

# Dana Fleetham Interview Transcript

Interviewee: Dana Fleetham

Interviewer: Kyle Pitzer

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:24

Kyle Pitzer: All right, it is February 9th and this is Kyle Pitzer. I am with Dana Fleetham. This is the third interview in the Occupy Dayton project. So I think just to start off, could you just tell me a little bit about yourself and who you are?

:42

Dana Fleetham: Okay, well I'm actually a grad student at Wright State. Right now I am in the international and comparative politics program. I've done everything but write my thesis. So that is the phase that I am in so to speak. I got my bachelor's degree at Wright State as well. I got it in anthropology. I have a family. I have six children, and a wonderful husband, and I also play roller derby.

[We both laugh about the roller derby comment]

1:14

KP: Where are you from?

DF: I was originally born in Hollywood CA, and lived in the suburbs of LA until I was about eight. Then we moved to New Hampshire, and I spent time living in snow like it is now outside--basically. Then Illinois, where I went to high school out there in the west suburbs of Chicago. So I've been in the Midwest really a long time.

1:30

KP: And you're living-where are you living now? DF: Dayton right now.

KP: Like any specific neighborhood?

DF: Dayton Far East. Eastmont so it's-just-kind of south of SR 35. In the old Delphi homes that were built

KP: So how long have you been here? SF: In Dayton?

KP: Yea

DF: Oh gosh. A decade at least, a decade and a half. So yea I've been in Dayton forever.

1:58

KP: Describe your community.

DF: The community I live in is very small. Like the neighborhood is very small in the sense that there's not a whole lot of kids there. A lot of people who have retired. They kind of just hang out. It's not really-warm [laughs] for the most part. I mean we do know our neighbors, it's not really one of the most interactive neighborhoods though. I've lived in much more close knit neighborhoods.

But we have a broader community we interact with so that works out pretty well. We have our kids in local homeschool programs. I play roller derby which is like a huge part of community now [laughs]. We do a lot of stuff together. My daughters actually plays roller derby as well. So it's a very close "not" community in the Dayton area-it makes up for the neighborhood. Definitely.

2:54

KP: How does Dayton compare to the other places you have lived then?

DF: Well, it is a lot smaller than Chicago or Los Angeles of course. But I think Dayton makes up for its size by being really interesting. There's always something independent going on here. I know we have Garden Station downtown, the circus collective, yellow cab, art shows, parties being thrown, and just all kinds of events. Especially kid friendly events which is nice. It's very much what you would expect out of a very good college town. I think that's neat. The Ithaca's and Portland of the world. So yea, Dayton is all right.

I did not used to feel that way by the way. When I first lived here I was like: AHFFF, Ohio this place! But it's grown on me, it's pretty nice.

KP: How's it changed since you lived here?

3:42

DF: Oh, there has been much more interest in developing Downtown which has been amazingly beneficial to everyone. The building of Riverscape. The creation of all the interest in local inventors, like the opening up of the Wright Brothers museum. I mean just like everything to do with aviation. Actually building things. You can take kids and you can go and critique and you can engage with. I think that's been important to Dayton's revitalization.

I mean it's an exciting place. So many things were invented here. It's like we want that again. It's slowly being built. There's buy local movements here, Dayton Urban Green, and I know a whole collection of stores downtown that have been cropping up. The popup store model has been amazing. You can build stores for almost nothing and they just they kind of exist overnight.

In Downtown Dayton are you familiar with that? [I answer no]. It's basically small businesses can invest for a very low starting fee, to kind of buy in. They have to go in and spend money on the contracting and set up their own business. It's called a popup business. It's just there. Just exists. They put a sign out front-I can't remember the name of it-Peace on Fifth. They still exist kind of, they were a local fair trade movement. So they would have a fair trade store and you could buy fair trade products. That was pretty cool. So huh, I like Dayton.

KP: Would you say you're fairly involved with your community?

5:15

DF: Yea, I think we engage a lot. We've been involved with some of the local peace movements and some of the like local political movements, as a family. We've taken our kids up to protests, we've canvassed for the Green party-ages and ages ago. Back when there was somebody running in our district. We were able to go and talk to people. And, just a lot of activism in general. I think has been here for a while. Not very large scale activism, but there has been a lot of interest.

Several activists from Dayton went down to Central and South America and have participated in solidarity movements with trying to close the schools of Americas [?] and I forget the acronym for it. But like the western hemisphere they've changed the name from School of Americas to something much longer and much more obnoxious and then it became your trying to get that place out of there. They were training basically assassins.

Paramilitary forces were being trained by the US government. And so there has been a lot of outreach and connection between there and the local Dayton Peace museum. Which is amazing that exists here. Makes Dayton even cooler. I'm very proud of what our city has accomplished as a community.

6:30

KP: What's driving your interest in activism?

DF: Oh gosh-probably exposure to the punk scene early on. Most of the music that I was listening to when I was fifteen, sixteen, was like political punk. It was all--you know like about what was going on in the world. And so at a relatively young age I was getting interested in what was going on in Yugoslavia or what was going on in Bolivia. It brought the international into the local for me. So I was interested and it continued. A lot of political science too, that helped. The more you learn about how things became the way they are, and the more you read about theories that people have had on why that happened, the

more absurd it starts to become. You're like ah! This just keeps happening over and over again. Yea-I'm sure you recognize that being a student of history. History repeats itself constantly. [Sigh]

7:30

KP: What ways would you say history is repeating itself now?

DF: Well, I think that lack of knowledge in the general public about forces that affect them. Economic and political forces and how those really affect their lives. It's leading to a kind of complacency. The complacency is the problem because then all kinds of corruption grows. You end up having lack of civil society. Lack of engagement from the general public. It really contributes to the downfall of civil society. So you end up with a public that could care less if they are being fleeced by Wall Street. They're complaining about money going to food stamps when the money is going to help out corporations. It's just kind of a disconnect in general between the public and reality. And it's sad because we're smarter than that. We're better than that. It's really disappointing to see we care more about what goes on in the Kardashians lives than we do with things that actually affect people in our everyday lives.

But that's across the board mean that's----every time in history that's happened. You can find this general "eh" we don't care. And you can find it on both sides of the equation too. If you look at the French Revolution you have a political and economic elite that become totally complacent with their position. They're not paying attention to the fact that people are ready to chop their heads off essentially. They're not even connected.

And so once you get that kind of disconnect and you have people that actually have the power to exert political will, you end up having a society just tom shreds. So that's unfortunate. I don't think anyone really wants bloody revolution, even if they want change. I mean---maybe-I dunno the Tea Party [laughs]. Like militias, that kind of mentality. I can't really conceive of an everyday person that would just be like I want people dying in the streets in order to change something.

9:30

I think a lot of social movements now are moving towards using direct action, using non-violent techniques of engaging in protests, and you saw a lot of that in recent movements. I mean you saw it in Seattle in the W20 protests, you see it in all the larger anti-globalization protests. You see this kind of shifting of techniques. It's changing from we want to form a paramilitary army and go and overthrow the government, it's changing to we're going to represent this body of individuals which are the people. It's all of us. We are going to assert for change in the name of everyone. So it's interesting, like watching just how social movements evolve over time is pretty fascinating to me.

10:20

KP: What kind of social movements have been going on?

DF: Well-in the 1980s and early '90s you kind of have this moving away from being invested in control of governments. Which you see a lot of leftists agitation in Central and South America in the 1980s, trying to change these governments. You also see a lot of right wing in Central and South America. So you have these kind of these polarities. These very distinctly different ideas, and that has dominated a lot of things in the upper western hemisphere as well. But now things are shifting, and people are not think in terms of states and in terms of political parties. They are thinking of terms of: We have this global system, and this global system that's affecting everyone in a very intricate way. We have to find the roots of those problems. We can't just say this state is failing because we have bad leadership, or we

have this political party in control and so there's a problem here we can address by overthrowing the government.

That's not possible anymore basically because you end up having individuals who are recognizing the destruction of the environment, and the rise of corprotacracies and you know all kinds of complex-- complex situations that affect people in the entire globe essentially.

11:45

I know that is a very poor way of saying it-but I mean really I think people are becoming cognizant of boarder things than just their own communities, just their own selves. They're realizing that it doesn't matter who's in charge if you can't drink the water. It doesn't matter who's in charge if you can't-you know--have Enough room to grow food because we have degradation of soil. If we can't breathe, right? It doesn't really matter who's in charge if you've degraded your entire access to a normalized system. I mean you could look at the economy in the same way. It doesn't really matter if you can't get a job with or two or three degrees. It really doesn't matter if the Democrats or Republicans are in charge.

12:30

I think that growing realization is what social movements are starting to become about. And that's what we started to see with the anti-globalization protests in 1999. They've been going on before then, but Seattle was like the turning point so to speak. It's where people really recognized that you could mass large numbers of people together, and you could say the G8-the G20. That have been more of a European thing. You would have much more protests in Europe going on that were off a global focus.

