

# **Interview with Mack Evasion (winter 2010/2011)**

Winter 2010/2011

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## Introduction

{ Outside the snow fell. It was nearly 5am. We had just finished the interview. Standing up, he said, ‘I think I know this place in this building...’ }

The late 90’s and early 2000’s diy punk scene seemed to exist on scams and secrets passed between forever-young kids with dirty clothes and squeaky bikes. Amongst my friends, there was an unspoken determination that adventure took precedent over jobs, and in hindsight, the afternoons spent on the river in hand-built rafts and the photocopied zines carried on cross-country train-hopping trips were the spoils of our starry-eyed oaths to get around the traditional work-economy in any way possible.

It’s hard to recollect the significance of this era for us without speaking of other people whose direction overlapped in places with ours .

One afternoon, a friend passed along a copy of a zine he had picked up. It was called Evasion, and it was a [very thick, very wordy] account of a hardcore kid hopping trains, shoplifting food, and sneaking into concerts. In short, it was proof to us that our band-of-thieves network of friends stretched out further than our city. It made me feel that ours was a militant movement stretching to all corners of the country. Excitement dripped from the pages of that zine. And we treated it as a dare to go even bigger!

{ We shuffled down the hallway, flanked by doors on either side. Fluorescent lights throwing their glow on a corridor empty at this late hour. ‘I think it’s this door over here,’ he said. We tried it. Locked. }

Around this same time, another publication from the hardcore scene — Inside Front — arose in the form of a book called, Days Of War, Nights Of Love, a sorta modern take on anarchist ideas, and dare I say, giving it a much-needed kick in the ass. That publisher, Crimethinc, then followed that up by publishing Evasion in book form. And with that, our scene that existed on scams passed around amongst friends began seeing a new wave of energy surging into its midst. And at once, it was exciting, though if we would’ve taken a breath, we should’ve seen that our days were numbered.

But every wave has its backlash.

The sustainability of a lifestyle of low-end scams and dumpstering one’s necessities is based on staying two steps ahead of those corporations whose lackeys were catching on to our tricks. As refreshing as it was to see these new books have such a large impact on people across the country — and possibly even further — part of me couldn’t help but feel that they were partially responsible for commodifying a way of living that I felt an affinity to. What seemed to follow throughout the scene was an era containing a volatile combination of adopting new ideas to their extreme, short-sightedness, righteousness, an unfortunate influx of celebrity, gossip-mongering and arrogance that the subculture had at least superficially claimed to have sworn off, and ultimately, a whole lot of cynicism. Before long, Evasion and Crimethinc became the whipping posts for any ire directed at situationist-style activism or any semblance of drop-out culture, and it soon seemed that more focus was being spent tearing apart the negatives rather than acknowledging anything of significance and moving on.

{ And then the giving way of a door that pushed open. We moved it slowly and looked inside. The cafeteria was immaculate. The dimmed after-hours lighting reflected on orderly and thoroughly restocked counters and displays of chips, juices, energy bars, and snacks. We stepped inside, ignoring the overhead security cameras. }

Over the ensuing years, the Evasion columns became more vitriolic and less *fun*. A reflection of the cynicism becoming all-too-present within activism at the time. And then, the columns disappeared altogether. Rumors of a second Evasion book faded over time.

It may have tread on territory that wasn't completely original, and maybe in all of its pages of 'lefthanding' groceries, impersonating company employees to get crates of juice, and redundant vegan straight edge hardcore band references, there is no formula of an anarchist utopia [though what else is to be expected from a punk zine?], but for what it was, it went bigger than most of the other zines and books breaching the same subjects. And here is where the entertainment and challenge presented by the book lay.

{ To this day, I couldn't tell you if that pre-jadedness era of zines and travel and these stumbled-upon accounts of the endless possibilities was as romantic as the distance paints it, but what I *can* say is that dreaming up the next big idea with an armload of free Odwalla drinks has never ceased to put a smile on my face. And as we left the building and walked out into the snowy streets on this late night, I could only smile and hope that that 'youthful idealism' would continue to have this much of an impact well into another decade. }

Today, it seems harder and harder to find friends from those days who are still involved in any type of activism. And I wonder if there are still kids out there to whom finding the loopholes around selling ones self to the wage economy is as meaningful and as fun — fuck, is as unquestionably urgent and cathartic — as it was for us... and for some of us still is.

