the newcomer a job leading it. Gifford's snark aside, there is something to his assessment. Hayes had unsuccessfully lobbied for Friends of the Earth to expand its work in rainforests before he and Roselle founded RAN. Despite the skeptics, RAN continued to grow and rack up wins during the 1990s. Hayes and company secured sustainability agreements from 3M, Anderson (the largest window manufacturer in the United States), Kimberly-Clark, Kinko's, Levi-Strauss, Nike, MacMillan Bloedel (the largest timber company in Canada), and Mitsubishi Motor Sales and Mitsubishi Electric. Threaded through these major efforts were many others in which RAN provided aid to Indigenous

and local groups threatened by what Hayes referred to as corporate-led global capitalism.¹²

In the last years of the millennium, RAN began to encounter the challenge of success. Gifford's lighthearted criticism was replaced with attacks by RAN's opponents and internal concerns about the chaos of Hayes's freewheeling leadership. He was serious about the issues but less so about management. Hayes encouraged RAGs to develop distinct identities to energize their members and modeled a seize-the-moment, fun-loving approach to life that attracted dynamic activists. After over a decade of rapid growth, RAN had to embrace EF!-style chaos or create a structure with accountability and formal leadership. RAN chose the latter when Hayes prepared to step down and recommended a new executive director and the board of directors hired oversight from outside the activist world. The changes initiated a few years of turmoil and identity searching until the organization regained its footing. RAN retained its radical strategic goals but embedded them within a more hierarchical structure that featured professional leadership attuned to big-picture issues such as climate change and the fossil fuel and banking industries.¹³

Identifying beginnings is a fraught task for historians as a tweak to a definition here or a qualifier there can produce dramatically different outcomes. For this analysis, modern, radical, grassroots environmental action can be traced to the 1960s in the actions of James Phillips (better known as the Fox) and his band of supporters in Chicago. The Fox welded shut factory outfall pipes, spilled industrial waste on the plush carpet of an executive's office, and created all manner of havoc in a campaign against the polluters of the Fox River. After the Fox, the practice of ecotage reappeared in communities across the country where the relevant authorities were unable or unwilling to protect the environment and people's health. A small team in Tucson acquired outsized significance in the history of such actions. These "eco-raiders" fought urban sprawl by cutting down billboards, pulling up survey stakes, and sabotaging construction equipment, and they inspired Edward Abbey's *Monkey Wrench Gang*. That book then inspired generations of eco-radicals, including the founders of Earth First!.¹⁴

The core founders of Earth First!, Dave Foreman, Bart Koehler, Roselle, and Wolke, were driven to radicalism by what they saw as large environmen-

tal organizations' cowardice in the face of the U.S. Forest Service's rejection of its statutory responsibility to protect wilderness. The quartet agreed on the need for a potent voice for wilderness that would not be cowed by political, economic, or legal power. Their creation, Earth First! was designed to establish an undeniably radical flank to imbue the environmental movement with creativity and expand the boundaries of the possible. Theirs was a strategic radicalism that intended to make the big greens more effective, not replace them. Foreman outlined this with his "An Environmental Strategy for the '80s," in a 1982 issue of the *Earth First! Journal*.¹⁵

It is to our advantage to let a wide range of opinions and positions be publicly heard within our ranks. . . . Truly conservative groups like Audubon and The Nature Conservancy should continue to butter up the corporations and dip their fingers into their fat wallets but they should also edge a step or two over to greater militancy. The Sierra Club and Wilderness Society lobbyists should keep wearing their three-piece suits or high heels while playing the game but they should ask for a little more, be a tad less ready to compromise, yell a tad louder about how the game is skewed to favor Exxon and Louisiana-Pacific (i.e. they should play rougher within the system and begin to question the system itself.) Friends of the Earth should eagerly jump back into its role of being the radical in the environmental establishment. . . . Further out should be the real extremists: EARTH FIRST! and her cooperating local and state groups calling for the creation of vast wilderness preserves, pioneering a revolution in our housekeeping habits on the planet, questioning the very philosophical tenets of Western Civilization, and engaging in non-violent direct action to stop the industrial beast whenever necessary.¹⁶