And well-Americans caught on a little later [laughs] and that's understandable, but you end up seeing the grasping of that. I mean really people on the street in 1999 in Seattle were very cognizant of the fact that global markets were absolutely oppressive to seventy percent of the world, and that was a problem. And we should recognize that as problem even if it is still benefiting us where we live. And so having Americans become cognizant of that was really important as well. And I think that continued with the continued anti-globalization protests over the next decade.

13:40

And then you had Occupy, and that was probably the first time in my lifetime that I had ever seen that articulated for something that wasn't just globalization. I mean it was about globalization too. It was in very much the same problems that existed, that were recognized more in the anti-globalization movement were still the same problems being recognized by Occupy. But it was so much than that. It was this is affecting the whole world. But look at this. It's really affecting us here, and it's starting to affect even people in the richest country in the world. Essentially. Which I don't think we are anymore. I don't really know, I haven't looked lately. But one of the richest countries in the world. And that really hit home for more people than just the activists that were networking on global scale and saying there's problems over here. We have rising sea levels, etc.

[She hits the table with her hand} Sorry! Is it really loud?

KP: You can hear it.

14:40

KP: Going back to the Seattle protest. I've read a lot about it doing my research. Can you kind of explain what was going on with that?

DF: Well, the World Trade Organization came into being as a means to help nations to settle their differences, essentially. So it became an international player to settle disputes over tariffs and to make sure everyone was basically making the free market stay free. So to speak.

What happened though, you have the free market staying free, but people, and the environment, and anything that was not a corporate interest was basically traded off for that—that chance at equal profit. That was one of the biggest criticisms of the WTO which encapsulated everything else. If you were making a tariff issue fair for two states, so to speak.

But the people who actually affected by this exchange—such in the case of water. If water was going to be taxed, what would be a fair way to allow a corporation to come in and take over a natural resource in the area? This happened during a time of shifting states, especially in Central and South America, and so you have this growing recognition of how states have been unfair players in the global sphere.

16:00

I think that things really had been happening already, particularly in Central and South America. You have a lot of backlash growing over time—that—communities are growing a backlash to corporate interest and political interest. Basically political and economic elites controlling everything that happens to them in their daily lives. Water was a big issue. Access to—no—actually democratic institutions in nations has been an issue. And so you see how the global network of people participating in these systems has become convoluted.

And so then in 1999, it just kind of erupted. The World Trade Organization was having its yearly meeting—it may not be yearly actually, you should probably look that one up. It may be every couple of years. But they were having their meeting, regardless, and a lot of groups from a lot of different interests converged on Seattle at the same time. So it was really just right place at the right time.

17:10

One of the things that Seattle did showcase that had not been showcased in a lot of other protests that had been globally in existence for years was the show of police violence. Which in terms of non-violent direct action, that's really—that's the leverage you have. If you are not an economic player and you are not a political player. If you are part of individuals that have joined together with mutual aid and mutual aims so to speak, that's all you have.

You can sit down in the street, and you can refuse to move, and refuse to allow the people that represents nations and represent the WTO to meet. You can disrupt that meeting. But you can't really go in and arrest them all. Or you can't shoot them all. I mean you could, but at what end would that be? And so you see these tactics being not only used, but you see the public opinion of those tactics. And you see the public opinion of the police response to those tactics really changed at this time.

18:15

This also happened, another interesting part of that, the WTO protests. They happened after a transition of policing had changed. It used to be that there was a different model, and there's actually three different models. I apologize I can't remember the names of any of them. But the model that was used in the '50s and the '60s and the '70s was one of conversation. It was one of let's try to find a mutual solution, and police officers were much more willing to engage in—you know there was brutality of course—but they were much more willing to engage in dialog.

In the 1990s, especially late '80s, early '90s, you see police interaction with the public change to containment and control instead of control. Instead of engagement. So this disconnect really becomes clear at the W20 protests where you have rows and rows of protestors sitting in the street, and their arms are linked, and they are wearing gas masks. They're refusing to move out of the street. Then you have this line of police officers marching on camera for everyone to see, and just like bludgeoning these people and spraying them with pepper spray. It's a very visceral image, it has no matter what side you are in the issue, even if you don't know about the issue, you kind of find that repulsive as a human being.

So it did win a lot of support for that, for the same reason it won a lot of support with Occupy. You know, watching women be kettled on the street and sprayed point blank in the face with pepper spray. It really-it affects people who watched. And they start to think about the broader issues. They think, well, they must care very much about that. Why would somebody care so much about something they stood in the street and were peppered sprayed for it?

It has the same kind of affect that the Civil Rights movement had. When you watched a bunch of black men be hosed down with water cannons on television, you really start to wonder if the entire system is at fault, instead of those individuals. So it really-if violence is not used on the part of the individuals engaging in non-violent direct action, it really is a very powerful tool. It's much more powerful than arming yourself as a militia essentially.

Unless you want to take over and like have a coup. But I don't think coup would be very successful and in like most of the places where these types of protests are taking place. I mean it certainly wouldn't be successful in Seattle or-you know anywhere. We have like an incredibly powerful military. It's not like you can just get together army and say we're going to take over and have a coup. It's illogical, and I think people realize that, and so you this usage of so called weapons of the week. Which I think is Tilly, but---it was a long time ago since I read that.

21 :10

KP: You said that police actions kind of shifted to containment. What's pushed that along?

DF: A lot of the reasoning was based in a change overall in policing tactics over time. In New York-New York City specifically-there is an idea that if you have broken windows in a neighborhood. If rubbish allowed to accumulate. If there is a lot of obvious crime in a neighborhood. That it essentially would wear the neighborhood down-it's called the broken windows theory or something. If you allow small things to happen, then it would destroy the whole society. I mean that was this prevailing idea,

And so police forces were starting to say: Well we feel the same way. We need to not be allowing this kind of incremental-kind of show of protest to happen. We need to just shut the whole thing down as fast and as quickly as possible, and with-you know-as dubious tactics as possible. You kind of have the mentality develop over time in police forces that-[sigh]--extrajudicial force becomes acceptable so to speak. And you know of course this is not every police officer, this is not every precinct but-on the whole you have the theory in how we should police change from these are all of our fellow human beings, we are going to engage in dialog in them, and see what they want. Do they want us to set up a meeting between them and the people they are protesting? How can we solve this as a community? And that changes to these people are breaking the law. All we care about the fact is that they are breaking the law. We are going to kettle them. We are going to take them off and have them processed

at an arrest center. Which happened increasingly over the late '90s and early 2000s, essentially. You have this change in how people are treated. They are treated as criminals just for existing at a protest. When before, I think there was more of a focus on: These people are engaging in their civil rights, as citizens of the United States, to gather together and engage in a peaceful protest. So it's just shifting philosophies, really, that did drive it over time.

23:40

KP: I think everyone's becoming a lot more aware of like globalization-

DF: -yea absolutely-

KP: --how do you think it affects a sense of nationalism?

DF: A sense of nationalism? Interesting question. I think that nationalism becomes less important over time, and see globalization as just a threat to human beings look at themselves more as global citizens. And less as: I'm particularly loyal to this state, or this other state. There's also a lot of crossover of different philosophies happening in anti-globalization movements. So you have peace movements, and you have anarchist movements, and you have feminist movements. You have all these different philosophies coming together and saying: You know, we're all interested in the same thing because this is affecting all of us.

Because that's happening, you have less alliance to the idea of nationalism in general. While I think that many people are still proud to be a part of the country they're from, I don't think that's the most important thing to them anymore. I think that they are starting to see broader issues that are affecting people kind of on a meta-scale so to speak.

25:00

KP: What role do you think media has in this? The fact that-

DF: [Laughs]

KP: You know, twenty-four hour news service and-

DF: Well something I've noticed, just from my interaction with individuals that see things on a more global scale-is that the news you're reading is different. If you're somebody that is aware of gee-political issues and you're aware of how protest is happening on a global scale. I mean on any given day we have a protest happening somewhere and the protests are for similar reasons, and we can see that now. But that depends on what kind of news you're watching.

If you are turning on the BBC--or NPR-you're going to get a much different picture of the world than if you turn on, say Fox News. Or you're just reading these very sound bite-I would feel like word bite I guess-like very quick, very-there's no substance. Be excited about this. Be angry about this. Be upset about this. Be sad about this. And that's kind of what I'm getting from Fox News. It's a different way of delivering news that I don't really think we've ever had before. It is much more dystopian than it is sensible.

I think that even some of the people that are wanting to see things-maybe not from a global perspective-but maybe they want to see things from the perspective of America as a state. They don't

really like that either. So I don't know. I think it really depends on how much you're willing to engage with the world. If you're only thinking about America's interests, and you're only thinking about-you know-how your own-even if you're from another state. If you're from Canada or Australia, or Germany. I mean if you're only thinking of your own state's interests, then you're probably going to be thinking from a limited news standpoint as well. You're not going to be aware of how the price of rice you're buying is affected by conflict in Southeast Asia. I mean you're just not. You're not going to be cognizant of that.

