



## Comments

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# Porn activists go all the way to save the rainforest

By Lissa Harris

*Warning: The following article contains naughty words — but we can't help it, as they're the whole subject of the story. It also contains links to websites that are, as they say, "not safe for work." So all you kids, go play Pokemon or whatever it is you do these days. The rest of you, consider yourselves warned.*



How much do *you* love the rainforest?

Photo: National Center for Atmospheric Research.

It's been nearly a thousand years since Lady Godiva, the original libertarian libertine, went on her famous naked horseback ride through the streets of Coventry to protest high taxes imposed by her husband.

Since then, the West has been subjected to the Enlightenment, free love, bra burning, Third Wave feminism, and Janet Jackson's nipple. And yet, it seems, getting naked for a good cause is just as scandalous as it ever was.

There is no shortage of naked activists willing to carry on the legacy of Lady Godiva. Nude and partially nude protesters shocked this year's Republican National Convention, from ACT UP supporters clad only in painted slogans to Axis of Eve members in "Expose Bush" panties. The California-based ensemble calling itself Baring Witness holds protests in which naked women (and sometimes men) arrange themselves to form words like "PEACE" and "VOTE." Activist Dona Nieto holds impromptu strip poetry readings for logging crews, in the hopes of distracting them from the task of chopping down old-growth redwoods. And everybody knows the folks at PETA would rather go naked than wear fur.

But the award for Scandalous Naked Activists of the Year, if there were one, would have to go to the Norwegian nonprofit organization Fuck for Forest.



Johansson (left) and Ellingsen.

Photo: Fuck for Forest

Leona Johansson, 21, and Tommy Hol Ellingsen, 28, are a new breed of environmentalists — or perhaps a new breed of porn stars. With their paid-subscription website, they are raising cash to save the rainforest, one money shot at a time. And they're determined not to let their fellow environmentalists stand in their way.

Since this past winter, when Johansson and Ellingsen started the site (with seed money from the Norwegian government), Fuck for Forest has gained considerable notoriety in the European environmental community. In July, the group won both friends and enemies around the world after making a special appearance at Quart, an outdoor music festival in Kristiansand, Norway.

The couple climbed onstage during the performance of a band called (what else?) the Cumshots. "How far are you willing to go to save the world?" said Ellingsen, who then proceeded to go all the way for about 10 minutes in front of an audience of several thousand.

That stunt got Ellingsen and Johansson arrested and slapped with fines of about \$1,400 each. They face a to-be-determined court date, and say they will serve jail time rather than pay the fines.

## Why Don't We Do It in the Roadless?

The link between having public sex and saving the planet may seem tenuous at best. (After all, it's probably not sending the best message about population control.) But consider this: According to a report by the U.S. National Research Council, the online porn industry could rake in between \$5 billion and \$7 billion per year by 2005. That's about as much as all environmental and animal-welfare groups, combined, raised last year in the U.S. Cashing in on the porn money machine could be a windfall for environmental groups — or so Ellingsen believes.

While Fuck for Forest is apparently unique in the green movement, the porn-for-charity model already boasts some successes. For example, a site called ALSScan.com (the ALS stands for "All Ladies Shaved") claims to have raised \$78,346 last year for children's cancer and muscular dystrophy funds, by donating 10 percent of sales.

Ellingsen reports that Fuck for Forest has raised more than \$50,000 in cold, hard U.S. dollars since its launch less than a year ago, even after paying for necessities like server space and internet billing services. “We have a lot of potential,” he said.

The stunt at Quart, despite gaining them considerable notoriety and a little legal trouble, appears to have been a net gain for Fuck for Forest. Since the couple’s highly publicized arrest, the site has attracted more than 1,000 new members — at \$15 per member per month. Ellingsen estimates that nearly \$40,000 of the money they have raised so far was donated following Quart and the attendant media hype.

Whatever one may think of their morals, that’s pretty savvy fund raising, said Alan Abramson, director of the Nonprofit Sector and Philanthropy Program at the Aspen Institute.

“I think that’s pretty good,” he said. “Nonprofits start in so many different ways. If they had one wealthy donor, they could start with millions. Others operate on a shoestring for decades. It’s hard to say if there’s a norm. But it sounds like a decent amount of money.”

## Network It, Network It

Other enviro groups have been reluctant to get in bed (so to speak) with Fuck for Forest, fearing that the group’s brand of activism could tarnish their reputations. Wereld Natuur Fonds, the Dutch branch of the World Wildlife Fund, initially seemed receptive to Fuck for Forest’s offer of about \$15,000. But after Quart, the organization backed off.



