

Joe & Ms. Donna,

I was somewhat dismayed to have recently learned that you are perhaps angry with me, but not surprised. Some explanation is owed in consideration of your many kindnesses toward me. As you are no doubt aware I have taken serious issue with certain elements and members of the so-called Trail Community. While I do not seek to convince you of the righteousness of my arguments, I would have you understand their genesis and aim. While I am taking this opportunity out of respect to communicate this with you alone, you may feel free to share my thoughts with whomever you wish, understanding that many in the “Trail Family” may feel as you do – angry and/or confused.

There is no real way to convey to you how completely broken I was when I first mounted the stairs alone at Amicalola Falls in January 2012 with everything I owned on my back. So I won't try. I will tell you that by hiking in solitude on America's *other* long trails I was slowly resurrected – reborn. I will tell you out there looking back at the A.T. I began to understand that escaping one community for another is no respite at all. That for however healthy and supportive the A.T. Community might see itself as, it exists on, and totally occupies, a place set aside for something completely different. That indeed it does so to support itself primarily, and others secondarily, in a sort of ever-growing, codependent, reciprocating saw that cuts into both the environment, and what the ATC terms as: “The intended A.T. experience.” Any person that would point out that Benton MacKaye's vision always included communities should reread his 1921 essay on the subject – or never has. What he said was: “These community groups should be carefully planned in advance. They should not be allowed to become too populous and thereby defeat the very purpose for which they are created.” In reality he was discussing “small camps” much akin to the existing 115 hostels or campgrounds that do indeed provide the “cooperation and mutual helpfulness” v. the “competition and mutual fleecing” of other relatively new on-trail enterprises. Enterprises which by their very nature introduce the “economic scramble” MacKaye recognized was a “grinding” malady of the cities, and could be retreated from by establishing a place free from it – the Appalachian Trail. “For fellowship with the *wilderness*.” What opportunities for work and jobs he discussed were meant on the trail and at these small camps – nothing more.

After 45 months of continuous hiking – half of which occurred on the A.T. – it has become clear to me that the existing “Trail Community” has not been carefully planned in advance, has been allowed to become too populous, and is thereby defeating the very purpose for which it was created. The evidence is everywhere in the form of fees, registration, quotas, and growing outcry. I am thankfully not alone in this view. But why share my position at all? Why not remain silent like so many others? Others that go along to get along, or don't want any trouble – trouble like I've experienced since raising my voice. Why raise my voice at all? Well, I'll tell you. Because I once fell in with the yegg-men and the profiteers of the trail. First finding them to be unavoidable, then later inescapable.

MacKaye said: “The trail must be guarded against the yegg-man and the profiteer.” A yegg-man being a kind of “criminal-beggar” like much of the Riff Raff, and a profiteer being their patron saint, chief enabler, primary defender, and now admitted leader, Ms. Janet Hensley.

As you know in the long miserable spring that was 2013 I made the incredibly poor decision to fall in with Jan. Like her previous partners I was comparatively young, running, lost, searching, emotionally unstable, needy to the point of desperation, and vulnerable in this regard. I accepted a relationship that included aid and comfort in exchange for first my labor, then later my companionship. As did she. It was mutually beneficial, friendly, loving, and temporary. She refused to accept its end.

She became dangerously obsessed. Unshakable. Frightening. Riff Raff, or as David “Awol” Miller described them: “her minions”, were enlisted to monitor me on-trail, report my movements, run off my new romantic interests, and hassle me at Trail Days. There were threats and intimidation. Little did I suspect she would stalk me to Maine, back to Tennessee, chase me from my home there, that I'd lose my job, reputation, friends, my girlfriend, and have to flee Standing Bear broke and on foot in fear of my life Christmas Eve. She used the internet to post bogus BOLO reports for a “missing hiker”, canvassed every on-trail establishment showing my picture, and staked out places where I might be. She called my friends, old girlfriends, ex-wife, and even my estranged family first with reports that I was in danger, then later with reports that I had robbed her. That I had somehow taken advantage of her. She went to the police and was dismissed. This requires no demonstration as it is memorialized in trail lore and is now embarrassingly legend. You once shared with me that she tearfully checked your place for me as she pursued me south across Virginia. Her mental state upon her arrival at Standing Bear has been described as “hysterical” by the many who witnessed it. The many.

I spent the winter of '14' on the TXNST training and preparing for the PCT. I was at the kickoff party in Campo California some months later when a woman I didn't know took my picture. She then handed me her phone a moment later and said: “It's for you.” Ms. Janet had found me. So had her minions. They went right back to work tracking me on the other side of the country and blackballing me up the PCT. In two highly critical moments shirted Riff Raff members, or their associates, were able to block both my girlfriend and I from much needed hostel access and/or work. That would be “Yuke” in California, and “Lion King” at the Oregon and Washington border. Thanks guys!