Earth First!'s radical tactics, "No Compromise in Defense of Mother Earth" slogan, and boundary-pushing rhetoric tapped into precedents that included the exploits of earlier ecotage practitioners and the rollicking adventures of Abbey's *Monkey Wrench Gang*. The difference was in scale and duration. Before Earth First! built a national movement, ecotage and environmentally motivated civil disobedience were generally restricted to local actors who

emphasized health and quality of life issues. Many of those local campaigners were radical pioneers in what is now termed environmental justice. While Earth First! often embraced similar tactics and confronted some of the same opponents, only rarely did the wilderness defenders directly address environmental inequality or harm to humans until well into the 1990s.¹⁷

Earth First!'s ability to build a national movement of radical environmentalists and gain some public support exposed a cultural trend that also lifted RAN. A small but notable number of American environmentalists were growing frustrated with the conservatism of the movement's big nongovernmental organizations (BINGOs) and the political system that seemed intent on transforming the nation's last natural spaces into industrial extraction zones and wastelands. Even more significantly, this turn to radicalism was not confined to the environmental movement. Reformers of many types turned to nonviolent civil disobedience as the capitalist excess of the Reagan Revolution and the Me Generation shut down hopes of help from governmental sources.¹⁸

Civil disobedience, whether as marches in Berkeley, Birmingham, or DC or sit-ins in Cambridge, Flint, or Greensboro, had long provided American reformers with the tools to expose injustices and build public support for change. The potential of civil disobedience seemed to dissipate as corporate media turned away from dissent during Reagan's conservative consensus and the subsequent neoliberal defense of the status quo. Without media coverage, civil disobedience largely disappeared from public awareness. That did not mean the tactic disappeared. Communities of purpose defending workers, the poor, women, LGBTQ people, minorities, and nature continued to find value in the tactic, especially at the local level.¹⁹

Unable to leverage media coverage to communicate with a national audience, these movements narrowed their focus to specific issues and emphasized local victories over systemic solutions. Workers in the deindustrializing Rust Belt lobbied business and political leaders, used legal action, strikes, and civil disobedience, and even tried to buy their workplaces in a generally unsuccessful effort to save local jobs rather than systematically confronting the offshoring of industry. The Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now spun off from the National Welfare Rights Organization to focus more intently on local instances of poverty and inequality. The new association achieved victories but is most significant for popularizing

the philosophies of Saul Alinsky, including confrontation and local action. Possibly the most assertive and successful radical organization of the 1980s was the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP). The stakes could not have been higher as the LGBTQ community's struggle to survive the AIDS epidemic was exacerbated by the public's puritanical attitude to gender and sexuality. ACT UP's eventual success at the national level, much like RAN's, was largely a product of effective organizing at the local level.²⁰

Earth First! pulled Hayes into environmentalism, provided RAN with its first campaign and activist network, and established the tactics and organizational model that became the RAG network. In its first public actions, RAN leaned on its allies at Earth First! and Greenpeace and adopted the attention-grabbing tactics of the more well-established groups. The public recognized the tactics but knew little of radical environmentalism and lacked the ability, or interest, to distinguish between the groups. This was partially attributable to corporations, politicians, and media outlets that labeled anyone who challenged profits as a communist bent on destroying America. Even the Sierra Club was often lumped into this monolithic representation of environmentalists as dangerous radicals.²¹

A combined RAN/EF!/Greenpeace action led by RAN's Atossa Soltani in September 1992 illustrates the alliances between the groups and their shared tactics. The action employed a particularly complex and dramatic lockbox. A lockbox is (generally) a tube into which demonstrators insert their arms and handcuff themselves to one another or interior anchor points. The action at Paramount Studios was part of a RAN campaign to pressure Hollywood studios to end their use of lauan (a tropical tree from Southeast Asia) plywood for set construction. Soltani and her team prepared by inserting lockbox tubes through holes cut in the sides of eight steel barrels. The next step made the action memorable. The team filled the barrels with concrete and painted them to resemble tree stumps. When police arrived at the demonstration, they found Paramount's main gate blocked by demonstrators sitting with their arms locked inside the "stumps" and about a half-ton of protective concrete. Other demonstrators paraded RAN's fifty-foot-long inflatable chainsaw around the scene while another group dropped a banner across the gate. Any observer would have struggled to identify who was with Earth First!, Greenpeace, or RAN.²²

