



The Cleveland 4 are four Occupy Cleveland activists, Brandon, Connor, Doug and Joshua “Skelly.” They were arrested on May 1st, 2012, accused of plotting a series of bombings, including an area bridge. However, the real story is that the FBI, working with an informant, created the scheme, produced the explosives, and coerced these four into participating.

They continue to fight against the government’s attempt to brand them as terrorists, and to expose the techniques of entrapment employed by the FBI and their informant.



cleveland4solidarity.org

Connor, Doug, and Brandon took non cooperating plea deals and pled guilty to all charges. The judge applied a "terrorist enhancement" charge to each of them, elongating their sentences as well as subjecting them to harsher prison conditions. Doug is serving 11.5 years, Brandon 9 years 9 months, and Connor 8 years 1 month.

Skelly took his case to trial. He went pro se and acted as his own lawyer. The FBI offered him a non-cooperating plea deal with a 3 year sentence, if he would have plead guilty. Josh refused to plead guilty to something he wasn't guilty of doing. He was found guilty on all counts by his jury and sentenced to 10 years. Even though Skelly had the most minimal role, he got the second longest sentence because he took his case to trial.

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A Message From Brandon (transcribed)

A Message from the Belly of the Beast Jun 24

Thank you everyone for your support and solidarity. Your contributions to our commissary fund and our legal fund are very much appreciated. Without your donations I wouldn't have been able to afford the paper I wrote this "thank you" on, or the postage to send it back home! your contributions have made it possible for me and my comrades to communicate with our friends, family, lawyers, support group, and a couple of publishers to request literature. I've also been buying coffee so I can stay up all night doing legal work, going through OVER 60 HOURS of FBI transcripts. I've also bought some hygiene items so I don't stink out my cellmate. The state is providing our court appointed legal team with very limited funds to do research, hire experts, print transcripts- the logistics of the entire defense, more or less. So your contributions to our legal fund may very well make the difference in us obtaining our freedom or spending our lives within the confines of the prison industrial complex. You are forever within our hearts.

Forever in Love and Solidarity,

Brandon "Scavil" Baxter

As we band together, talk, debate, and organize, we are already moving closer to the world we are struggling to create. Who among us has not has the strong impression that this is but a dream, that these days and nights since April 30th are not but a nightmare? Yet who can deny that this dark dream that has been case, not upon the May Day 5, but upon our whole community, and indeed the world, has not been pierced by overwhelming rays of Love, of solidarity, of strength – in this warmth I do not require “hope” because here and now I am witness to and participant of the timeless Power of the People.

A Brother wrote me, saying, “I feel they have taken my Freedom with yours.” And this is why we struggle – the fascists (federal government and corporations) have not merely imprisoned the May Day 5. They have, in effect, declared war on any life, which even questions, their hegemony. This is not the first case of this nature, nor will it be the last. As they accumulate their watch lists, tap phones, dispatch informants, rip apart families, friends, lovers, passing even more (unnecessary) legislation (NDAA for fiscal year 2012) in preparation for martial law, we must never forget we the people are infinitely more wise, more beautiful, more passionate, and more Powerful. When we fight, we do so in defense of all life, here and to come. The journey before us will be arduous, but we have run out of alternatives: if we chose life, we can no longer remain spectators and consumers. So, my great big glorious family, let us jump up and live again! Let us chose life!

ALL POWER TO THE PEOPLE, IN ARMS,

From a Love that can only be expressed in action,
your brother, comrade, Connor C. Stevens.

Open Letter on Occupy and Cleveland 4

Editor's Note: This open letter was written by Juss, who has worked tirelessly with Cleveland 4 Solidarity. It is an honor to include it here.