It was with these questions of the elusive history of the subcultural terra incognita of the intentionally- and gainfully-unemployed that I set out to track down the writer of Evasion — who goes simply by the name Mack.

## Interview

Mack: Let's start at the end, and then go back to the beginning. I think we should start this conversation with how I have literally not had a full conversation about Evasion in about 6 years.

*So before Evasion became a book, it was a zine. I'm interested in hearing if you had any goals originally when you wrote the zine, did you have anything you were hoping to accomplish?*

I wrote Evasion for who I was when I was 17 years old. I wanted to write something I'd wished I'd had when I graduated high school. I knew I wanted to circumvent college and circumvent having to get a job, and just go straight for maximum optimal experiences all the time. I wanted to extend my youth indefinitely. There were zines that came close, like, obviously, Scam zine was the biggest influence, as well as Cometbus. But I felt that, in certain ways, they were a little out of sync with my identity. I felt like Cometbus was a tad too cynical and Scam was a tad too drunk. I wanted a zine that was all-action, no filler, and absolutely unapologetically criminal and militant. I wanted a zine that said, I'm not going to ever work again and I don't care what you think about it, and I'm going to do whatever it takes to make it happen.

I wrote the Evasion zine, which eventually became about 40 percent of the book, in the spring of 99. At the time, I was 21. This was a period in my life when I decided the social scene I had back home wasn't for me and I decided I was gonna go on this epic hitchhiking trip by myself and move to a new town by myself and write the zine. I hitchhiked down the West Coast to San Diego, and then took a bus to Tucson, Arizona, where I knew absolutely no one. I pulled off a rather lucrative little scam of sorts and got myself a month-to-month studio apartment right next to the university campus where I holed up for several months.

At that point I had no formal training as a writer, I had never written anything in my life. So I went to Barnes and Noble and got three books, *Bird By Bird* by Anne Lamott, *Writing Well* by Zinsser, and *How To Write* by Richard Rhodes. I devoured those three books, I read them all several times. I also had several issues of Cometbus and Scam #3, which had just come out. Between those five blocks

of paper, I was able to pull off some very passable writing. I wanted the thickest, most militantly punk zine ever written, that's what I set out to do. And in about May of 1999 it was finished and I hit the road again.

So when I first sat down to write the original zine, it was written for kids who were exactly where I was when I was graduating high school, who knew what they wanted to do but didn't know how to make it work. It wasn't written for cynical hipsters or people who had been in the scene for years and years.

*How was it originally distributed?*

I did all the layout in a Kinko's in Little Rock, Arkansas. I slept inside of a movie theatre behind the screen at night, and the days, I was in Kinko's all day. I remember at one point during the final stages of the layout I spent 24 straight hours in a Kinko's, which I was really proud of at the time. Doing the layout was my entire life for like three weeks.

I finally got a master copy together, I think it was in late June of 99, and I made 10 copies of it. I gave a couple to people I met inside the Wild Oats, and to a handful of other people I met around town. It might have taken me a week to give out those 10 copies. I didn't have the confidence to actually mail my zine to HeartattaCk or Maximum RockNRoll. I felt like, why the hell would anybody want to read what I had to write. Over the next six months, I might have given out maybe, maybe, another 50 copies around the country. But by the time the end of 99 came around, the Evasion zine was a closed door. I had moved on. I was proud of it, I hadn't forgotten about it, but I wasn't reproducing it anymore.

*And how did that lead to Evasion being made into a book?*

By the time the end of 99 came around, I had moved on. I was no longer reproducing the zine.

It was about a year and a half after I made those first 10 copies, about the fall of 2000, I checked my email and it was as if somebody had flipped a switch. I had like a dozen emails from people all around the world saying they'd gotten the zine. I was totally baffled as to what was going on. I eventually pieced together that someone from the band Zegota had picked up one of those 10 copies in Little Rock, had stolen it from someone's bathroom, and had made thousands of copies and distributed them all over their tour.