27:10

KP: What role-how does the internet fit into this?

DF: Oh, because it's an explosion of information. If you're not limiting yourself to turning on the news in the morning, you read MSNBC or Fox News during the day. If you're not limiting yourself to that, my gosh! There's information everywhere. Like there are independent news networks all over the world. And there is criticism about that, you can't verify everyone's source-I don't know-I mean is Reuters the only source also? And Reuters has been relatively unbiased. If you can just dig through the internet and find the various, even if quasi-independent news sources, you can often get a pretty clear picture of what's going on.

It just takes stepping outside of your comfort zone as a modern human being. You know-you can't just stand in line at McDonalds' and watch Fox News and call it your news day. I mean if you're not picking up a paper or-reading an online news site. Whether its Wall Street Journal or Huffington post. Whatever. What we can all agree on is being relatively unbiased news. There's accusations on both sides of course. I think we can all agree the New York Times is a relative repute. Something like that, and if you're not reading that, then you're not really engaging with the world? I mean how could you possibly form an opinion on that, you know?

And I think the media, the mainstream mead-and I hate that term. Because it's used so much by right wing pundits now: The mainstream media! It's just, just destroying people's minds!

I can almost hear Rush Limbaugh saying it in my head. But that's what most people are experiencing as median. So if that is all you're experiencing, then yes. The media can be a problem. Because you're only getting one perspective of most issues. You're not getting a pluralism is what you really need in order to make an informed decision. So yes. The media is very dangerous because it keeps a lot of people focused on singular sources of news. Whether its MSNBC, or Fox, which are-you know-on both sides of the polarity.

29:26

KP: You said if people would just step out of their comfort zone-DF: [Laughs] KP: I would kind of say most people aren't comfortable stepping outside of that zone.

DF: No, they're not, and I always find it very strange. I don't know if it's just because I've had a cosmopolitan life-so to speak. I've lived in different areas, I've experienced different cultures. It doesn't seem as weird to me, but then I try to think: What would I feel like if I lived in Dayton Ohio my entire life? If I had never even been to Indiana.

I don't know. I hate to be-it's not classism. It's just more-I hate to think that-everyone should automatically have this interest to step outside of their comfort zone, just because I do. That's seeing the world through my own lens so to speak. So I do try to think of that. It must be hard, especially if

you're older and you have lived very simply in your life. And you think of the world in a singular way, and you can't comprehend the world as this complex. I can see that as being fairly difficult.

It's rather terrifying actually. [Says this with some sarcasm] What are our grandchildren going to be turning on for news, and are we going to be sitting there saying: Oh back in my day we still had newspapers! That nobody read. But yea---

KP: Are you optimistic about the future for your own children?

30:54

DF: It depends on the day. You know I'll see something amazing happening in the news and I'll go: Wow we got really far on that scientific chart-you know like-we've made some amazing discoveries as human beings.

And then other days I just can't fathom. It's really hard to envision a future for grandchildren and great-grandchildren that-is a future where they can eat food that doesn't contain poisonous things. Or they can't breathe air. Literally already where we live right now you can barely breathe. That's because of the valley effect. Then you read reports about Hong Kong-well most of the cities in Chia are very poor. A lot of poor environmental regulation. So you have air already that is unable to be breathed comfortably by citizens in that area. And that's really kind of terrifying.

Is that going to be New York in fifty years? Will that be L.A.-well L.A. is already kind of like that to be honest. You drive in LA and you can barely breathe. When we lived there when I was child, my father developed an environment induced. Could not breathe, he had to use an inhaler. Literally, when he was driving around-he worked for the Boy Scouts. He did executive work and fundraising, administrative functions. He had to drive around all the time and was in this traffic, and literally couldn't breathe. It was the dardnest thing. When we moved to New Hampshire he could breathe just fine.

So you can this disparity between access to clean air already developing. It's already taking place. What is the mobility of the citizens of Los Angeles? Are they going to move to New Hampshire? Are they going to move to Canada? I mean-no they're not moving anywhere. They are going to stay right there even if they can't breathe. Because they lack thousands of dollars to pick up and just move to a cleaner state. And-you know-right now. There are a lot of people in Dayton that have allergies every year, and they have asthma, and they are really impacted by the local environment. But it's cheap to live here. Right? So you have that transition over time already happening.

33:24

KP: All right, so-what is Occupy?

DF: Well that's the question of the year, isn't it-well it was the question of 2011 and the question of 2012. Sometimes I think it would be easier what Occupy is not. But you know-it is a construct in a lot of ways. Occupy is an idea that encompasses many ideas, and I do not think it was unintentional that Anonymous and several academic anarchists came together and formed the original idea. Which was the Adbusters creation.

They put this-[laughs]-this one page advertisement essentially. That had a picture of the bull and it said September 17, 2011-you know-bring your tent. Come bring tent [laughs] and people showed up. And it was the most amazing thing that that idea was so gripping. That Wall Street was the focus of huge number of problems in the United States. And people came, and they set up tents. I think that became

very symbolic over time. It was people willing to do more than like-get a petition. It was one of the first times in the United States that you've seen people willing to do more than "click" to engage with activism. It was really awesome.

And Occupy became a lot of things to a lot of people. Depending on who you talk to-you could go up to somebody that identifies as a libertarian at an Occupy protest. And this would be on a global scale--well probably what I'm about to say is on an American scale. You could find somebody who identifies as libertarian and they would say: Well, I'm all for second amendment rights, and I really want to protect the constitution, and it's a really big deal to me and I've got these tea party friends.

And then you could talk to someone completely different who would say: Well I identify as an anarchist. I see mutual aid as being more important than capitalism.

I mean you could have these vary disparate individuals coming together and saying; we don't want Wall Street to get all the pieces of the pie, so to speak. We don't want to watch our environment just be sold off. Fracking became a very important issue early on as a local issue within Occupy. That kind of took this singular idea of money is in the wrong hands, it's in the hands of corporations, and banks, and the one percent. You know that became the bid dividing line. You have all the rest of the people, and then you have the one percent that controls most of the wealth in the United States.

36:52

It's the simple idea that Occupy is--of saying that is what is creating the rest of the problems. What most people that engaged in Occupy early on were too afraid to say was---capitalism is the problem. It's really one of the first times you see that articulated--albeit-not articulated by a large number of people. It became different things to different people related to their own community. If you had fracking on the table in your community, and you saw that as something that would be damaging because it would threaten your water supply. You then would get together and it would be a local Occupy issue.

If you saw in your local community that a bank was--you know doing a whole lot of business. You would go find your local Bank of America and set up in front of it, and talk about how Bank of American is involved with ALEC, and Bank of America is cheating customers. They're creating mass economic devastation. So you have the recognition that multiple players are involved in the creating of a problem for people.

And so it meant something different to everyone. I think essentially it still does. I'm what, the third interview in? I'm sure my perspective is different from the first two individuals, and I think if you interviewed a hundred, two hundred people, you would find---connecting to the original idea of Occupy of course. But you would also find that interpretation is very different. Depending on where they're from, or what their experiences in the local Occupy have been like.

38:32

KP: So what is Occupy to you?

DF: Well when I first heard that Occupy had happened, I had just given birth to a child. He was born the 17th of September. You know, I heard about it like--on national scale--that night. We heard the news, we were in the hospital. We stayed overnight, and we heard the news. We're like what?

For a minute we couldn't really think of like where we had seen that before. Then we remembered we had seen stuff in Adbusters, and we were like what? Like 'Cause stuff in Adbusters, have you read

Adbusters ever? It comes out of Canada, it's been around for a long time. They used to have stuff more online, they had online forums. But anyway it's kind of this cacophony of stuff, Political commentary, and pictures. It's very zine like-it's very much like zines were in the 1980s and 1990s. So we had a subscription at the time. We just made that connect and were just like wow, I wonder how that' 11 all turn out.

39:46

And then locally in Dayton things started happening around-the 8th of October was the first time. So we started going down, and we took the kids down. It was very interesting to--see so many people engaging. And in the beginning .in Occupy Dayton I mean there were easily a hundred, a hundred fifty people coming out to General Assemblies. For Dayton, that was pretty impressive. Even with the local Dayton peace movement you wouldn't get more than like fifty people at a protest. We protested the Iraq War, we protested local city issues but-it was interesting to see so many people converge together.

And it was hard to field people's question of what is Occupy. Because it was so many things, and how do you answer that? I'm not religious, but I guess when people are asked to articulate something that is complex and abstract to a certain extent, like a religious belief. How do you articulate that to a person? How do you show them that? You could say well it's all of these things, and then it is all of these things.

You just kind of look at it, and if that's what you think is true--then that's what you think.