RAN's small size during Hayes's tenure, a peak of about twenty-five staff members, meant that the bulk of its actions were carried out by its RAGs. Despite the significance of these groups, it is impossible to compile a comprehensive list of all RAGs across time. New locals constantly joined as others merged and folded. Some communities were home to multiple RAGs, while others saw new groups spring up after a previous version collapsed. The network peaked with about 250 semi-independent groups, each pursuing the tactics and campaigns that excited its members. This complex arrangement poses one of the challenges of defining RAN's radicalism.

Hayes encouraged the RAGs to pursue any tactic they chose that fell short of damage to property or risk to human or other life. A favorite tactic that RAN supported with training and supplies was the banner drop that Hayes and his team learned from Greenpeace. RAN and the RAGs captured media attention with the tactic often enough that it became a signature. The lockdown, borrowed from Earth First!, was arguably RAN's most common civil disobedience tactic. One of the reasons Hayes found the tactic so appealing was its simplicity and inclusivity. Most of RAN's lockdowns consisted of people sitting in front of an entrance, joining arms, and refusing to move. This made civil disobedience accessible to people unwilling or unable to risk their health or lives. There were more daring lockdowns, but those were usually the product of a RAG collaborating with Earth First!. Beyond those visibly radical tactics, RAN and its RAGs used boycotts, letter writing, fundraising, advertising campaigns, and other tactics not generally perceived as radical.

The boycott exemplifies RAN's ability to creatively incorporate existing, accessible tactics into its quest for a radical vision of a global society that respected human rights and ecological integrity. As the historian Keith Makato Woodhouse argues in *Ecocentrists: A History of Radical Environmentalism*, no other tactic is as closely associated with the extraordinary success of RAN's early years.²³ Hayes and his allies introduced the boycott to the environmental movement, but it was well established as a tactic to force change when RAN emerged in 1985.

One of the most significant in terms of its influence on RAN was the Nestle boycott of the 1970s. Hayes readily credits that boycott and Ralph Nader's leadership as formative influences in his journey to activism. The Nestle boycott served as something of a bridge for RAN. As Paul Adler demon-

strates in *No Globalization Without Representation: U.S. Activists and World Inequality*, that boycott demonstrated the objection to corporate globalization's disregard for human life. The difference was that the Nestle boycott was part of a tool kit that included "lobbying, lawsuits, and other 'insider' tactics to bring about social change."²⁴ Nader and others who promoted the boycott were chasing the same goal as Hayes, despite pursuing it as experts using top-down organizing. Radical in goals if not in tactics.

When reflecting on RAN's radicalism, many of the organization's veterans struggled to draw distinctions between tactics and strategies. Two themes emerge in their statements. The first is that RAN was beyond the World Wildlife Fund and the Natural Resources Defense Council on a spectrum of radicalism but short of Earth First! or Earth Liberation Front. Pamela Wellner, RAN's tropical timber coordinator, explained this by asking and answering a rhetorical question. "Was [RAN] as radical as Earth First! or some of the animal rights organizations? No. But on the spectrum, I would say they are." The radicalism in that distinction is based on tactics. To Beto Borgess, RAN's Amazon coordinator, it was important to emphasize that RAN was "not radical in the sense of green terrorists." There was a limit, but many RAN veterans shared Michael Marx's assessment of "the principles that RAN drilled into me, which were you've got to be willing to push the envelope and take risks."²⁵