Eventually I remember getting an email from Crimethinc, and them saying, 'We like your writing. We're willing to take a chance on you. We want Evasion to be the follow-up to Days Of War, Nights Of Love'.

I spent the first month after I got this offer holed up in the basement writing this book. I was living with a girl, but all of this was foreign to her; my lifestyle, the zine. I felt like the environment just wasn't working out. So I put everything I could into my backpack. I remember I had a backpack filled to the seams and a paperbag with every piece of paper I had up to that point, thousands of pages of notes, journals, every scrap of layout. And I remember standing at a bus stop in Long Beach, California with the rain pouring down onto this bag of notes knowing that I had to find somewhere to write this book. So I caught a bus to the Metrolink, which I took down to San Diego. I caught a bus to La Jolla, I went to the UC campus, I threw all my notes and everything into a locker at the arts school and threw a padlock on it. I roamed campus for a few weeks, found an abandoned broom closet, moved in, and spent the next three months living in an abandoned broom closet while working on the book. So most of the Evasion book was written in the UC San Diego library. I was spending like 12 hours a day, going through like 32 ounces of coffee, bleeding out of my eyes to write this book. It was a real struggle because I had to think about if my locker was found out, I would lose everything. So I was spending like every third day backing everything up at Kinko's, mailing it to friends around the country. I had backup copies of the book planted all over campus in case something went wrong with the originals. It was a very sparse existence. I spent most of my time in the library or in the broom closet, or sleeping in various 24 hour lounges around campus. It was great, I have really good memories about that time.

But eventually, it was like early June of 2001, I remember sending a one-line email to Crimethinc saying the book's done, let's get together and edit this thing. So I hitchhiked with two friends to Olympia. We had a very strict deadline for this book. It was, in part, due to the fact that the publisher was getting school credit at Evergreen for the book and he had to meet the semester deadline. And Earth Crisis was playing their last show at Hellfest and I had to get to that, so we each had our own deadlines. It was just ruthless, I remember sleepless nights. And we hacked through it and whittled it down to something that was passable. I think of the new material for the book, it should have been cut down by at least another 20 percent. It was too verbose. I was trying too hard to meet the word quota and focusing on quantity over quality. I cut a lot of it out for the second printing, but not as much as I should have. In the end it was rushed.

*So a problem that I had with the book was that I felt like Evasion was commodifying a lifestyle that I felt a part of, like it was taking something that wasn't extremely popular at the time and representing it in an over-the-top excessively romantic kinda way.*

Never in my life had anyone put me under scrutiny, because nobody had any reason to care about me. I was never part of the scene. I was very quiet, I was very socially awkward, I was very withdrawn. Let me tell you how absurd it all seemed from where I stood. I was this lone vegan straightedge punk kid that knew nobody. I was never plugged into social circles. My window to it was lyric sheets and zines. A lot of what I was doing, I didn't know if there was anyone else doing it. Like, you would read Scam or Cometbus and they're traveling to these little punk enclaves like Philadelphia or Portland. I was always interested in going to the small towns that no one talked about, where there wasn't a punk population. Places like Fargo, North Dakota or Hastings, Nebraska. Those were my favorite towns. I had spent two years photocopying the zine. It never got any reviews. The audience was 100% people who I met, people who picked me up hitchhiking, or kids I met outside of Whole Foods, or those people who photocopied it and handed it to people they knew. It was totally DIY for so long, and my heart was totally in the culture of it. At that point, nobody in the punk scene did books. Maybe the Burn Collector book came out first, but it was uncommon for punks to put out books at that point. As soon as the book comes out, all of a sudden the quote/unquote Evasion Kid, which was an identity I never signed up for, finds himself under a magnifying glass. Now everybody wants to know my opinion on white privilege, and everybody wants to know my opinion on feminist politics. I was accused of trivializing poverty, of not acknowledging class privilege, of not acknowledging that my poverty was self-imposed. And that's where the whole disconnect between the Evasion zine and the Evasion book. It was a photocopied zine, no different than any other photocopied zine that ever came out, it was just a little bit thicker and it happened to circulate a lot more, but nobody is holding every other zine that came out to the standard of 'you must include a class analysis in your writing.' It was a personal narrative, that's it. It never occurred to me that I might have an influence. I felt like I didn't know that by releasing the book I took on the burden of making sure everybody didn't apply the things I wrote about in a really destructive way. I was outside of these circles, so I didn't take into account that I could have embedded my writing with a greater emphasis that this is not a blueprint for hedonism. I never wanted anyone to hitchhike and dumpster dive and shoplift and feel good about themselves for doing it. If you're not taking that time, that freedom that you're creating for yourself and trying to make the world a better place with it, then I don't have any more respect for you than the 9 to 5 wage slave that's treating their life like it's disposable.