Doing a good deed.

Photo: Fuck for Forest.

“We do not want to be associated in any way with this type of industry,” said Kees Verhagen, a spokesperson for WNF. “We are one of the biggest NGOs [in Holland], with the support of about 1 million Dutch people. I think they will protest if we support groups like this. We could lose credibility with our members, and also with the stakeholders we have to deal with every day.”

The Rainforest Foundation Norway has also equivocated on whether to accept money from Fuck for Forest, publicly decrying the group’s activities while indicating in private meetings with Ellingsen and Johansson that it would be willing to accept a hefty donation — so long as it was kept quiet.

“I can not see that this helps the work for the rainforest,” Lars Løvold, head of the Rainforest Foundation Norway, told the Norwegian TV station 2 Nettavisen shortly after the couple’s arrest at Quart. “Generally

speaking, we accept donations, but if the money is coming from illegal activity, from someone who abuse[s] the rainforest or wish[es] to abuse our name, we say, ‘No thank you.’ This may be the case here.”

Ellingsen tells the story differently. “[Løvold] said straight to our face, ‘We want your money, but we don’t want to make a big thing of it,’” he said. “I think that’s pretty childish.”

Ellingsen also sees a certain irony in mainstream environmental organizations’ reluctance, for political reasons, to associate themselves with groups like Fuck for Forest: We live in a world where public sex is considered far more controversial than wholesale ecological destruction.

“Society is so upside-down. In Norway, we have this prime minister talking about war and defending it, and at the same time putting sex down as something bad,” he said. “Any kind of action to help nature is good.”

Despite the chilly reception his organization has gotten in some quarters, Ellingsen isn’t worried that the money will go homeless for long.

“There are a lot of environmental organizations out there, and some of them are pretty radical. I think it’s pretty much Norway that is the problem,” he said. “There are some in America and some in Brazil that have contacted us.”

Jamais Cascio, for one, feels that Fuck for Forest is just what the world needs now. Cascio runs the environmental-technology blog WorldChanging.com, and moonlights as a website reviewer for the online sex-toy retailer Blowfish. A self-described “freelance world-builder,” Cascio is delighted with the idea of blending sex and activism.

“The Fuck for Forest kids are just my kind of activists,” Cascio wrote via email. “It’s sad that the Rainforest Foundation Norway (and other Norwegian enviro groups) refused to accept the money. Novel approaches to fund raising and activism should be welcome, and youth (especially in Europe, sheesh) are a lot more comfortable with sexual expression than are the green geezers that run many of the mainstream environmentalist groups.”

Abramson doesn’t see what the fuss is all about, either. “I think that’s what the nonprofit sector is all about, being able to give expression to different ways of working on social issues,” he said.

## Children of the Porn

True to its anarcho-hippie roots, Fuck for Forest’s website is more Lola Granola than Jenna Jameson. Caveat emptor: Patchouli fetishists will find Fuck for Forest a \$15 well spent, but those who habitually comb the internet in search of Sorority Slumber Parties Gone Wild may find themselves more bemused than aroused.

The front page features a psychedelic Photoshopped tableau of naked girls, giant glowing phalli, and the familiar three-arrow recycling logo constructed from video stills of porn scenes. In one sample video, a beatifically smiling Johansson, her pixie-ish face framed by a halo of white-girl dreadlocks, touts the organization’s good work while performing various sex acts. “The more times I do this, the more money goes to the rainforest,” she says.

If you’ve ponied up the monthly fee, you can access the membership-only content, where you can witness all

kinds of debauchery: from plain-air romps involving novel uses for corn on the cob to the uniquely Scandinavian spectacle of a naughty Euro-hippie hiking up her skirt at Ikea.

With its notable absence of teased hair, fake boobs, and bow-chika-bow music, Fuck for Forest is definitely not your typical porn fare. (“I don’t look so much at porn, actually. I’m more into having sex than looking at it,” Ellingsen concedes.)

“The commercial porn industry has made it all about money. They don’t have fun when they make the movies, and you can see that,” he says. “There should be a little spark of self irony and fun in it.”

It must be noted that what Fuck for Forest lacks in glitzy production, it makes up for in sheer joie de vivre.

“The two of them (and the occasional friends from Sweden and Germany and the like) scrump with the energy, enthusiasm, and disregard for social convention that makes being a young twentysomething so much fun,” Cascio wrote. “They are actually relatively attractive, in a will-fuck-for-spare-pot kind of way.”

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