I mean it's really hard to say that to somebody from say the news media. And a lot of the early criticism of Occupy focused on that: They don't know what they're standing for. These protestors, they have no idea, When in fact they had an idea, they just had fifty ideas all together at the same time. And so that was---very-kind of invigorating. I guess. It really kept the movement very active early on. Because there were so many things, so many reasons to be involved. And people came to it for all different reasons.

Over time, I started to become more involved with the civil society aspect of it. We had a very small group locally that developed-in the beginning. We would have meetings and we would have committees. We had a focus on local issues that was beginning to develop.

42:09

And we also had the camp that was being supported for a while. And the camp kind of became this very-locally, and this is not how it happened with other Occupies. But the camp for Occupy Dayton became this very distracting thing. We couldn't really do anything because we had the camp to support. And then if you sat down and really thought about it, why were we supporting this camp?

It didn't take on the same kind of connotation that it did in other cities. Like this reclamation of public space. I mean it was cold, nobody really wanted the public space. You had to find some kind of reason to actually want to be there. And it was symbolic, and so you wanted to like continue to hold that symbolic thing true. But at the same time, it was like-what are we really reclaiming? And what did we really reclaim, like a patch of space in the center of the city that anyone could use anyway? I mean it just seemed kind of ludicrous after a while. And I think that it did not seem as ludicrous of course, if you were occupying Wall Street. But--downtown Dayton is so dead anyway. You weren't really competing in terms of interest or agitating space.

43:20

DF: Now it did become interesting that Christmas actually. Because there was a huge issue that developed between the Downtown Dayton Partnership and Occupy Dayton, and the issue of having

tents and having tabling happening during the yearly children's festival that takes place there. And there's like this tree lighting, it's like a big deal. And it's also seen as some that-Kettering-you might want to look up who actually did it because it was an interesting story. It was Kettering or it was some local benefactor who wanted to have a festival for poor children. So there is this moralistic goodness that emanates from this festival. Then you have Occupy who is set in Courthouse Square, because they had been set up since the beginning of October.

And so by the middle of November, it started to become a problem. There were all these general assemblies-we would have issues about whether we wanted the camp to stay, or whether we wanted the camp to go. That actually was the first time I started to become very vocal in the local Occupy. I mean I'd been recovering from child birth. I hadn't been attending every event. My husband and sometimes the older kids would go. So I wasn't as really connected. I think that was the first time I really started-joining-committees and engaging with the civil society aspect.

So I participated in that issue, and it was a huge issue, lots of discussion. People felt that it was-a very-people in Occupy, I mean, felt like it was a very-moralistic thing on their own side. If you just for a Christmas celebration, then really what's the point? Why bother holding this space at all? So there was one side of the issue that wanted to say, you know, screw it. Why can't we have an Occupy tent at the children's festival? It's not taking over the entire space" So there was that perspective.

Then there was perspective that a whole bunch of other individuals took that was we really don't want to disrupt this festival for poor children. I mean how could you? That's awful. And it created the first fracturing that I had seen develop within Occupy Dayton. I think a lot of people left after that. You had a lot of people that formed their own opinions about Occupy based upon that polarizing issue, and it was a game changer. It took the general assemblies from being a hundred, a hundred fifty people, and it slowly ground them down until you had twenty people showing up.

The weather was doing that as well. The whole camp moving issue. The fact that the camp was comprised of mostly homeless people-because really most of the ideology of Occupy Dayton were people that were holding professional positions and working day jobs. They didn't really have the chance to go and sleep all night at Courthouse Square.

46:28

So you kind of had a class disconnect that grew overtime as well. Where you have like the people at Courthouse Square are all these homeless teenagers. And then a bunch of activists. You don't have the people who are holding the meetings and talking about things. We're going to issue this statement to the local government in Dayton about our position of moving the Occupy Dayton camp. You had this disconnect. You have these campers who aren't even showing up at meetings.

The people that were making all the decisions were not the people on the ground who were doing things-well sitting there. Because there's really not much to do to be perfectly frank mean you could talk to people if they came around, but it was really usually like four or five people that would sit around the camp all day. And that's very different than the experience you would have in Occupy in New York City. Where you would have this kind of community event. Where there were multiple players involved. You had people that are providing food and you have people that are making sure that there's bathrooms, and there's people making sure things are safe.

So you have more of an integrated community growing in these larger Occupies. I mean you saw that in Occupy Portland, Occupy Seattle, Occupy Boston, and Occupy Chicago. You have larger camps. Larger involvement from community members, and that was critical I think, in the longevity of those Occupy movements. And today if you look at Occupy Dayton compared to Occupy Chicago-Occupy Chicago is much more active still. There's still large scale local issues that they are participating. And that's simply not the case with Occupy Dayton.

There are other reasons of course that went into that. But overtime you have less engagement, and less involvement. That's the death of any movement, or any organization for that matter. If people don't really spend time and have any reason to engage, then they won't. And so losing the camp early on did create disengagement as well.

48:46

KP: You mentioned this a couple times-the civil society aspect. What do you mean by that?

DF: Well when people have the idea that democratic participation is a value. In order to engage in society-you're not always going to be voting or-looking at the political players. Sometimes you're going to be learning and engaging in those aspect of building a strong civil society by sitting on committees, or participating in local movements to improve the neighborhood. You know all kinds of things fall into civil society like non-profit organizations and neighborhood watch groups. Local polling places that are supported by the neighborhood.

Having the organizational structure that kind of was inherited in Occupy-in New York-you have things like-the education and outreach committee. Which is one that we had. They had different names, education and outreach was how you are going to take all the stuff you're talking about in Occupy and share it with the broader population. You have things like a camp committee. You have process and facilitation, which was taking that structure-it was a consensus model-and it was kind of a modified consensus model. And then taking that structure and finding a way to implement so you have fair and engaged dialog.

There were all sorts of ways that was implemented. Hand signals would give as a group in order to say this is our opinion on this. You're talking and we can't all like voice our singular opinions it will take all night. So we're going to wiggle our fingers like this in the air to say that we agree with it. And it was a very effective way of mass communication. It was a very democratic way to create democratic communication, in an activist context.

I think it worked really well-I think could have went a little better. We don't have much of a background in civil society. We have a very weak civil society in Dayton. Most people in Dayton are not members of professional organizations, even like interest groups. Like a sports organization for example. The vast majority of people don't participate in things like that. So we don't have a lot of experience engaging in civil society. Unless you get to like the, the higher education level. You have more people engaging in civil society at that point.

But-really, that even there is a small section of society. It's a very tiny fraction of the vast majority of people in a given area. And so I think Occupy was very important in the sense that people were participating, for some of them, it was the first time they had engaged in a civil society supporting manner in years. Maybe they were in Girl Scouts or Boy Scouts when they kids. Or maybe they are members of professional organizers. But it was the first time that local organization, for many people,

had a political interest. And not even just political, but sociopolitical, and economic. It was all of these things at once.

53:22

DF: Which in hindsight that was probably a little overwhelming for a lot of people. It was articulated by several activist that I worked with at the time, that it felt like we were always just putting out fires. One solution would happen, and then another thing would happen, another crisis would happen, another disagreement. I think that a global experience for those participating in Occupy, varying to degrees of course. Depending on what your own communities experience in civil society and political action has been. A unifying factor was-it was hard. Especially for Americans [laughs]. We don't make decisions as groups very much, we make decisions based on our own best interests. And that's just our culture, that's the way we have done things for a very long time.

It's very difficult to have a collectivist model, like a consensus model, be utilized by people who are more familiar with competitive model. And that created a lot of tension, and a lot of problems over time. A lot of the arguments actually. A lot of the fractioning and the-I'm gonna take all my toys and stomp home kind of mentality that developed over time was based in that individualism versus collectivism. Interacting with your fellow human beings.

53:50

KP: Is this idea. Horizontal democracy-

DF: [Laughs] Yea.

KP: --how does that tie into the idea of civil society?

DF: Well horizontal democracy is democracy without representatives. It's saying that-having a representative is really not good enough. You can possibly have representatives, but there has to be mutual trust. No, it's not about electing somebody and I trust them because they're in the role. Because that's rooted in the growing distrust of the American republic system. You know we-we have democratic values, and we have this structure in place. But it's showing itself to be flawed at this point in time.

Some people are calling for kind of a fundamentalism, if we only returned to the constitution then everything would be fine. And other people are saying that's not even the crux of the issue. Corruption is the issue. We have this good structure in place, but we're not really following it. So horizontal democracy starts to become more and more appealing over time. Because people look at the flaws of hierarchical democracy, which I guess would be another interesting way to say it.

But I mean, that's kind of how I see it. It is a hierarchy. You elect this representative and they go and represent you as a person, but they are so far removed from you that it almost laughable to consider that they could be working in your interest. A lot of that is rooted in the breakdown of trust that a lot of people have for their elected officials. Again, that makes horizontal sound incredibly appealing, because then you are making decision together.

