

Taking a Hard Stand: The Unauthorized Biography of LaVoy Finicum

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“The informed resister in crisis situations is not surprised by the occurrence of brutalities against the nonviolent group. In reaction, either to halt the defiance or to resort to violence would have serious negative consequences. To be effective, the resisters must persist through the brutalities and suffering and maintain their fearlessness, nonviolent discipline, and firmness. Some time and considerable suffering may be required to demonstrate to the opponents that brutalities will not crush the movement.”

– Gene Sharp



From 2014 – 2016, the late [LaVoy Finicum](#) made his foray into the alternative media as a vlogger. During this period within 2015, he also managed to get [his novel](#) published as a way to finance his mounting legal costs that were incurred thanks to the federal Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Although most people remember Finicum as that member of [Citizens for Constitutional Freedom \(C4CF\)](#) known as the [#TarpMan](#), **who really was LaVoy Finicum and what did he actually believe in?**

[Robert “LaVoy” Finicum](#) was born on January 27th of 1961 in Kanab, Utah. He worked on a drilling rig in his early twenties, and later in a sawmill within the town of Fredonia, Arizona. Finicum was a teetotaler “prepper” as well as a Mormon.

Aside from these manual labor jobs and being a one-time novelist, Finicum was also a professional [foster parent](#) and [hobby rancher](#). Finicum himself [told Oregon Public Broadcasting in January of 2016](#) that:

“My ranch has been a great tool for these boys. It has done a lot of good...[w]e are very successful (foster parents). Our track records are good, it’s been a good relationship...[t]hat was my main source of income. My ranch, well, the cows just cover the costs of the ranch. If this means rice and beans for the next few years, so be it. We’re going to stay the course.” [emphasis added]

When you combine this admission with Finicum’s eyewitness statements regarding the 2014 Bundy Affair, a new shade of meaning begins to emerge. In Finicum’s [very first vlog on April 26th of 2014](#) (a mere two weeks after the Cattle Unrustling), he began by saying:

“Hello, everyone. My name is LaVoy Finicum. I’m a neighboring rancher to [Cliven Bundy](#) on the Arizona side of the border. I rode with his boys on April 12th when we went to go get his cows...”

This is quite revealing, for it means that Finicum didn’t just spring out of nowhere as part of C4CF, but had actually been known by at least some individuals within the patriot movement, if only as a relatively minor figure. [On August 14th of 2015](#), Finicum said that:

*“We have been here **prior** to the BLM being **formed**; these grazing rights were established, and I’ll explain it to you. This particular grazing right, right here, that we’re sitting on – all this green grass, all this acreage here. I bought this here grazing right from the ranching family by the name of Ballards – Ballards bought it from the ranching family called the Heatons; the Heatons were some of the first settlers in this country here...[i]t’s not theirs! I didn’t buy it from them! I bought it from the Ballards, Ballards from the Heatons, Heatons established it; it’s not theirs, **it never was theirs** and they’re forbidden from having it!”*

[Grazing rights](#) are, in truth, a consequence stemming from the [tragedy of the commons](#) that is known as “public” lands. What Finicum has done here is engage in “[befuddlement](#)” by confusing grazing on “public” fields as if it were an action that is justified by the [homestead principle](#). This is nothing more than an obfuscation of the [private property ethic](#), for the Heatons never “established” any “rights” by simply having their cattle graze on non-privately owned lands. In this same vlog, Finicum admits that:

“Now, how will I graze off all this grass that is mine, that I pay for, that I fight every year to make my mortgage payment on? Everything I have is tied up into this – my home, my life; I’ve spent my lifetime trying to obtain a ranch, to live like...I loved as a young boy riding with my dad chasing some cows on the weekend. I always wanted to raise my family out here, and raise them like this, so I am putting

| everything on the line, my home, my **dreams**, my ranch.”

Yeah, that’s right – Finicum’s hobby ranch that he “bought” was, in fact, *mortgaged*. This is further elaborated on [September 7th of 2015](#), when he said:

| “I have mortgages on my house here, got a mortgage on my ranch, there’s my trucks out there, got payments on my trucks I gotta make; just like most Americans, workin’ hard, trying to make payments, trying to afford my family, put food on the table.”

In other words, Finicum was a **debtor** to lenders for (at least) his trucks and his ranch. Thus, in order to *pay* all these debts, he eventually became a foster parent, which required him to be licensed and regulated by the Arizona government. To further complicate matters, Finicum also claimed:

| “I’ve acknowledged [Mohave County](#) and the state of Arizona as the rightful owners of this land...I’m acknowledging [Kingman](#), our county seat in Mohave County, as the closest government to We the People. I am going to pay a production tax off my cattle to Mohave County. **I will no longer pay my mandatory grazing fees to the BLM.**”

Wait a damn minute! Didn’t Finicum just say the previous month that the Heatons “established” *his* grazing “rights”? How in the hell does that jive with the Arizona government being the “rightful owners of this land”? Is there some difference between who *owns* the land versus who has the “right” to *graze* on it, regardless of ownership?

