

Climate Activists With Terrorist Charges for Protesting Oil and Gas Company Devon Energy

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Two climate activists who staged a protest at the headquarters of Devon Energy, a Fortune 500 company based in Oklahoma city, have been [charged with a “terrorism hoax”](#) after black powder drifted down from a banner that they unfurled.

Moriah Stephenson and Stefan Warner, members of the Great Plains Tar Sands Resistance, were part of a group that blocked the entrance to Devon’s headquarters on December 13th last year and hung two banners in the building atrium. The red banners had the words “The odds are never in our favor” painted in gold letters using glitter powder which started to fall off soon after the action began.

The activists were protesting intensive energy extraction technologies of the company. In north Texas, Devon has drilled [over 5,000 wells in an area called the Barnett Shale in the last decade to extract natural gas](#) using hydraulic fracturing. (This is a technique – often called [fracking – by which chemicals and water are injected into rock formations deep underground with serious environmental consequences.](#)) Devon has also designed a technology to inject [steam from saline water into sand formations 1,000 feet under the surface of the earth](#) in Alberta, Canada, at its Jackfish project to extract bitumen, a heavy oil. The company is also [backing the Keystone XL pipeline which will carry 830,000 barrels of crude extracted from tar sands in Alberta down south to the Gulf Coast](#) where it will be refined into oil.

The Jackfish project has come under fire from the Beaver Lake Cree Nation who say that tar sands extraction operations have [devastated the caribou herds that they rely on for food.](#) Notably Devon Energy’s steam operations have led to major accidents such as an incident in 2010 when a [plume of bitumen-laced, high-temperature steam spewed into the air for nearly 36 hours.](#)

The [protests at Devon’s offices this past December](#) was attended by about a dozen activists in support of the Beaver Lake Cree. Some staged a mock oil spill out front and attempted to block the entrance to the building, while others hung a banner from the second floor.

Captain Dexter Nelson, an Oklahoma City police spokesman, told Mother Jones magazine that the “unknown substance” falling from the banners was described by police officers who arrived to shut down the protest as a possible “biochemical assault.” <http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2013/12/tar-sands-keystone-protesters-arrested-terrorist-glitter>

The activists say that the charges are absurd. “When we unfurled the banner and saw the

glitter fall to the ground, we immediately felt guilty because we knew the janitor would have to clean it up,” Stephenson wrote in a statement on the activist website. “[There was no panic, and almost immediately Devon employees began touching the banner and taking it down](#). As we exited the building a janitor began cleaning up the glitter with a broom. Stefan Warner turned to her and apologized for the mess.”

“I had no intention of scaring anyone, nor do I believe I truly did,” adds Warner. “My intention was to ‘arouse the conscience’ of a state that refuses to provide storm shelters for children at public schools yet [has the gall to pay out \\$645,000,000 in tax subsidies to the oil and gas industry](#) the past three fiscal years.”

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