*I know there was a lot uproar when you wrote about what you called the 'girlfriend scam'.*

You know, it's always hard to know how big a rumor actually is in relation to how often you have to answer for it. In other words, there was a time when the biggest dirt anyone could dig up on me was that there was some two page Evasion supplement of which I made about 20 copies which sorta concluded by saying 'what I'm doing now is this thing called the girlfriend scam. I've been living here for three

months and she hasn't asked for rent yet,' which is totally consistent with the type of humor I used in *Evasion*. But the fact that I referred to something as the 'girlfriend scam' in a very tongue-in-cheek way seemed to come back to haunt me for years afterwards. It was this rumor that just spiraled to the point where I think most people just thought I had written a zine just on how to scam girls into paying your rent. What was most interesting, there was a time for a couple years when I had to answer for the 'girlfriend scam' all the time. I'm still friends with the girl I lived with. There was no exploitation going on. I paid my rent through food and other things that in monetary value more than eclipsed what I would have paid in rent.

*Then let's talk about some of the columns and writing that came after the book. It seemed as if you began to focus more on stirring shit up and making a lot of accusations and severing ties with other people who had visible personalities in the hardcore scene. Does any of this feel like it was the result of ego?*

It always bothered me that I felt that people who found themselves within visible positions in subcultures lost a lot of their fire, they lost their edge, and they were dulled by having this social incentive to get along with everybody. This tempered their criticisms and tempered their opinions, and this made me sick. I remember being in high school and thinking if I ever got into a position where I had an audience, I was not going to be one of those people that was pacified by the social aspect of the scene.

I remember what was probably the moment where I surrendered all investment in the political hardcore scene. I tagged along on this tour called the Total Liberation Tour in the summer of 2004. It had political hardcore bands, vegan hardcore bands, and speakers. It was a really great idea. It epitomized the aspect of hardcore that I valued most at the time. I remember being at the show in Indianapolis, and there was a guy onstage who I had known since before he knew anybody else in the scene. I knew him well enough to know he was a really big talker that liked to impress people with his hollow boasting. I remember seeing this guy giving a workshop on how to carry out ALF actions, and knowing for an absolute fact that this guy had never done a thing in his life activist-wise for animals, had never lifted a finger to do anything other than promote his own name in the scene. He was on stage acting as though he knew how to carry out ALF actions, speaking on how to carry out various sabotage actions, and the whole audience eating it up and giving him a huge round of applause afterwards, because he was in a band. And I remember thinking, if I'm part of a scene that can be this easily fooled, I'm done. I don't want anything to do with this anymore. And it was very soon after that, a month later, that I wrote a column for *HeartattaCk*, calling out people exactly like him: people that tried to cultivate an image of being these radical eco-warriors but who had never done anything other than buy records and sit around on message boards gossiping all day. That column was my attempt to sort of burn bridges and say, if you are going to take things that I care about and make an image out of them to further your own social status, don't come anywhere near me cause we're not friends. So if it came off as ego, maybe it was fighting fire with fire, because I felt that I was trying to fight against these scene-climbers that were motivated by ego and the desire to make names for themselves by being in bands and perpetuating a totally fraudulent image that wasn't who they were.

Having unfashionable opinions in those circles is like a social death sentence, and since I was never socially invested in those circles anyway, it gave me a lot of freedom to say exactly what was on my mind. All I had to do was use a line like 'girlfriend scam' or call out *Against Me!* or something. I was saying things like, you know, talking about white privilege all day doesn't make you radical, it just means that you want to cultivate the appearance of being radical. When the book came out I was thrust into what was primarily an anarchist-based scene where it didn't matter what you did, it only mattered what you said, it only mattered that you used the right language. I just didn't identify with the critique-junkie anarchists. It was, essentially, a subculture of people who were all talk, and that was in total opposition to what *Evasion* was about, which was action-based, which was if you're not putting this stuff into action, it doesn't mean anything.