55:38

DH: Problems with that are-that takes a long time. Direct democracy is very close to the constructs of horizontal democracy. If you talk to any groups that participate with democracy, or utilize direct democracy, excuse me. Like the Quakers utilize democracy, and there are cantons in Switzerland that

utilize direct democracy. And it takes forever. Meetings go on for hours. And hours, and hours, and hours. It becomes difficult to process through the problems of people who live in a very individualist system, or individual society, and who have been under the impression that the republican system in the United States is an amazing exercise in democracy.

It's hard for them to recognize the corruption and the disconnect that's created there. And so I do--I do think horizontal democracy becomes even more appealing at that point.

56:44 KP: Did it work?

DF: No. It didn't work for all the reasons stated. I really think that it was a beautiful idea, but I don't think that horizontal democracy and the utilization of consensus models, I do not think it worked as well as it could have. A lot of that is just rooted in our experiences. And yes, it is kind of sad. It is a failure, essentially. But it's also a learning process. This is one of the first times that many American, and really many people who have been living in the western hemisphere, have really considered that their system might be-flawed.

Just learning that was valuable. You know, just seeing that. There's more than just the political elites at play. Cognizant of that was important, but it is unfortunate. I think it was perhaps too much, too soon. You know it's like taking a whole bunch of people who've had experience in engaging in one way, and saying go ahead. We are going to take away all the hierarchical models. We are going take away leaders. We're going to denigrate leaders. And we're going to establish this collectivist consensus model system. And it didn't make a good fit over time.

And you did have people that are used to working in hierarchal systems reemerging their own ways of interacting in that system. Just on the micro social level, you have individuals who are better-spoken, and who are perhaps with an academic background. People that are elites essentially. The intelligence of society. They speak and they act very differently than somebody that has worked in a factory their whole life. Or whose family has traditionally been very working class. They're not thinking of things in the same way, they're not looking at theories. They're looking at-you know-is my union still going to exist?

59:08

You do have that disconnect happening over time, and it was never really resolved. You know, over time as the fractioning got worse in Occupy Dayton, it got to the point where people wouldn't even meet together. You had like these very deep rifts that develop between individuals, and they would say well we're not going to meet together because we don't like you. We can't get along. Or you would have individuals that didn't feel like the process, which was like the structure given to manage general assemblies. People feeling that process was so----constrictive. It was bogging us down. We couldn't actually get anything done.

And to some extent they were correct. Of course I was always a fan of consensus models. I really wanted them to work and it was very exciting but-I recognized very early on that's not what was happening. What was happening was that we were just grinding our gears. Talking and talking and taking. We lacked the trust and the empathy as a community to really say that I'm okay with you doing this. I'm okay with you engaging with this, and I can step back, and I can trust you to make good decisions. We constantly wanted to fight over what the best decision was. We constantly had to discuss even like fine granular details, down to a point where no one wanted to participate any more at all. And so you ended

up with-after a year-you have like fifteen people. Who can't get along. [Laughs] And that's what we were left with.

And I think that situation-at least from my research-that's been mirrored in other Occupies. Other Occupations worldwide have shrunk. And the destruction was very effective in that, early on, that was a political decision most state actors to go with at the time. And there's actually a concerted effort in the local community, or the country actors, state actors. Even on that more micro scale you have a lot of cooperation in-you know-we've got to get rid of this. We can't let something like Occupy happen. I mean come on it's peeling the veneer off this entire system we're trying to keep hobbling along. The unspoken things-right? And that didn't work so well, unfortunately.

1:1:36

KP: What do you guys think you could have done better? Or done different?

DF: I think we could have focused on community building, early on. I think arbitrarily expecting a group of people with very disparate ideas and background and focal points, all get together and make decisions together. I think that was very premature.

I noticed that the individuals that did get together, or that knew each other already, and you know helped kind of form the networking of the community and help build this framework up. They often were more successful in getting things to happen. I think that when we did have ideas we mutually worked on, and we mutually took interest in, that it did a lot better. But when trust broke down, and what little fragments of community we managed to hobble together, were not really there, it just fell apart.

And so I definitely think that early on building community should be more important than building-social actions. Like its great, it's all well and good to go and engage in Gorilla Theater. Or pass out fliers or-I don't know. Have a public panel where everyone can get together and discuss issues. Or have a film showing. Those are all wonderful things, but they're just things if you don't have a strong community being built. Either simultaneously, or having been built beforehand.

1:3:18

Because those people that are continuing to do things in the community, continuing to engage and-education and outreach and agitation. Those people have to trust each other. Otherwise it's working for free. I mean no one will want to do it for a while. It's very much like non-profits or internships. You know, you have to treat your interns well. Otherwise they don't want to do anything for you. Communities have to be built, and trust has to be established or otherwise you don't have much of a movement-after some time at least.

KP: Jumping back to something you said-said a while ago--it might be easier to say what Occupy is not?

1:3:52

DF: [Laughs] Occupy is not single issue movements that are easily solved. Occupy is not something that you can start a petition for. Occupy is not one legislative decision away from being solved. It's really complex, and I think appreciating the complexity is important because-it's really quite astounding that all of these issues have become so complex. And I think that Occupy is not simple, and it never could have been, and it's almost laughable to have that be the most dominant question coming from reporters and coming from-like state players. That was the primary question. Well, what is Occupy? What do you

want? What are your demands? Which is almost like cheapening the whole thing. Its saying well: Your're holding Wall Street hostage and you have this list of demands. And it did kind of seem that way early on, and I could see how that could be misconstrued. There was like a list of points, these critical points that were established in New York City, and with the New York City general assembly. And they did say very specifically this is what we want, and it is a very articulate list. But once you get to the end of the list you realize, well that's like everything! That's like saying we want it all. It's a very provocative thing to say in a way.

1:5:50

And that really gets to the heart of what Occupy is. It was everything. It is everything. It's recognizing that we can't solve broader political and social and economic issues with single solutions. It really won't work anymore. Because sure you can stop fracking in one little town in Pennsylvania, but what happens when fracking starts in the state next door. The recognition that we cannot have single solutions to problems any more. Which is at once terrifying. It make you feel how precarious you are. Republican system with democratic values, because that's supposed to be how problems are solved. That's the fundamental way problems are solved in a republic system. You can go to your state, you can go to your county, and you can go to your local governments and you can have problem addressed. And if you can't address through them local governance you can go through a federal level of addressing issues.

We're seeing that's not even possible anymore? And so that is another factor in what Occupy is.

KP: What is Occupy to you personally?

1:7:13

DF: [Brief pause] Hope. It's opportunity. It's a rejection of complacency. The very fact that Occupy came to life for a short period of time, and still exists-albeit in different ways and different forms today-is incredibly inspiring. And as bittersweet-I guess bittersweet would be a better way to say it-as bittersweet as it is to have watched it to be very exciting and amazing, and everyone's engaged-and then. Everyone fractioned off and couldn't get along. Ugh. We don't exist anymore.

You know I still talk to people from Occupy, and we still engage in conversations that are of-political and economic and social importance, I think. It changed the conversation. So to me, that was important than actually doing something tangible. Because you couldn't really do anything tangible.

And I think that's the realism that people failed to grasp early on and it became very frustrating once you realized it. Is that, what are you doing to do? I mean, put a new president in office? And really, what power does the president really have to change things on a global scale. Those realities started to seep in after a while. And you think to yourself-you can't focus on immediate results, or simple results. Because that's just not the way the game is anymore. I mean it's really not about legislation being passed in your favor anymore.

1:9:10

I think that having people realize that on a mass scale was very important. So that--- that's what it is to me. Its hope. Its hope that this maybe this was a dress rehearsal. For massive resistance to the destruction of everything. I know that sounds really dramatic, and very hunger games like but---isn't it though? If we look at things in terms, we are absolutely destroying this planet for ourselves as human beings. And I think to varying degree people recognize that. It trumps everything. If we can't afford to live in one of the richest countries in the world, if we have an escalating homeless

population, if we have resulting poverty-in one of the richest countries in the world. Are we able to even solve things? In a reasonable way? I mean can we vote someone into office that's really going to fix it. And I think people realizing that is very important.

1:10:16

KP: So there seems to be a debate going on. Some people are like Occupy it's over, it's done, and it happened, it's gone. And the other side of the coin seems to be is that it was the beginning of a movement building. What you your take on that be?

DF: That's another question of the year. Is Occupy dead-and-well--yes and no. In many ways what we thought Occupy was going to be, that is gone. And can never be claimed again. Because you are never going to be able in the United States, at least, have massive public camps spring up that will be tolerated on a large scale. You 're never going to have that kind of public assembly possible again. So {sigh}-in one way, that is very troubling. It's difficult to conceive of the realities that we are facing in the United States.