Let’s recap the story so far, shall we? LaVoy Finicum is a neighboring rancher to the Bundys, but since his mortgaged ranch is only profitable enough to pay for its own operating costs, his livelihood is made by providing foster care. Based solely off of his own statements, the incentive that Finicum would have to promote grazing “rights” in order to lower his own operating costs so that he may finally pay off his debts and eventually become a truly *independent* rancher should be obvious to everyone by now (and what the production tax on his cattle Finicum said he was paying to Mohave County has to do with *any* of this is, quite frankly, beyond me).

The BLM decided to penalize Finicum to [the tune of about \\$1,400](#) for “trespass cattle,” which [by November 13th of 2015, had increased by another \\$5,000](#). Meanwhile, Finicum accused [the BLM of stealing his water](#), and then [depriving him of his half interest in Coyote Springs, which he claimed is in the deed to his ranch](#). Obviously, “trespass cattle” is a victimless crime and thus is a use of *lawfare*, and yet, am I also to assume that Finicum’s alleged grazing “rights” are in the deed to his mortgaged ranch, too?

In response to this **paper chase**, Finicum attended several meetings, the first of which was with [Mohave County Sheriff Jim McCabe on September 23rd of 2015](#). A few days later, [Finicum met with both county bureaucrats and](#)

state representatives, including county supervisor [Gary Watson](#), head of the grazing board [Merlin Esplin](#), head of Fish & Game [Luke Thompson](#), cattle brand inspector [Raymond Christenson](#), chief deputy treasurer [Bill Barker](#), and legislators [Regina Cobb](#) and [Margaret Nyberg](#). Later in November, [Finicum met with a bunch of ranchers in his native south central Utah](#).

Although he [outright denied it to MSNBC correspondent Tony Dokoupil](#), I happen to think Finicum really did have a death wish, because as early as [May 31st of 2014](#), he declared :

*“At some point, you have to say that my freedom is worth more than my life...I’m glad that they’re people who are starting to draw a hard line. They are beginning to value their **freedom** more than their life...I just want to say that I think it’s time that those who love freedom begin to draw a hard line, that they begin to love **freedom** even more than they love their life. Those who gave us this freedom, loved it more than they loved their life.”*

Honestly, how is this anything fundamentally different from [the myth of the line in the sand](#)? I’m a Texan, so believe me when I say that such imagery is quite overwrought of [dying for this, and dying for that; just, dying, dying, dying constantly](#) (whatever happened to *living* freedom?). Finicum also thought that [the prosecution of the ATV protest riders in Recapture Canyon was retaliatory for the Cattle Unrustling](#), but I can’t help thinking whether the [county commissioner Phil Lyman’s conviction](#) is sufficient evidence to Finicum that Lyman loves freedom more than his own life?

The lead-up to C4CF’s sit-in at the wildlife refuge is significant too, for it shows that perhaps Finicum was a true believer rather than a “conspirator” in much of anything. [Finicum mentioned the Hammonds for the first time publicly in October of 2015](#), saying:

*“...I’ve been following what’s been happening over in Bend [Burns], Oregon with that ranching family over there – [the Hammond family](#). I’m pretty upset with what the BLM has done to them. Actually, I’m really angry...they threw’em in jail, they fined’em **tremendous** amount of fines, and now it looks like they’re facin’ five more years in prison. These are **real** lives, these are **real** people, and by dang, I’m angry about it. America, how long are we gonna put up with this type of stuff? It’s time to stop.”*

About two weeks into the sit-in, [Finicum admitted that the Hammonds being sent back to prison was the flashpoint for C4CF](#):

*“It’s the right of the **individual** we’re lookin’ at, not the right of the collective. You know, if there’s just one rancher sayin’, ‘Please help me! Please don’t go!’, what about **him**? What about [the Hammonds](#)? What about that family that is in prison? What about the **one**? We wouldn’t be here if it wasn’t for that **one family**. All of these abuses that have been building for a long time, but it was that*

| *one family that is what now, 11 days in prison? **Unjustly** so? Let them be released!"*

Finicum also admitted that same day that [Ammon Bundy explained about an hour before the "Operation Hammond Freedom" protest march commenced](#) on January 2nd how C4CF was going to go about conducting the sit-in at the refuge:

