

Open Letter to Judge Rosen,

I am writing to urge that you suspend sentencing for Matthew Alex Erikson until an investigation is conducted into the shadow side of SPD's Community Policing Model.

It is appalling that a black man who drew a legal weapon to create space and escape from a mob of more than a dozen street kids with chains and skateboards and knives who were attacking him was not only arrested, but was moreover falsely convicted somehow of having an illegal weapon.

Add in that there was a witness, a neutral observer, who was simply passing by and corroborates the fact that Matt E used his legal weapon to create space from the attacking mob.

Add that the arresting Officers Chase and Clay wrote in their report and testified in your court that this mob of violent street kids was "assisting in the arrest" of Matt E.

Add Matt E's testimony that it was arresting Officers Chase and Clay who incited the mob of street kids to attack Matt E in the first place, and that they have motive to do so after weeks of calling him out by name and threatening him in response to his successful work as a founding member of Seattle Cop Watch and his filing of formal "use of force" complaints against them well before the incident.

Why is it that there was no expert testimony submitted to establish the fact that the knife is legal, and why was this allowed to be left up to the jury?

Footage from the Westlake Plaza security video of the officers rolling Matt E towards the crowd of attacking street kids they indicate were assisting with the arrest is enraging.

The video of Matt E's failed lynching documents even more of an affront to human dignity and basic civil liberties when you know Matt E, how much he embodies respect for all of his comrades in struggle, including women, trans* and queers; how much of a peacemaker he is, bringing community together and healing old wounds; how thoughtful he is in not only escalating but deescalating when necessary; how caring and supportive he is of others. He is widely trusted, respected, and deeply supported by a far-reaching network of diverse engaged social-environmental-&-economic-justice-minded communities and activists.

You know by the attendance of the trial in your courtroom and the various letters you've received that Matt E has touched many people from diverse race and class backgrounds and in a lot of different communities.

These facts taken together ought to compel you to choose a more lenient sentencing or to suspend sentencing until an investigation into the conduct of Officers Chase and Clay and SPD's Community Policing Model may be carried out.

It would be wrong to allow some obvious differences in cultural experience, including language, and understandings of how to "maintain law and order" vs. "how to actually better keep everyone safe and not criminalize the poor" end up putting an innocent black man behind bars simply for having strong language to describe how he escaped a lynching and why he would always resist arrest by the officers who incited the lynching and the system that upholds this injustice.

Especially when it turns out that after drawing a legal knife to save his life from a lynch mob directed by the police, Matt E has been convicted of a crime that he did not commit and may actually be locked up.

I'm learning as a friend of Matt E's, thru observing his experience with the "criminal justice" system, that resisting arrest is actually a very sane, life-preserving and dignity-affirming option for black men today in our country.

As the world is waiting anxiously for Officer Darren Wilson to be indicted and Mike Brown's murder to be treated with the gravity, dignity and justice that it deserves, it is all the more important that you recognize Matt E's right to life, self-determination and freedom of speech, as well as his right to film police when they are on duty.

Just last week Antonio Buehler was acquitted at his trial in Austin for filming police; this right has been repeatedly upheld. Moreover, it is a right to carry a legal weapon, it is a right to be able to defend oneself, and it is a right to have a fair trial. Even if you're a black man without financial resources, by the letter of the law this is supposed to be true. But Matt E's case demonstrates that we do not have justice for black people, those living in poverty or those falsely convicted by a system that is foundationally flawed and irreversibly broken, in Seattle and across the U.S.

A fair sentencing in this case is no sentence, but mandated police accountability and an investigation into the shadow side of the

Community Policing Model that was used by Officers Chase and Clay to incite a mob of street kids to attack Matt E in direct retaliation for his cop watching.

Susan Koppelman, MSW