Because for so long we have been not only the richest nations in the world, but one of the freest. And as we watch civil and political freedoms start to erode-I think that-letting Occupy stagnante, which would be a better way to see it rather than dead. 'Cause how do you kill an idea' that's like saying you can actually control an idea, which nobody can, of course. I think that continuing to recognize that stagnancy is not really helping anyone any is important. So-[pause] yes. I agree with the assessment that Occupy is not a very effective means of protest on its own. And that's probably okay. I mean not everything has to end up a long running process. Just engineering discourse and creating awareness is viable enough, to some extent. I don't think you can look at the awareness that people have of the political and civil landscape compared to-you know-comparing 2014 to 2011. I don't think they're even comparable. And a lot of other factors have been at play of course. I mean it's not all Occupy at fault for that-at fault sounds kind of terrible-that caused such a thing to come about. So-sleeping, perhaps. Might be a way to see it.

1:13:16

KP: What about Occupy Dayton itself?

DF: Oh, well-that depends on who you're talking to I think. I still talk to a lot of people that I knew in Occupy. There are a lot of people I don't talk to, and I think that overall-Occupy left a bad taste in a lot of people's mouths. But-it was kind of an embodiment of that hope. You couldn't help but want it to exist. Even if it was sometimes messy and difficult, and hard to get people to get along. I mean even at its worst, it was still pretty amazing.

But most people can't sustain that. I mean everyone has other lives, right? People have jobs, and children, and mortgages. Our entire system actually worked very well, perhaps without trying. I don't know. I'll get back to you after the study is complete. I really don't think people have the time to engage in full scale resistance. Once you realize how much time it takes out of your week to go to meetings, go to marches, make signs, go and drive to protests at the statehouse. It really starts to take its toll on your life. It's like another job that doesn't pay you anything but heartache, and it's hard to sustain that for a lot of people. That will kill a movement, because if you don't have a way that people can do both easily-then you don't have much of a movement after all. Once the initial importance dies down.

When movements start everyone's really engaged and excited. It's like their sports team is winning. They want to do things. They want to go to meeting four nights a week, and it doesn't really feel as

much a drain on your life. Because you don't notice it for a few months. Until you start to see the other stuff in your life piling up, and you're like oh crap my back door has been broken for four months. And I haven't done anything because I've been at Occupy committee meetings all week long. And you know the realities of political movements always fall on that. I think if you look at any political movement in history, if you don't find a way to feed people, and give them the chance to get away what makes the rest of their lives tick, then your movement doesn't last very long.

1:16:09

And that is the same thing if you have people occupying a factory. You know that occupying space is resistance, is really at its heart what Occupy is. And so if you have people occupying a factory, they have to have food. Otherwise they're not going to be able to stay there and occupy the factory. You know, have people continue to help their families, so their children can get to school, and have food to eat at night.

You saw a lot of that happening in the big factory takeover. When the big union pushed in the United States, you saw whole communities of women fretting together and making food for the factory workers. They would get together and have childcare collectives. There's actually a movie-I don't know if you can get access to it here-but it was done by Julia Deliberate, and somebody else she was associated with. It was all about women's role in the unions. They had old footage of just like, the women bringing giant soup trains and feeding all the men in the factory. It's that same idea, is what I'm getting at. If you don't have a merging point for what becomes periphery of your life. Eventually that periphery cannot become peripheral anymore. It must become central again, because you cannot have everything else in your life just fall apart, just because you're an activist.

And that did, particularly because a large number of people involved with Occupy Dayton were-they were professionals in their fields. They worked jobs during the day. And that really had an impact, because if those are the people in your population. If your population is not students who don't have lots of responsibility-which is not always true because students often have lots of responsibility. But if you don't have large numbers of people who they don't have external responsibilities, then you don't have sustenance for a movement over time.

1:18:15

DF: To be perfectly honest I don't think we will see mass civil unrest in this country until things are really bad. Once you have like an 80% unemployment rate or something like that, I don't think you're really going to see you're going to see mass civil unrest. Because we are pretty easily bought off as human beings. You know we have sports, and we buy stuff. That's pretty exciting so---yea.

KP: So is Occupy Dayton, I mean do you guys still meet. Or are you guys-

1:18:45

DF: Eh, towards the end it started to be like a supper club, they would get together and have dinner. Maybe watch a movie about agitation somewhere, about something. You know-it was rubber stamping. We would make fliers and everyone would get together and put stickers on it and we go hand out fliers.

I mean after a while-when you're not engaging in political protest or civil protest anymore, you start to just feel like-uh. I've got this thing I have to do. It's occupying everything. Well that's all well and good. That does flip what I originally said back on its ear, doesn't it? I mean if you at like community, isn't that the community building you would need to be build a movement? But, I don't think. I think at that point

by the time we became a dinner club [laughs]. I think that it was too late. The fractioning was really bad. And you had like separate camps of people-not camps of tents-you had separate ideological groups of people who do not agree on particular issues. Or have had arguments in the past.

So you kind of like-have people who are not involved in either of these disagreements, and show up sometimes. It's a lot of fragmentation. A combination of sorts. It's not just fragmentation. It's not just lack of time for involvement. It's a perfect storm of all those things coming together, and that's just the reality of it. It's not really good or bad. I mean you can't create time in people's lives to occupy.

KP: In what ways did it factionalize?

1:20:43

DF: Well you had political fractioning early on that was always a problem. People from the far right, and more the far left that found inspiration in Occupy, or issues supported by Occupy. But yet you had all these other issues that were really fragmentary. For example-we had-this is actually very recent. You know Occupy is of course very fragmented now but there's been a lot of action with the march against Monsanto movement and the anti-GMO movement. And what I found to be interesting is that you have all these people converging for a singular issue-which is getting GMOs out of our food supply.

Well those people don't always agree on like racism and sexism. And you know like deal breaking kind of issues. You know we have this one individual that was just incredibly incendiary, and very active and very involved in the anti-GMO protest. But he's also like a white power supporter. All of these other things, he supports the Golden Dawn, and like fascism. Things that all these other people involved in the anti-GMO protest are just like: Oh my gosh! I can't even believe that people in 2014 are saying the things things that this gentleman is saying. He's associated with the Springboro Tea Party.

Like actually, if you look up his name on the internet-Sunny Thomas-he's been involved in all kinds of racist statements that he's made. Like he made public racist tweets that actually cause people from the Tea Party to withdraw But things like the from a local rally. They were like; whoa, that's a little too far. It's one thing to be proud of your Scottish heritage, but wholly crap you're a racist.

Things like that, and that's a very modern example which is perhaps-not-not the best one. But it's the most recent one. But things like that did develop. Personal issues developed as well that were not really based in something like that-not really based in something as simple as-you know, racism. There are personal dynamic issues that developed between a lot of the people that were the most active and involved in Occupy Dayton. And that was sad to see happen, because these were people that were friends.

1:23:35

I personally had a very large falling out with two other academics involved with Occupy Dayton. We had written about Occupy Dayton together and we'd gone-and presented in a conference. The fall out we had was very personal. It was not political by any means. And it was---kind of damning I think, because it wasn't the only one that happened like that. You had these very like high profile-like people that were very active and very involved in Occupy Dayton. So you had several very big factional events that happened based on personal issues. And that ultimately was not very good-because-the tendency of some people in response to personal infighting was to-you know--come let's stop having this screaming over personal issues. Because we are all supposed to be uniting under these broader socio-political issues.

And I think that to some individuals that felt like things were being brushed under the rug. Like there was this emphasis on group think and group speak. You know, it felt very corporate, right? Come on you can't let people think that Occupy is just going to fight amongst itself, when in actuality-they were. They were fighting amongst themselves. And it was a very strange moment when we presented the research-in Canada. Because I almost, like it was fraudulent. You know, like we were speaking about all these things that Occupy to be, and used to do. And we'd done this analysis. And I read the paper and I was like: That's not what is now though. I feel like we're giving this image of Occupy being this amazing dynamic thing, and it's really not, and it felt very strange. That was my first publication. So I felt like-great-I hope that doesn't set the tone for my whole career.

KP: Was that the paper that I read, that you guys sent to me?

DF: Yea. It was decent paper. It was well researched, and well-constructed, and I think on its own it stands well. {Sigh}. In terms of what Occupy is now, it feels very bittersweet to consider that's-that's what we wrote. That was presented in like 2012. So-I don't know. I mean it does happen to a lot of movements. It happens to a lot of--lot of anything. Where you have personal relationships forming. Bands break up--non-profits dissolve. You know Occupy still exists, but it's very fragmentary and it's very polarized. You know you have like-you have some individuals on their own. And you have other individuals who get together on their own.