*"Maybe I can just go back and explain how the day it was that we got here and how it happened, because I was one of the first ones to pull in here. We came up here on that day to do [a peaceful support march for the Hammond family](#) before they were thrown in prison; not once, but for a second time (for the same charges), and the hour before the rally, Ammon Bundy pulled us aside with a group of residents, a group of people that came up to support, and he took the time to go through the litany of all the things he did to get redress for the Hammonds. It was **extensive**, and over a considerable period of time, and he was completely ignored...but he laid out the plan, hour **before** the march to say that we need to come here and occupy this resource center, this wildlife refuge that the federal government has placed here...Ammon did the march with Ryan Bundy and a handful of others, and we drove out there."*

Ah, Ammon, he's no end of surprises – this was the same guy who [led the earlier town hall meeting in Burns on December 15th of 2015](#) that directly led to the formation of the [Harney County Committee of Safety](#), the very same Committee of Safety who [on January 8th of 2016 had their own meeting](#), which ended up in a deadlock regarding [whether to order C4CF to immediately depart the wildlife refuge](#) .

It's now a matter of history what preceded Finicum's death. [Any negotiations between the FBI and C4CF to reach a compromise was debunked](#). C4CF's discovery of [Paiute artifacts carelessly stored in the basement of the refuge](#) was quite alarming, yet the [Paiutes specifically told C4CF that they did not want any open dialogue regarding the discovered artifacts whatsoever](#). According to Jeanette Finicum (LaVoy's widow), her husband felt as if he was back serving his Mormon mission on the Dakota reservations.

Ultimately, [LaVoy Finicum was killed by the Bluecoats on January 26th of 2016](#). According to Jeanette, Sheriff Jim McCabe (the exact same one LaVoy met in person just a few months earlier) told her four days after LaVoy died that [she better not emulate her husband's shenanigans because after spending two weeks in D.C., McCabe knows that the BLM will not put up with what she has planned](#). Thankfully, not only did Jeanette pursue a wrongful death lawsuit, but [she also said the following on March 8th of 2016](#):

"The American people are outraged at this inhumanity, this brutality, this barbarism by the courts and law enforcement. It has created a new American awakening from both the Left and the Right. It shocks our conscience and that is why around 1,000 rallies spontaneously organized in support of my husband's assassination and these patriots who are being held as political prisoners."

I don't know about the rest of y'all, but I already prefer Jeanette to LaVoy as a political dissident, because at least her grievances are easily provable and quite serious. Unfortunately, it's currently unclear as to whether the BLM decided to up the ante by trying to collect on those fines they levied against LaVoy before he joined up with C4CF.

Speaking of political rhetoric, what exactly *did* LaVoy Finicum believe to be true, precisely? What I can tell you for certain is, is that Finicum specifically repudiated anarchism, and he did so multiple times. [On September 21st of 2015, Finicum said:](#)

*"People might think that I am 'anti-government,' or an anarchist, and I'm certainly not. I **believe** in government, I believe in the federal government; we **need** the federal government – how else are we going to protect our country, and protect our borders? Keep commerce regular amongst the states – that's what the federal government is for; unfortunately, they seem to be doing a poor job about our country and our borders, but I do believe in government, and I do believe in the proper relationship between the states and the federal government and the counties."*

Believe me, I really wish he were, but alas, that statement of fealty comes straight from the horse's mouth. Just to reiterate the point, [Finicum said on November 13th of 2015](#) that:

*"We're not just a bunch of wannabe anarchists and sayin' we don't believe in government (want to take down government). **Contrary**, I believe in government, I believe in the federal government, we **need** the federal government, but in their proper place. **They need to be controlled by the confines of the law.** Right now they are the anarchists, running beyond all their banks, but we need them; we need them to protect our border, to keep commerce regular, and to keep our country safe. Just a few other things, very identified in the Constitution, but they have usurped power and authority everywhere."*

Yet again, this was partially echoed during [the press conference in mid-January](#):

"Federal government, go home! [Take care of federal things!](#) [Secure our borders](#), protect our nation, keep commerce regular, and just a couple of other things – get the heck outta Dodge and leave the rest for the state and the counties to take care of. Let the people be free! It's high time, dangnabit! Get outta town!"

Plainly, it can be observed that Finicum is a [constitutionalist](#), especially if you consider what he said [on September 18th of 2014](#):

*"[I]t's easy to see that our government has eviscerated [the Constitution](#). They are a **lawless** government unwilling to be being governed by the supreme law of the land by [the laws that We the People placed upon them](#)...[t]he judiciary is, in large measure, corrupt too, insofar as they are unwilling to adjudicate on the simple Constitution...I invite you too, to stand up, and defend the Constitution; the **rights** that are guarded by this document. Stand, stand for freedom, stand for the Constitution."*

Putting aside for a moment the historical *fact* that [the Anti-Federalists and some of the Founding Fathers like Patrick Henry thought the Constitution empowered the central government way the hell too much](#), Finicum's misunderstanding of anarchy makes sense when you consider [he did the same thing in his novel](#); truth is, the etymology of the word, "anarchy," means **without rulers**, so if the republican form of this hypothetically limited government is all about *empowering* rulers, then *limited* government is a cruel joke, for all it does at that point is replace the [divine right of kings](#) with social contract theory, which the latter might as well be more accurately called the [divine right of politicians](#).