*One thing I've gotten from your writing and talking to you is the idea of constantly trying to push boundaries, to go bigger, to look for new ways to get or accomplish something. What do you think are people's hinderances from this, what is it that leads people to look at the scams you wrote about in Evasion as a checklist, but then to stop there rather than taking that mentality and those methods and expanding upon them in their own ways?*

That's the thing about Evasion is by the time it came out, I was already on to the next thing. By the time the writing saw print, I was already three steps ahead. I think it would really surprise people, and that was stuff that I never wrote about.

I think these radical subcultural ghettos discourage people from looking outside of themselves, or rather, discourage anyone in the scene from looking outside of the scene for influences. I think in these scenes, people are surrounded by an unambitious crowd, and everyone's too concerned looking to their left and looking to their right before deciding what they want to do. In effect, I think these scenes enforce mediocrity.

You read Cometbus, you read Scam, nothing will ever take away the role those zines played in my life, but that's like entry-level stuff. I was reading true crime books, I was reading books about people that took things to the extreme, who exercised more ingenuity to get what they wanted out of life. Now it just happened that the subjects I was reading, what they wanted most of the time was money, which was not what I was going for.

I was fortunate enough to meet the guy that invented the scam that funded many punk tours and lifestyles up until the early or mid-90's, which was the salt water coke machine scam. Where you would squirt salt water into the coke machine dollar slot, and it would spit out all its change and sometimes you would get about \$50. I met this guy and I asked him the story behind it and he said, and I don't know if this is embellished, but he said he was on the roof of some building on the boardwalk, this is like Coney Island, in New York, and a giant wave came in and struck a coke machine and when the water receded, he had noticed all the coke machines had spit out all of their money. So he kidnapped a coke machine and performed experiments on it, and basically reverse-engineered the machine and came up with it being the salt water that did it. That set off a wave of salt watering coke machines around the country and got a lot of punk kids a lot of money. And then it became obsolete. It got to be so widespread that coke actually installed these salt water shields over the dollar slot of every machine that prevented the water from getting to the crucial circuitry. So he kidnapped another machine and took it to his basement and performed experiments on it and figured out that if you punch out the little backlit square that said 50 cents, if you punched it out and squirt salt water directly into that hole, you could circumvent the guard and actually still get the same effect.

I just don't see a lot of innovation like this going on. I still meet people that are doing the same things, and it's cool if you're just outta high school and haven't really thought about this before, but I feel like people should look at it the same way I look at writing, which is to flagrantly rip off other people's ideas until you develop your own identity, and in the course of being a copycat, you will develop your own identity. When I sat down to write Evasion, I was going to flagrantly rip off Scam and Cometbus, and hope that in the process I would develop my own voice as a writer, which I think is what happened. And you can do that with lifestyles.

*In the time since the book came out, have you heard of anyone who came into these ideas through the book, but who eventually went bigger than the scams that you were writing about at the time?*

I definitely met a lot of people that took things a lot further than I was. Like people who were running massive shoplifting rings and making a lot of money and taking that and buying property with it. Though, I think when people are just getting into these ideas, that's the stage when they're really more likely to come up to you and credit you. And there gets to be a point where, because punk



emphasizes autonomy, you want to kill your teacher, so to speak. I think that's where a lot of the backlash came from. So I feel like the people that did take it far were already so separated from being the type of person that would want to give me feedback, so I really didn't meet a lot of those people.