1:26:39

The ideological separations over time, did form around a self-identified anarchist in Occupy Dayton-which there were quite a few. And then there were a whole bunch of other people who were very-they were under a lot of misconceptions of what anarchism is, or could be, or should be. And all they can think about is like the guy with the long mustache and the bomb in his hand. Or like people at the W20 protest, the Black Bloc so to speak. Taking hammers and hammering the hinges of the plate glass on the front of Starbucks, and then pushing in till it falls. And those are the images that the media constructed of anarchism. So then, Occupy in and of itself is this ideologically very anarchist movement. And was from its beginning. I mean you have-God, the constructors of the movement itself. You have academics, one was a Canadian academic. Who's actually been completely raked over the coals for his anarchism, as an academic? But you know people that constructed the idea for the movement, there was a lot of root in anarchism.

For those that were anarchists and participating in Occupy Dayton, it didn't feel that strange. But then the larger and wider Occupy Dayton started to spread itself around, the more you had people coming in that were like-you know-libertarians, very much focused on traditional democratic interest. Or traditional leftist interest. That didn't really mesh very well with the anarchist point of view. I think that did create problems. It created problems in how we responded to things, when issues would develop. There was a lack of cohesive vision, and that really created a lot of problems.

I answer your questions with so many tangents, and I get to the end and I'm like: what the heck was I just talking about?

[We both laugh]

KP: That's all right.

DF: Yea, I mean you'll edit it down to the good stuff anyway, so that's fine.

KP: So in that paper I read, it said there were four original members in Occupy Dayton, and from that it blew up into this protest of hundreds. Who were those first four people?

1:28:56

DF: The first four people would be Shawne Cassiman, who is one of the authors. And Vernalia Randall who is a professor at UD as well. You do see a lot of the original ideological developments coming out of University of Dayton faculty. Christina Hall was somebody that she was already pretty established in like local activist communities. I don't who like the four original people could be though, other than I can think of Vernalia and Shawn. Maybe Karen, but I'm not really sure when Karen came into play. Because I wasn't actually attending general assemblies at first. My husband was, and my oldest son was. So I had a disconnect early on because I had just given birth. We did take him out but it got called quickly, and it limited my mobility early. But that changed as time went on. Babies get older and things get different. As far as I know it was very much coming out of this UD faculty kind of development.

When I arrived with Occupy Dayton, my husband had been going to just local general assemblies every week. We would talk about it, and our kids were engaged with it. We would bring food to the camp. It was—it was pretty interesting. Just for our family. Then when I started showing up to the protest was when I started being involved. And by then it was beyond the four people, that's when you had like hundred and fifty member general assemblies, so to speak. I don't think anyone ever counted—but they estimated.

KP: Were there any people that stand out to you as kind of like core members?

1:31:05

DF: Yea. There definitely was a core that developed over time. I mean you have the people I already mentioned, Christina Hall and Shawne Cassiman and Karen Abbney-kom. Johnathon Galliene developed as a core person over time. Parris Hobbs. All these people, they were the people that showed up at general assemblies. They were once—once general assemblies were not held outside Courthouse Square because it was just too flipping cold to do that anymore. You know, we started having meetings in libraries. Then we had like the space we got down on Third Street. So the core of people that stayed kind of static,

And then you had some people that were kind of part of that core. Like my husband and I couldn't both be in the same place at the same time. He would go to some things, and I would go to some things. So we kind of both participate. And then overtime he started to become less interested and engaging with Occupy. He actually mentally distanced himself far before I did. Even still to this day, he's just like "eh" these people. I'm not interested. And a lot of that—he cannot stand Shawne and Karen.

The triumvirate of Shawne, Karen, and I became a very difficult thing for a lot of other people to appreciate. I think that as time went on, Shawne, Karen, and I—because Vernalia ideologically was there in the beginning. But as time went on, the dominant ideological thrust was coming from academics. You know Shawne, and Karen, and I were all writing about things. We were helping with general assemblies. It became what previewed over time as being—like the steering committee of the entire movement. And I mean that in the sense that they saw it in a very scathing way.

And I can understand that. People that did not have this extensive background in political and social theory, which all three of us did. Probably more so Shawne, that's her major focus area. For me it's a research area for me. So it was never like my dominant interest in life. My Master's degree is actually

much more globally focused than just looking at like local movements. I do look at other things than mostly political theory.

I think that perception was very damaging over time. Because it did make people feel like they were-if they didn't know the lingo of political and social theory, they were outside a lot of conversation that were happening. I really honestly couldn't see that when I was in the middle of Occupy. Looking back now, hindsight being what it is-I look back, I deeply regret being that unaware. It's very elitist in a sense to be in the ideological know how and to not be cognizant that you're controlling things. That is something I think-at least in conversations with Shawne-I think Shawne was very cognizant of that. I'm not sure how Karen feels about that. But, we don't talk anymore. I don't think that's a conversation we'll be having soon.

1:35:00

I have found that Shawne and I converge in some ways. At least because some former people from Occupy Dayton started the-the Circle A Caucus. It used to be the Radical and Revolutionary Caucus, which was like the anarchist caucus in Occupy Dayton. They used to actually meet and have discussion on anarchist, readings, and things of that nature. Ideologically, I think we still converge a little bit. But we're still not meeting, you know. The Circle A Caucus which was like kind like the transitioning from that-that was mostly Jeff Piper and to a lesser extent his wife. She had issues with Shawne and Karen as well. And so-that perception, that's another example of how damning that perception was.

There were also other perceptions that we discussed in like a forum presentation we did. We were looking at gender in Occupy. There was this perception that like-Shawne's not married. But Karen and I-Karen had this boyfriend, Patrick. And my husband they were called lapdogs. Because they were-like feminist males, essentially. There was a scathing accusation they were like lapdogs to these dominating academic women. It's really quite hilarious when you break it all down, and you look at those factors. We actually talked about that on a panel discussion here at Wright State. At the SOCI [?] it was called the Gender-conference:? It's put on by the women's study at Wright State and several other departments. It's like the gender and something something conference. We did a panel presentation on that. And we played the Manarchist video. I don't know if you've seen that. It's pretty funny. It's on YouTube you should look it up. It's basically like this tongue in cheek commentary on things that dude anarchists say. You know like: I've read [Buchanan?] Come on, I'm in the know. We were kind of playing around with gender and looking at how gender comes out in social movements.

1:37:42

Because it is a valid thing to discuss. At least in New York, and to a lesser extent in Dayton-this didn't go over very well in Dayton. But there's this concept known as-something stack my mind is blanking out what is right now-progressive stack. Progressive stack is basically taking people in a local group that are not usually able to speak in American society. Women, the disabled, older people. And it's saying you come to the front. Because you know very often the conversation is dominated by male voices. White male voices is like the perception. And it's saying you come to the front, and you speak first.

Oh, that did not go over well in Dayton-at all. There were a lot of people that were really-a lot of white males-that were insulted by that. Who thought that we were telling them they weren't; allowed to speak. Ever. That we were allowing all these other people to speak instead. So there is this misconception of what privilege means. It did actually sound very much like the rhetoric you're hearing from like the far right now: Multi-culturalism, ugh! They don't need to learn about other cultures! We need to learn about American culture! What about American culture? And why don't we have white

history month? That kind of perspective was really part of that backlash. I think that that made understanding something like progressive stack fairly difficult for people.

1:39:21

I never actually spoke to Vernalia personally about it, but I got the impression that as a person of color, and a female professor from the University of Dayton-I got the impression that she was very disappointed that we could not successfully implement that kind of structure in Occupy Dayton. And you know as time went on, whether she was busy or what, she was not very involved as time went out. That is something I think we failed to address as a group. To our own detriment. There were actually people of color who came to Occupy Dayton events who felt unwelcome, and told us later that they felt unwelcome. Or people who outright had racist things said to them at events. And you know, they came to tell us later about it, and we were just like: My gosh! I don't even know. And most of us are white, and relatively affluent. Whether you're affluent because you're educated, or affluent because you actually had money-most of the people in the core Occupy Dayton had some kind of broader affluence in that way.

And people that had less-like lower levels of education, or people of color, people who were disabled. I don't think they felt as welcome, overtime-in Occupy Dayton. And that---that's something if we were ever to do things as a group again that were more meaningful than dinner parties. That would be something we would have to address I think. Because that's pretty damning for any political or social organization to happen. I mean that doesn't happen in non-profits, at least legally it's not supposed to. There is supposed to be like a balance, as much of an attempted balance as possible. I don't think that we really as cognizant as a group as we could have been.

1:41:33

But that's across the board in Occupy. You can read many very scathing analyses of how well Occupy groups were able to create spaces for people of color. And that's actually very similar to broader agitation efforts everywhere. You know there's Long Ben, an anarchist people of color movement, APOC. That specifically was created to address the fact most anarchists are white and privileged, and they didn't feel welcome. So--perhaps it's a broader issue for everyone.

KP: What was the impact that Occupy had on you?