"Our love transcends 20-Foot high walls of cement, the memories we share outweigh 10,000 slamming metal doors, And I am not afraid" - Connor Stevens

When I first got to Occupy Cleveland, I had never been around any sort of Activism. I had never seen it. I sat by for a few hours toting a Guy Fawkes mask, hardly even knowing what it represented. I had the vaguest of ideas. I watched what I had come to learn to be a GA. I learned the lingo, the hand signs. *Twinkle Fingers!* I came out of my shell and stopped being afraid to speak. I had found my voice. A home. Something I loved doing. I fell in love.

At first I had a small tent and shared it with friends. We were evicted in less than a month. Then I spent months living in an 8'x10' tent in public square, living off of semi-frozen cans of beans and donated food from local restaurants. I don't think I'll ever eat Auntie Annes again. We warmed up food on a steam grate while also using it to keep away frost bite.

For a while we had an office space. It didn't last long, but it was a place to calm down and brush my hair without being in a mall bathroom. A few months later, we got a warehouse. We built small rooms in it. We made a kitchen. We made it our own little "Anarchist Commune", which was more of a big cement room filled with people who had never lived on their own. It was our home. Many of the Occupy Cleveland members who covered most of the tent shifts lived there. We split up shifts at the tent and the warehouse was where we would rest and find our sanity. Some of the shifts felt like we were stranded on an island, forgotten. We counted the minutes until Kathy brought breakfast or waiting for the next occupier to arrive and relieve us. Our shifts were eight hours but they often ended up being longer. We were fighting for something though, right? Surely it had to affect something. We wanted to change the world.

I fell in love around this time. I had finally decided to date for the first time in a year. Brandon was one of the most amazing people I had ever met. He was sweet and the kindest boy I knew. We did tent shifts together, took care of one another, and

Letter from Connor C. Stevens to everyone.

traveled together. He kept me safe from getting arrested in St. Louis. He kept me away from danger so I could live stream. We would stay up all night hanging with everyone back at the warehouse. Among them was Connor, Skelly, and Tony. Doug came over sometimes, too, but he had a job. He had met Shaq. It wasn't long before Shaq had conned the other boys to work for him as well. They were so excited. Doug once told me that he had finally found a father figure and he had never been so happy in his life. He spoke of how cool this guy was. I was so happy for all of them. They had found jobs when none of us could.

For a while Brandon found another job. He ended up not being able to make quota, though, so he went back to working for Shaq, coming home with fiber glass, paint and splinters all over. I imagine gutting houses wasn't the best of jobs, but they were proud.

Their boss had even given them a house, rent free, as long as they fixed it up. They were still at the warehouse a lot, though. Soon, we were trying to plan for Heart fest. We had a vision of this awesome Occupy event to bring the community together. The city didn't exactly make it easy for us, but we tried our best. There would not be a huge turn out. The last day of the Heart Fest would be May 1st. We planned to have a huge rally at General Electric. I was going to live stream the event. We spent night after night painting and sewing banners. I went to bed early the night before to get rest before the rally. Everyone was paranoid that there was going to be cops and that they were going to raid the warehouse! I thought it was funny. Why would they worry about a bunch of punk kids sitting on the sidewalk holding signs? I figured they hardly knew that we existed. Anyone that thought someone was an undercover, I deemed paranoid. I didn't know how wrong I was.

I remember that night so well. I remember not being able to reach Brandon. I had some "rearrange the warehouse" brilliant idea. I was gone all day, so I didn't get to see him. I got home around 11pm. It was quiet and emptier than was usual. I figured everyone ran off for a party. I sat up for an hour or so trying to get hold of Brandon through Josh and Connor. Neither answered. I found Brandon's tobacco, cigarettes, and his phone at the warehouse. I got a little worried. It was weird, but I hoped he wasn't too far.

At 9am my phone started ringing over and over. I forced myself out of bed and answered, thinking I had over slept. It seemed no one else was awake yet. The warehouse was silent.

"Juss. Are you awake? Are you ok? Did you hear?"