*Who or what are the things that have inspired you?*

I'm always really inspired by people who are willing to risk bringing either adverse social or adverse personal consequences to act in a way that's consistent with their beliefs, people that are willing to risk prison for what they believe in, who are willing to risk losing friends to act in accordance with their principles. You see that so rarely. I don't think someone's core principles or values are exhibited by what they say, but only spoken through their actions. I really only respect people that I see doing things that risk having personal or social consequences for them, that's the mark of someone that's truly sincere. So I'm inspired by the Animal Liberation Front, the Earth Liberation Front, by the founder of WikiLeaks, he knows he's got a target on his head and they're going to put him in prison one way or another, and he's going for it. There's a fairly decent list of people who were coming out of the vegan straightedge scene that had actually put their beliefs into action in a way that was more than just a lifestyle way. You had people who have gone to prison for burning down fur-feed factories, you had people who had liberated mink from farms and so forth. There's a guy who is still a fugitive named Andreas San Diego, he's accused of bombing a pharmaceutical company. I mean, these were people that I felt were putting their beliefs and politics into action.

*Can you explain why it seemed there was such an abrupt ending to the columns and your writings?*

By every measure I disappeared. I've never talked about why that happened. This is the first interview I've done in six years. I felt like the mystique around Evasion had reached such a level of absurdity that the rumors and the mythology and the gossip was now in the driver's seat. It had gotten bigger than me and it didn't feel like I was steering what was becoming of Evasion anymore. I just remember things getting really crazy. I remember the book came out in 2001. By 2003 things were so crazy that I was having people stealing my trash and making zines about what they found in my trash. Evasion was at the mercy of this hype machine. The same thing with my personal identity. I felt like I was losing control of my identity, that no one could look at me as anything other than 'the Evasion kid,' and I didn't want that to define me. It happened countless times, where I'd meet somebody and they'd want to pick my brain, and they would find out that I wasn't the person they thought I was. I had what I thought was a very dynamic life. I was never just dumpster diving and hitchhiking and shoplifting, that was only a selective account of my life, but Evasion and the stuff I wrote about was never more than a pinhole view of my life. I started to step back and think, all the hype around what was just me in my bedroom, writing the kinda zine I wished I'd had in high school, turned into this. I felt like the message of Evasion had gotten totally lost in all the hype, that's what ultimately led me to close the door on Evasion for a while.

In late 2004, early 2005, I had almost finished the second Evasion book, and I was terrified that this book wouldn't be read by anyone with fresh eyes, that this book that I had spent two and a half years of my life writing would get published and get funneled right into the same subcultural gutter. I wanted to be sure that when I gave this book to an audience, it was an audience that could look at it objectively and judge it objectively based on its content. I wanted to have it published on the furthest possible thing from Crimethinc. I had to wait until the timing was right, so I just vanished. I disappeared. I stopped doing the HeartattaCk column. I sent them a one line email saying don't expect to hear from me again. I stopped doing mailorder. I cut off all communication with Crimethinc. I did the most complete break that you possibly could with something that, at least on a public level, made up most of my identity.

And something really interesting happens when you're so invested in an identity that you just walk away from; your friendships start to become more genuine, they start to become more diverse. I can say that less than 10 percent of the people I consider friends or interact with now even know that I wrote a book.

*Having had literally years go by now, given the chance, is there anything in the past you would've done differently?*

As much as I was very autonomous and not very interested in punk circles, I still didn't stray too far outside of them either. I eventually realized you should never put faith in any subculture. You can put faith in individuals, you can put faith in yourself. But I feel like music scenes attract very insincere people. I think I didn't come to that realization until a much later age than most people do. And I will never devalue what hardcore was to me, and what it still is to me, and what it is to a lot of people. I'm not turning my back on the scene, but I do think that it tends to attract the people who want to cultivate the image of being radical but who are not actually radical and don't live radical lifestyles. That's a hard thing to admit. That's a really hard thing to admit.

In terms of my life, I would have escalated my tactics a lot. I would have challenged myself a lot more. There were definitely long stretches of my life where I felt like I had become too comfortable with my own checklist. By the time the book came out, I was starting to push myself a lot more in new directions, though that's not to say there weren't blocks of my life where I feel like I stagnated. I would have forced myself to escalate my tactics sooner and more often.

I think I would have been a little bit less of a lone cowboy and plugged myself into different circles that I shunned because we didn't see eye to eye on a lot of things. I think one of my biggest regrets is not being more socially versatile. I didn't identify with other people I knew that were squatting, or who were hopping freight trains. I didn't identify with most punk kids, frankly. I think my personality type has just always drawn a lot of lines in the sand and anyone that wasn't on my side, I just wasn't going to be friends with. I would've been more versatile in that sense, where I could hang out with those people and just find the common ground. I stand by everything I ever wrote, but I do think that I could have not carried that attitude over into my one on one interactions with people.