Historical context matters when assessing RAN's leaders' statements on radicalism. Two events that bracketed the turn of the millennium changed the place of grassroots and radical action in the United States. The first was a 1999 mass mobilization of activists in Seattle with a wide range of grievances loosely connected to civil rights, environmental protections, and human rights. The participating groups lacked a shared vision or set of leaders and quickly lost cohesion and control of the narrative. In the confusion, politicians and corporate media outlets highlighted random acts of vandalism to convince the public that the participants were dangerous anarchists and that mass organizing threatened the nation. Two years later, politicians and corporate leaders took advantage of a horrific event to undermine the constitutional protections for the patriotic dissent that has brought reform and progress to the United States since the nation's founding. Since hijackers crashed two passenger jets into New York City's World Trade Center Twin Towers, nonviolent civil disobedience in the United States has increasingly

been criminalized and labeled terrorism, making the tactic inaccessible to anyone unwilling to risk life in prison.²⁶

When conversations with these same RAN veterans turned to strategy, they were much more comfortable naming the organization as radical. Borgess expressed this in terms Hayes and his colleagues used frequently. RAN “was radical in the sense of going to the root of the problem.” Shannon Wright, who led much of RAN’s Ecuador work, expanded on this. “RAN was radical in addressing the root cause and speaking about the intersection of human rights and environment and corporate power.” RAN’s early leaders remember the organization as pursuing nonviolent revolution. Curt Clemenson, founder of the Houston RAG and a key figure in many fossil fuel campaigns, asked, “What is it to be radical?” He theorized: “To confront multinational corporations to change their methods and demonstrate in front of their offices, I don’t think that’s radical at all. I think that’s common sense.” While it may seem like common sense to cure the disease rather than treat the symptom, that was not the philosophy of neoliberal politicians, profit-hungry business executives, or cautious BINGOS. RAN was radical in promoting a new, more just, and sustainable way for the world’s people to live together.²⁷

Another element of RAN’s strategy marked the organization as radical. RAN presented a public image of power and confrontation. This was visible in public statements by Hayes and other leaders and in the stalking black jaguar in RAN’s logo. The logo’s first iteration featured a seated jaguar that looked like a cuddly housecat and was much less menacing. The final logo is iconic, though not a great depiction of the organization. RAN never had the overwhelming power or strategy of the large ambush predator. Marc Gunther identified a more apt avatar for the organization that reflects its radical approach to generating pressure in “Mosquito in the Tent,” an article he wrote for *Fortune* magazine. Of the four major campaigns covered in this book, one lasted less than five years, two lasted a decade, and one remained active after twenty years.²⁸

RAN won by mobilizing never-ending swarms of small groups of local activists. Even if one was swatted away, the cloud continued to draw blood. That structure revealed an adaptation to the reality of asymmetrical power and civil disobedience. As Hayes explains RAN’s use of civil disobedience: “It’s not about defeating your enemy. We didn’t have enough power.” The goal was to make opponents so uncomfortable that they were willing “to walk

forward together with deep ecological sustainability in mind.” If that didn’t work, the goal was to “get them down on one knee and negotiate a settlement that’s at least a bold step in the right direction.”²⁹ This was another legacy Hayes carried from Earth First!. RAN’s structure and goals were prefigurative. Hayes built the organization to encourage communities of purpose to form and collectively act for the greater good rather than individual gain.³⁰

This book began with an oral history project that asked key figures from RAN’s early years and their contemporaries to discuss what worked, what didn’t, and why. Those conversations, framed and contextualized with extensive archival and secondary research, are presented here to consider RAN’s significance and ponder the future of transnational organizing and radical grassroots action. In Hayes’s words: “We’re the last generation with a chance to save the rainforest so that the next generation can have a chance to save the rainforest.”³¹ The forces of greed, corruption, and narcissism never rest, which makes protecting the planet and its people an unending task.

Finding order in RAN’s early years is challenging. The frenetic activity, coupled with Hayes’s willingness to try anything and Roselle’s skill with spectacle, often obscures the intentionality behind their decisions. RAN managed up to ten simultaneous campaigns while coordinating a network of more than two hundred RAGs representing every continent other than Antarctica. The pattern in the chaos is revealed in the four broad campaigns selected by the international gathering of rainforest and Indigenous rights advocates Hayes assembled at the strategy session that launched RAN in 1985. Those four campaigns were rainforest beef, Hawaiian rainforests, the World Bank, and tropical timber. RAN played a leadership role and achieved a measure of success in each.