Would it be accurate to describe Finicum as a socialist, given his preference for "public" lands over that of the [private property ethic](#)? Historically, constitutionalists have always supported the individual [right to travel](#), yet they abhor [road privatization](#) because they don't reject the very notion of "public" roads themselves, in principle. Remember, the "public" goods argument is already [dialogically estopped](#), so spending time proving that any of these American governments are despotic trustees of the "public" goods (whether lands, roads, or "[education](#)") is an incurred [opportunity cost](#), quite frankly.

Once you understand that the [spontaneous order](#) of the [market](#) is superior to the [central planning](#) by [bureaucracies](#) simply because the only answer to the [economic calculation problem](#) is [prices](#), then you can appreciate just how silly it was for C4CF to demand that the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge be transferred from the federal government to the Oregonian government, instead of just *privatizing* the refuge by homesteading it permanently. [Root-striking](#) can be rather quite painful at times, for it shows just how ignorant, incompetent, or even [disingenuous activists](#) can be at times. Economic illiteracy can be cured, but a lust for power seldom can be.

What can be learned, if anything, from LaVoy Finicum's actions? I think it's more than fair to say that Finicum was a [satyagrahan](#), in that he conducted his [nonviolent struggle](#) to the bitter end, for he never actually shot or otherwise harmed anyone else, now did he? Yet, he and the other C4CF members (including the Final Four) have been regularly demonized as "armed protestors," despite the fact that *all* of the killing and violence was done by the police extortionists.

Another takeaway here are the dangers of [collective-movementism](#) tunneling one's vision down certain avenues away from genuine *private* property rights issues (like [the nuisance abatement in Costilla County during September & October of 2015](#)) towards grandstanding reenactments of the [Sagebrush Rebellion](#). If you think that's unfair of me to say, then how do you explain the fate of C4CF? [They garnered world-wide attention](#), yet they failed to accomplish their *stated* goals, and although [a few of them were able to beat the rap](#), most of them [plead guilty before trial](#), or were otherwise [convicted on "lesser" charges](#), but still largely becoming felons in the process.

Last time I checked, the Hammonds are still incarcerated, and the Malheur refuge is still under the control of the

federal government, despite C4CF's efforts. [Function determines form, means determine ends](#); *how* you go about doing something is just as important as (if not more so than) *what* said ends actually are. Today, there are *more* American political prisoners than there were before, so this is by no means like the [strategic victory](#) won at Bundy Ranch with a net gain, but rather, it is, at best, a [Pyrrhic victory](#) given that the lawfare and [democide](#) conducted by government was wonderfully exposed for the tyranny that it is, yet I have to ask, **at what cost?**

Some questions that I am unable to answer might be better taken up by those interested in doing their own follow-up. For instance:

- What is the current status of the [wrongful death lawsuit](#) that Jeanette was pursuing? Is it still being litigated? If not, what was the result?
- Where is the Finicum family living? What is the current status of their ranch? Did they have to pay the BLM thousands of dollars in fines? Remember, according to LaVoy, [he owed them in excess of \\$6,400](#) for "trespass cattle."
- Was [LaVoy's Bible](#) ever returned to Jeanette?

These and perhaps other questions may never be answered, but I figured it doesn't hurt to list some of them here for ease of reference. Too many people conveniently forget about those who have fallen because the fallout takes time and meanwhile the [news cycle](#) marches on, doesn't it? Much like American political prisoner [Robert Beecher's](#) own recent death earlier this month, most [consumers](#) of "news" frankly don't give a crap unless content producers make it an issue through posting items on their RSS feeds.

Many folks within the patriot community originally received the impression that Finicum was some independent rancher this whole time, and now that has been brought into question. I recommend that people stop mythologizing publicly recognizable figures as if they were some Great Man archetype, by reminding themselves that instead of putting these individuals up as symbols, they instead ought to familiarize with them as *men*. If [Ron Paul had his faults and foibles](#), then why should anyone else be held up to an impossible standard as if they were Olympian gods?

Postscript: *Be sure to check out [The Transcript Bibliography of LaVoy Finicum](#) for all the 20+ speeches that LaVoy made publicly, as well as all the hyperlinks I added to those transcripts in order to provide better context.*