One who, in the days of April, enjoyed such simple Freedoms as sitting by a
Flowing stream of water, smiling in the sun, or relaxing with a Friend under a bridge
in Cleveland, drinking a beer, now, in May, has been thrown into solitary confinement.
Here, in solitary confinement, I have never felt more connected to the People, whom I
Love and am willing to lay down my life for.
As we band together, talk, debate, and organize, we are already moving closer to
the world we are struggling to create. Who among us has not had the strong
impression that this is but a dream, that these days and nights since April 30th are
not but a nightmare? Yet who can deny that this dark dream that has been cast
upon the May Day 5, but upon our whole community, and indeed the world, has not been
pierced by overwhelming rays of Love, of Solidarity, of Strength — in this warmth I do
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ALL POWER TO THE PEOPLE, IN WARMS,
From a Love that can only be expressed in action, your brother, comrade, Connor C. Stevens.

Transcript:

One who, in the days of April, enjoyed such simple Freedoms as sitting by a Flowing stream of water, smiling in the sun, or relaxing under a bridge with a friend under a bridge in Cleveland, drinking a beer, now, in May, has been thrown in solitary confinement. Here, in solitary confinement, I have never felt more connected to the People, whom I Love and am willing to lay down my life for.

For the Cleveland 4 Support Committee and for all those who support political prisoners an important question remains: What are WE going to do? It is time to shine a very bright light on the methods used by FBI agents and prosecutors in an attempt to justify continued funding and personal advancement by entrapping the most vulnerable members of our society. We will continue to expose the use of paid informants with extensive criminal rap sheets as they are routinely misrepresented as accidental witnesses rather than amoral leaders highly motivated to create simulated crimes.

We will continue to support those incarcerated simply for others' political and personal gain.

You can help support the Cleveland 4 just by writing them a letter, sending a postcard, and ordering books. All info is on Cleveland4Solidarity.org

Donations are scarce, and we really need help getting money into their commissary. You can donate by visiting cleveland4solidarity.org

Any questions or concerns regarding the Cleveland 4 Solidarity support network can be emailed to cleveland4solidarity@riseup.net Definitely check out cleveland4solidarity.org for writing by the #Cle4.

Cleveland 4 Solidarity on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/freethe4>

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I'm not exactly a happy person in the morning. "I'm awake NOW. Whats up? Hear what?" What could be worth robbing me of five more minutes of sleep? I had a long day ahead of me.

"Uhm.. Sit down. Light a smoke or something. This isn't good. Shit has hit the fan."

"Uhhh... Yeah just.. Give me a sec." I propped myself up in bed and fumbled through my pack for my smokes. I thanked the universe for having rolled them the night before.

"The boys got arrested. Brandon, Josh, Tony, Connor, and Doug. They're in jail."

"Haha. Oh shit. What did they do? Get caught spray painting? Public intox? Fuck!"

"Juss.. It's some huge shit. I wouldn't be surprised if the cops show up at the warehouse. There was an article put out a few hours ago. They tried to blow up a bridge"

All I could muster was a few vulgar phrases. I got off the phone and screamed. I screamed and screamed and then did all I could do. I sobbed. I curled up in my bed and sobbed. They had stolen my boys. They were gone. Kidnapped.

That was the first we heard. They had been arrested for hours and no one called to check in on us or let us know. Then, we cleaned the warehouse a bit, terrified someone had maybe left a joint out or something. We did anything we could to prepare for the raid we figured would be coming.

My phone started ringing from reporters. It had slipped out that I knew them; that I was dating Brandon. I ignored every call. What could I say? It didn't seem real. There was absolutely no way they would blow anything up. They wouldn't hurt anyone. It was like a nightmare that I couldn't wake from.

People started filtering in and out of the warehouse. Someone dropped off Subway. I couldn't eat. I felt like my insides were made of sludge. Sick to my stomach, I didn't want anything but nicotine. Someone else showed up and handed me a lawyers number. I wrote it on my leg in case something happened and I couldn't access my phone. A reporter showed up but didn't stay long. Hardly anyone was there and no one felt like talking to them.