I need to embed my writing with a very strong message that you don't get to delude yourself into thinking you're radical because you don't have a job. It's what you do that doesn't make for sexy stories that matters. That's the biggest message that got lost. I'm gonna give a much fiercer effort to make people realize that it's your obligation to use a militantly unemployed lifestyle for the greater good. That's a mistake that I'm not going to make the next time around.

I'm going to go out of my way to make sure that my Evasion life and my real life don't overlap at all. I probably won't even tell most of my friends that I wrote a book. Because I don't want to slip back into the same mode of having a persona I'm not in control of. I think that's how I can put this book out and stay healthy and stay grounded and stay true to who I am and not just who people think I am.

*How do the principles you were writing about in the book factor into your life now? What roles do they play?*

In many ways I'm still that 18 year old that gets giggly when I'm in a situation I somehow maneuvered my way into. At one time, that was strictly criminal, it's a lot more diverse now. The superficial aspects of the book don't define me, but the guiding principles of the book definitely define me, those have never changed. I set out at age 18 to spend the rest of my life doing everything I did for the purpose of having a good story to tell, and I've never strayed from that in the 15 years since I made that commitment.

The tactics I'm using now have changed radically. But everything I do still feels like a scam, it still feels like a hustle, like I'm getting away with something, even if it's in a totally different realm. And when I talk about the high that comes with getting away with something, it's not the high that

comes with breaking a law, it's the high that comes from being in complete control of my time and not answering to a boss.

I still travel incessantly. I'm still seeking novelty in all forms. All these years later, I'm still trying to figure out how to push the boundaries. I'm living in a fairly long-established all-vegan squat. By every other measure, it's a normal household. It's all still a complete hustle, but I'm still pulling it off and having a lot of fun. I'm still vegan. I'm still straight edge.

The other night I was at a potluck at someone's house, and I saw a copy of *Evasion* on the bookshelf. I hadn't even seen a copy of the book in quite a while. And I was looking around the room, and there were professors from the local university, there was a local hip hop artist, there was a punk kid with face tattoos. I remember just looking around the room and thinking how interesting it was that I had this entire secret history that none of these people even knew about, that made up a huge chunk of my life and nobody had any idea. And I like being able to move between the two worlds without those worlds overlapping.

And just about a year ago, I had dusted off that book that was about 90 percent done. I realized I had slowly lost touch with certain circles of people, to where I didn't know if *Evasion* still had an audience. I didn't know if it was still read. So I began to ask people, is *Evasion* still viable? Does it still have an audience? Is there still a scene around this? And the answers I got were that things had changed a lot. And I started to wonder if maybe the time was right for me to put that book out. So I began to do some re-writes and some editing, and finish the last chapter. It started to take shape and I'm inching my way toward releasing it.

*If there was one idea or challenge you could set forth for people, what would that be?*

If I could've summed up the entire message of *Evasion* in one sentence, there's a line written in the book that says, life serves the risk-taker. And that's what I want to put forth to everybody. You're not going to achieve big unless you dream big and act big. Those are the only people that live lives worth living. It's not enough to have read all the right books, all that matters is what you do with those politics in the real world. Life is just the bat of an eye in the bigger picture, so if you don't live it militantly, it's not worth living.

\* \* \*

More information about the book, *Evasion*, can be found [here](#).

The Library of Unconventional Lives

Interview with Mack Evasion (winter 2010/2011)  
Winter 2010/2011

A Riotous Disarray: the interviews.  
<[web.archive.org/.../pukeskywalker.blogspot.com/2011/10/mack-evasion-interview-2011-first.html](http://web.archive.org/.../pukeskywalker.blogspot.com/2011/10/mack-evasion-interview-2011-first.html)> &  
<[web.archive.org/.../drugsanddaydreams.net/ariotousdisarray/evasion.shtml](http://web.archive.org/.../drugsanddaydreams.net/ariotousdisarray/evasion.shtml)>  
Mack is the author of the book Evasion.

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