This book analyzes each of those campaigns to explore RAN’s emergence and evolution as an actor in the transnational organizing of the 1980s and 1990s. The organization’s more targeted efforts to address specific situations, such as a pulp mill in Costa Rica or a mine complex in Indonesia, are integrated into the narrative where appropriate. The primary campaigns dragged on, overlapped, and shared leadership as RAN was drawn into ancillary issues while centering its ultimate goal of defending all rainforests and the people who depended on them.³² The result is a narrative of innovative tactics, strategies, and structures that shaped contemporary organizations

and remain relevant. During an era of global crises, including climate change, habitat loss, the violation of human rights, and corporations bending national governments to their will, the small group of young and inexperienced activists that comprised RAN helped create a global movement that slowed and occasionally halted attacks on rainforests and Indigenous people. Each of the following chapters narrates one of RAN's primary campaigns to analyze what it reveals about the organization's evolution and significance.

The first chapter investigates the events surrounding RAN's creation and its connections to Earth First!, exploring the Burger King Boycott, RAN's first campaign and part of the larger rainforest beef initiative. The Rainforest Beef Campaign originated in Australia with John Seed's Rainforest Information Centre before Mike Roselle and Earth First! adopted the initiative. Hayes worked closely with Roselle and Earth First! on the campaign before launching and building RAN on the foundation of Earth First!'s local groups. The chapter also explores several of RAN's important influences, such as Greenpeace and the Public Media Center, and the early development of tactics such as civil disobedience and media management. Among those issues, the chapter investigates RAN's role as an entity in an international coalition that pushed the rainforest movement into the public spotlight by the end of the 1980s.

In the second chapter, the narrative enters RAN's tangled timeline. One year into its rainforest beef work, RAN joined an international coalition attempting to force reform at the World Bank. While RAN was occupied on two fronts, Native Hawai'ian leaders from the Pele Defense Fund (PDF) wrote to Hayes to request help in their struggle to protect the Wao Kele o Puna rainforest on the Big Island of Hawai'i. It took RAN some time, but it answered the call and spent a decade supporting the PDF without putting itself in the spotlight. The Hawaiian Rainforest Campaign presents an opportunity to explore RAN's relationship with Indigenous communities and how that relationship made the organization uncommon among its peers.

RAN's longest-running campaign, covered in chapter 3, was its advocacy for reform at the World Bank and other multinational development banks. The chapter traces the complex geopolitical and economic threads that banks, corporations, and politicians wove together to establish neocolonial control and how RAN evolved to address systemic exploitation. RAN's answer was

a two-pronged strategy of exerting pressure on financial institutions in the Global North and supporting Indigenous and local groups in the Global South. To find purchase in this multidecade, multi-issue, and global effort, the analysis in the chapter centers on large-scale hydroelectric projects and the international scale on which RAN operated. The duration of this campaign creates opportunities to consider how RAN evolved, what it meant to be radical, and how environmental organizations adapt to the scale of the issues they confront.

The fourth chapter delves into a campaign during which RAN underwent significant change. Tropical deforestation, a campaign originally designated for leadership by Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth, was the source of many of RAN's brush-fire fights. European and Asian affiliates of Friends of the Earth were the architects of an exuberantly creative Tropical Timber Campaign that grew beyond their capacity, which is when they turned to RAN for an assist. The campaign presented an opportunity for RAN to lead a major campaign for systemic reforms, but it lacked focus. RAN narrowed the scope and transformed the Tropical Timber Campaign into its Mitsubishi Campaign. This became RAN's largest initiative and required the cultivation of new leadership, funding, and partners, and maximizing the effectiveness of RAGS. The changes continued and by the time Mitsubishi signed a sustainability agreement, RAN was a larger and more well-funded organization with more professional and structured leadership. This chapter brings direct action and the RAGS to the center and investigates the meaning of victory for direct action and grassroots campaigns.

RAN's most unique actions were going after corporations, bringing civil disobedience to the table, and bringing Native peoples into the conversation in addition to forests. That it was no longer just trees but Native communities added another emotional and human dimension to the story of the battle of good and evil—it was human beings, not just trees, that were being cut down.³³

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