



December 3, 2024

Jihada Aaron, Brian Cox Jr., and Deric Thomas Plead Guilty to 2020 Homicides

CLEVELAND - Cuyahoga County Prosecutor Michael C. O'Malley announced that Jihada Aaron, now age 21, Brian Cox Jr., now age 20, and Deric Thomas, now age 20, pleaded guilty for killing 19-year-old Anzaiyeh Brooks in November 2020. In addition, Aaron and Cox pleaded guilty for killing 15-year-old Anthony Hughes and shooting a 43-year-old male in December 2020.

"This is the most violent group of juveniles I have ever seen in Cuyahoga County," said Prosecutor O'Malley. "This group is responsible for murdering three separate people in a month."

On November 8, 2020, around 7:50 p.m. Deric Thomas, 16 at the time, drove a stolen BMW SUV with Jihada Aaron, 17 at the time, and Brian Cox Jr., 16 at the time, near Sidaway Avenue and Kinsman Road in Cleveland. 19-year-old Anzaiyeh Brooks was riding his bike in the area. Aaron then opened fire from the moving vehicle. Thomas continued to drive, and all three individuals fled the scene. Brooks was struck once in the head and once in the shoulder. The Cleveland Division of Police (CDP) responded to the scene. Brooks was transported to a nearby hospital where he was later pronounced deceased.

On December 9, 2020, around 8:15 p.m. 15-year-old Anthony Hughes was walking with two others near East 55th Street and Scovill Avenue in Cleveland. Allen Simuel Jr., 17 at the time, was driving a stolen Toyota and drove past Hughes. He then turned around and drove back to Hughes. Aaron and Cox Jr. both fired multiple times at Hughes from the vehicle. Simuel continued to drive, and all three individuals fled the scene. Hughes was struck multiple times. In addition, a 43-year-old male was also struck in the gunfire. CDP responded to the scene and Hughes was transported to a nearby hospital where he was later pronounced deceased.

The investigation was conducted by CDP's Homicide Unit. Ballistic evidence from both scenes matched to a third homicide committed on November 20, 2020. That gun was linked to Jihada Aaron. In addition, DNA evidence and phone records also linked the individuals to the crimes.

On December 2, 2024, Jihada Aaron pleaded guilty to the following charges:

- **Two counts of Involuntary Manslaughter**

Additionally, Aaron was convicted of involuntary manslaughter and aggravated robbery for killing William Lane on November 20, 2020. Aaron is serving 18 years in prison for the November 20, 2020, homicide. Both the State of Ohio and defense counsel have agreed to recommend a sentence of 27 to 32.5 years in prison on this case to run consecutive to the time he is already serving, for a total of 45 to 56.5 years in prison. He will be sentenced on Wednesday, December 4, at 10 a.m.

On December 2, 2024, Brian Cox Jr., pleaded guilty to the following charges:



- **Two counts of Involuntary Manslaughter**

On an unrelated case, Cox Jr., is serving 14 years, nine of which is in gun specification charges. Both the State of Ohio and defense counsel have agreed to recommend a sentence of 22 to 27.5 years in prison on this case to run consecutive to the nine years he is already serving, for a total of 31 to 36.5 years in prison. He will be sentenced on Thursday, January 9.

On December 2, 2024, Deric Thomas pleaded guilty to the following charges:

- **One count of Involuntary Manslaughter**
- **One count of Felonious Assault**
- **One count of Receiving Stolen Property (MV)**

Both the State of Ohio and defense counsel have agreed to recommend a sentence of 18 years in prison. He will be sentenced on Wednesday, December 4, at 10 a.m.

On November 3, 2023, Allen Simuel Jr. was indicted on the following charges:

- **One count of Aggravated Murder**
- **Two counts of Murder**
- **One count of Discharge Of Firearm On Or Near Prohibited Premises**
- **Six counts of Felonious Assault**
- **One count of Improperly Handling Firearms In A Motor Vehicle**
- **One count of Receiving Stolen Property**
- **One count of Having Weapons While Under Disability**

Simuel Jr.'s case remains pending.