No longer hiking the CDT in the winter of '15' as it became '16' I received a message from Ms. Janet at my home. She wanted to know why I had not accepted her friend request on Facebook. Not having a Facebook account this piqued my curiosity. Upon examination I discovered that she had used pictures she had taken of me to create not one, but multiple Facebook accounts in my name. Furthermore that these many bogus accounts were being used to harass, torment, and antagonize my friends, family, and members of the Trail Community. The information added to the accounts was personal, private, unflattering, and hurtful. God knows what words she put in my mouth. I would learn later that this is a harassment method called doxxing, and it is not only more ugly cyberstalking and cyberbullying, but it placed my family and I at great personal risk. She was again threatening my work, home, and relationships. Ms. Janet, the self-described Riff Raff leader, had placed my first and newborn child at risk three years after I had left the A.T. She woke a sleeping giant!

The giant reached down and ripped all 80 members of the Riff Raff from their “Pre-Days” donation-fleeing squat at the Turkey Pen Gap on-trail, and flung them directly into Backpacker Magazine so the hiking world could judge them and weigh their future. When they retreated to Dividing Ridge Campground the giant smashed it flat with a flick of his wrist. The Riff Raff have no on-trail future as long as the giant is awake, and I am not tired.

The response of Ms. Janet and her minions to this was surprising both in the incredible legal jeopardy they exposed themselves to, and in the callous way they were willing to manipulate the 20,000 some odd attendees of Trail Days – the entire Trail Community – in pursuit of revenge. Revenge for me having had trail policy enforced for their removal from illegally occupying it. This time they spread the internet rumor that I had threatened a “mass casualty” event at Trail Days '17'. That I was an armed escaped lunatic on-trail. An America's Most Wanted Fugitive with a price on his head. A pedophile. The doxxing and now attempted swatting – a method by which a harasser dispatches SWAT teams upon a target with bogus claims – kicked into high gear. Six endless months! My face, my history, my family, my friends, my life everywhere online with these lies. They made phony wanted

posters and spread them up the trail. The FBI and Damascus Police were involved. Now they, along with the NPS Special Investigator, are hunting those responsible. They have my full support and cooperation. They do because once again Ms. Janet and her supporters have placed my family and I in serious permanent danger. Five years later! On-trail and off. Our lives, our livelihoods, our peace of mind, our health, our relationships, the pastime we love, the places we met, made our child, on and on, again and again. Lies, doxxing, swatting, bullying, harassment, threats, stalking, hate, and grave personal danger – directed without a thought at a child. My child! This is Ms. Janet. This is Riff Raff. This is those who support them.

Which brings us to Matthew “Odie” Norman. Odie supports and emulates Ms. Janet and the Riff Raff personally with his donation-driven shuttling business, and with his Hiker Yearbook. He includes a special section in it just for them. I did not disqualify the Hiker Yearbook from the FedEx Grant Contest it was in. He just didn't win and blames me. He blames me for questioning his vehicular support of the hiker bubble and compliance with the contest rules. He was filtering unfavorable comments on social media which *was* the contest, and *was* a violation of the contest rules. He claimed that his product supported hikers and the trail. I was attempting to ask how this could be possible if he was a proponent of vehicle support for the hiker bubble, hiker feeds at trail-heads, and on-trail drug use, all which had just been condemned by the Riff Raff's recent removal. Condemned by the ATC, by ALDHA, the NPS, the USFS, Warren Doyle, David “Awol” Miller, Andy Downs, and Ben Montgomery. You simply cannot claim to be good for the trail and hikers while simultaneously supporting a practice and a group confirmed to be bad for both. A group that the USFS ruled had “interfered with trail management objectives”, and the ATC ruled “went against trail policies” for a *decade*. A group with a history of “intercepting and derailing hikers”, sexual harassment, sexual assault, violence, general jackassery, LNT violations, and busting my balls. Odie got in the way of an angry giant and if he does it again – if he says my name in vain again – Great Caesar's Ghost I'll sue the Hiker Yearbook into insolvency. He has foolishly given me the means to do so already and he knows it. So please Odie, say my name you dirty cheating, doxxing, swatting, profiteering yegg-man.

In closing I'd like to quickly dispel many of the inevitable and facile counter-arguments that the Trail Community favors so well. Arguments like I'm a hypocrite. That since I was misbehaved before I came to the trail (as if it were anyone's business), misbehaved on it, and misbehaved subsequently in rudely speaking truth to power while challenging the idols of the tribe therefore, then, and so, I should be dismissed, ignored, and/or attacked. By this same rationale having once been a womanizing drug addict I could not dissuade my daughter from using drugs or run off creeps that might take advantage of her, and should be whacked if I try. Or, my favorite: that I'm “not a real hiker” because I yellowblaze and therefore have surrendered my right to free speech. Hilarious. Like all mobs the “Tramily” loves to question others, yet hates to be questioned. And they fight the truth with lies.

I have never once hustled a single dollar from a fellow hiker, nor cooperated in a plot to make one unknown to me feel unwelcome on the People's Trail. I will never abide them that do. I went into the woods once to escape, to heal, to find myself. What I found on the A.T. was the same inescapable and hurtful thuggery I had been lost in waiting. This is the result of the poorly planned and managed Trail Community becoming too populous and thereby defeating the very purpose for which it was created. This is what happens when non-hikers – be they former-hikers, or fat never-hiked pack-sniffing profiteers in vans, or yegg-men – intrude on a place meant for hikers alone. Fuck them!

I love you,

Pilgrim Jus soli Skywheel BS Aka: The Riff Raff Hammer