We would be raided soon, right? How do you deem a group of people "terrorists" and not search their home? They never showed up. The raid never came. I was dating Brandon. Surely, they would want to talk to me. I had to call my family to explain it all. To tell them that, if, for some reason, I got arrested, I would be ok. I didn't do anything, I didn't even know. I didn't think it was real. I was afraid to go home. I didn't want the police showing up and traumatizing my little brothers.

I still waited for the police. They would want to talk to Brandon's girlfriend if they thought he was a terrorist, right? No, they knew how made up it was. They knew there wasn't anything suspect at the warehouse because the terrorists didn't exist.

I stayed at my friends the first night. I couldn't sleep. I kept trying to text the boys over and over, hoping on some off chance that it was all just a nightmare and they would reply "Hey! We'll be home soon!" It never happened.

Someone dropped a cup and I almost jumped out of my skin.

The next day I read the affidavit. It was like a bad movie plot. It was obvious that it was entrapment. The feds had conned the boys into their terrorist plot. They were the culprits here. They caused this. They paid someone to do it. A convicted felon. He targeted innocent kids for their plot. He gave them everything he could to keep them around. Most of these boys had a history of mental health issues. Brandon met Shaq days after a visit to the psychiatric hospital for a suicide attempt. They were chosen because they were easy targets. They are not experienced activists. They are not crazy radicals. They are my boys.

I remember the first day they had court. "All Rise." As we stood, I heard their chains rattling. It was the most eerie noise I ever heard. It took everything in me to not fall apart. My heart broke more and more as they walked further in.

I later found out they worked Tony over into testifying against the other boys. I'm sure they knew he would be the easiest to turn. He had a long criminal history and he had children. I was sobbing when he testified in court. He stopped for a moment, "I can't do this." The federal prosecutors reminded him that there would be repercussions if he didn't continue. After all they did to him already, they had pulled him in even further. They conned him into "snitching". He didn't say much in court, but we found out he had been corroborating with the feds for months leading up to the trial. He belonged to them.

They will always be my boys. I will do everything I can for them. It's hard to handle being afraid every month that we won't have anything to send for their commissary. Will they get letters? Will anyone visit them? Most of them can't get visits very often, but I will do what I can for as long as I can. I'll be there the moment they are "free". I can't wait to see their smiling faces.

Cleveland4Solidarity.org



Statement from the Cleveland 4 Support Committee on the Sentencing of Joshua Stafford

You don't offer a dangerous terrorist a plea deal for three years.

That was the deal the government offered Joshua Stafford, the deal that he left on the table when he chose a trial where he hoped to present evidence of his innocence against charges that carried a minimum of thirty years. It takes a great deal of courage to stand up against a prosecution that badly wishes you and your case would just go away quietly. Most people would be bullied by the threat of the long decades ahead, and go on to take the deal. Whatever his sentence today, Josh will have already served nearly a year and a half of it.

Whatever his sentence today, Josh will have had an insufficient chance to present his side of the case. Those who witnessed his trial are already aware that it played out as a farce, in which he was derailed from every attempt to explain the circumstances and the events that led up to his arrest on April 30, 2012. Those in the courtroom may not have been aware that they were witnessing the height of hypocrisy. A prosecution that would have been happy to settle for a three year sentence just the day before trial presented the scant evidence they had of his involvement while painting him as a person far too dangerous to let back out on the streets.

Thus, the jury convicted him without a chance to understand why a young man whose fast metabolism gave him his nickname 'Skelly' got in a car with his friends and their boss: an empty stomach and the offer of dinner at Applebee's. They only saw Josh stumbling as best he could through the legal system as his prosecution laid every well-crafted brick stacked against him neatly. They never heard that they were deciding the fate of a young man who has never had much in his life but has always been willing to share what he had; a young man who never hesitated to help a friend.