1:42:11

DF: Well-I stopped-making excuses for things. You know I became very aware that my children were becoming cognizant of social and political issues that were of---contemporary connection to them. It wasn't just: Oh let's look at this social movement from thirty years ago, which you know we'd already done and had this discussions. We looked at the civil rights movements, and we discussed why people have engaged in socio-political movements over history. We've had those discussions in our family. Once I realized: Wow. These are choices being made. What kind of message does it send to your children if you are engaging in protests against-like the---social and political destruction of your planet, essentially. To be very simplistic about it. That's what you're doing. What good does it do to engage in that if you're going to eat at Taco Bell? Right?

I mean you start to think about little things in your life. How can we support corporations less? And we had already a lot of that as a family, and I think it made it easier-but there's still a lot of choices you make in your life where you know, you're not always going to be-able to choose what is the ideologically best choice. Something as simple as going to get coffee. You want to buy a pound of coffee. Coffee is not

really a necessary element to your existence-well depending on how tired you are. At its root, it's not necessary to your existence. You can live a full life without drinking coffee, right? The tack we've always taken is: We'll try to buy fair trade. We do the same thing with chocolate.

Well what about when you go to the store and you've got two kids shopping with you. And you know you can't find the fair trade coffee, and oh my gosh you just want to leave. You're so overwhelmed with grocery shopping and being asked can I get this. Can I have this? Can we go here next? You know-in the past, I think in my own mind it would have been easier to say: Executive decision. I'm just gonna but this coffee that's here. I'm not gonna hunt through the rest of the shelves and find the fair trade coffee. But then once you realize your own children have become incredibly aware of how little decisions are connected to this broader picture. It then becomes a lot harder. And a lot of that-we're vegan. We'd already been having those conversations, just about a different issue. But still, it was harder to say-okay-I'm going to stay true to this all the time. I mean it's always hard. Any decision you make in life is going to come with complex associated consequences.

1:45:28

I mean you can decide not to shop at Walmart because they're a giant corporation destroying the world. But-where do you shop? Target? I mean it's the same thing. Kmart? Perhaps not as bad but then you're choosing the lesser of two or three or four evils. So--I don't know. It does make you want to think about it more I think. And that's how it's really affected me.

1:45:54

I really thought that I wanted to research Occupy more. I did. And-I, my thesis started to become very focused on Occupy and I was thinking about new terminology. Like I was really excited about-I felt like its universalism. I kept trying to find this new word to protests that has such a global perspective, and a global implication. It's very close to like cosmopolitanism. Universalism to an extent. It's looking at these issues that have become important to people on a global scale. I find that very fascinating, but also very limiting. And I frustrated myself for a long time trying to do that research. Constantly hitting brick walls-going I have no words yet. There are no words in political science to describe universal movements-without using the word universal which is really inaccurate, and at best flawed.

So, I don't know. It changed me in the sense that I began to see-without action-we really are not going to be able to fix the mess we're in. I think it was easy for a long time, particularly when my older children were very small, it was easier to engage with issues on a smaller scale. To sign petitions and ask other people to sign petitions, and go and hold a sign for a while-or whatever that it would do. It felt like that was effective, and I think that turning point of Occupy for me-personally-to realize how ineffective most of that had really been. Because ultimately canvassing for the Green party did nothing. Standing and holding a sign protesting the Iraq War did nothing. Choosing not to buy things from Walmart did nothing. Even if I'm not able to be physically in mass scale civil and political resistance, like non-violent direct action. I can't kiss my kids goodbye and sit down on the front lawns to be gassed. I mean---eh-that's not going to happen. I think that was actually a moment of terror for me. Realizing I've been engaged in this civil and political action that is completely ineffective. And the only thing that is ultimately-I think-going to be effective is mass non-violent direct action. I mean that's it. That's the only answer. And seeing that, realizing that, and realizing that I really lack the ability to engage in that, it's very humbling in a lot of ways. It made me feel more or less than do much more than write about it. And-go to meetings. Which is-not really a perfect solution at all. So-yea. Hope and dismay. Simultaneously. That's Occupy for me.

KP: So I'm just gonna ask you like one more question, 'cause we're working on two hours and I don't want to keep sitting down for-

1:49:42

DF: Wow! Hey, I didn't feel like two hours, if that's any consolation. I don't know if it felt like it was more time for you but-yeah.

KP: Just from like a historical perspective, what was 2011 like?

DF: Whew. Well 2011, I know to quote Time and Newsweek, the year of the protester. And it really was. It was a year that we saw global protest, and it did ideologically begin in other places. I mean what went down in Tunisia, and all of the-the kind outburst of protests that happened for other reasons. There was that guy with the fruit cart in Tunisia-I can never say that country name correctly. You can write it up though, that'll be fine. It was a localized issue that represented a broader issue. And you .see that happening all across the globe in 2011. So, it was a very exciting year. There was a lot of ambition, and hope, and excitement. Everyone wanted to change the world. It was like-what I imagined the '60s must have been like, toward the end. When people were like let's stop this world, let's change all these things about the way our world functions. That kind of mass engagement, I felt like people were really into that. And that was an important turning point. You take a population of people that get excited over the latest movie that's come out, or a new Oreo flavor. It's very interesting for those people to get excited about what's happening in their world. So it was kind of like a mass awakening in a lot of ways. So that in and of itself was valuable, and really is kind of the theme of 2011. It's the big waking up.

Even if you were just-I'm thinking of you right now. You didn't participate in Occupy buy you watched it. You were engaged with it. You were interested in the outcome, whatever your opinion was going to be. You were interested in what was happening. That's just amazing-that you have this whole year-well at the end of the year. Well no, I take that back because everything that was happening worldwide was happening across the course of the year. I mean Occupy was kind of the footnote at the end really.

1:52:59

A scathing examination could be that 2011 was the year that Americans and Europeans finally realized the world was becoming a bizarrely constructed place. They weren't able to find jobs, or buy as many things as usual and-my gosh. Worldwide protest! That's kind of tongue in cheek of course, but really that kind of is true when you think about it, You know Americans and Europeans living in some of the richest countries on the planet, they didn't' really realize how bad things had gotten until it started to affect them.

When it was no longer not out of your backyard, it was harder to ignore. Whereas in 1999 it was fairly easy to ignore the problems of globalization. Because it doesn't really affect you. You 're still getting gas for cheap. And you know, you're still able to find a job---mostly. And so American and European societies had not been affected yet. Really the late 2000s, mid 2000s I guess. Such an awkward decade to describe-the double thoughts. How do you even talk about it? The economic crash in the United States and Europe-and of course it's not just the United States and Europe, it affected the entire globe. I think it was the first time that a lot of formerly seamlessly affluent people started to realize there were ripples in the pond, and things were not what they were before. That's really the culmination of that is in 2011. What started becoming problematic in 2007 and 2008 and 2009-at least for the global affluent-started becoming critical in 2011.

So awareness-yes.

KP: I know we are only two months into it, but what's 2014 like?

DF: Ohhh, I don't know yet, you know-

1:54:54

KP: Or how have things changed in two or three years?

DF: I think that focus is shifted now. People have returned to single issues now. People are interested in protecting the integrity of the internet. They're interested in-like fracking right now. Especially when there has been massive chemical spills, and massive oil spills. So I think that things have become more issued focused, than they've become mass focused. Do you understand what I'm saying? It's like people are looking at their local communities and the local issues, or the issues that interest them the most. And they're not really trying to do it all as much anymore. And so I kind of see that continuing in 2014. You know, people are very upset about the chemical spills in--Carolinas, I think it was? Recently. They are concerned about the integrity of their own water supplies. And fracking is becoming a huger issue than it was before. It was kind of a footnote issue in like 2011, 2012. But now that we've had like fracking accidents happen, and water supplies damaged, now people are like: Oh, not so great!

1:56:34

Probably the largest global issue still gripping imaginations is Fukushima right now. And that's like the elephant in the room that nobody's talking about. No news station is spending very much time on it all. And then we have all these like possibly qualified independent news reports coming out of California of like-you know-of massive radiation exposure. And then you have people coming out and saying: No it's fine, you can have all this radiation exposure. And I don't think people even know what to think about that issue now. It's becoming a little dicey in some people's heads.

So I don't know. Things feel relatively stable, relatively unstable. In terms of civil and political protest---! don't know. The Zapatistas I've researched, looking from their own perspective in Central American, and they're in Mexico. And they've emerged discussing the same things they've been discussing for the past twenty years. Which is the same thing Occupy has been discussing. I don't know-anti-globalization movements have been discussing for twenty years.

I think we still have a lot of potential there that can be unlocked. But we're still treading water at this point in time. I mean most people still have jobs. Most people still have food. Most people are able to live relatively comfortably. At least the people having these political conversations are mostly living pretty comfortably. Even the poorest of us are living relatively comfortable. Although it's changing in that regard as well. I say most, and I say it perhaps out of ignorance. As soon as I heard the words come out of my mouth, I was like: Are we really? I mean we have rising levels of unemployment. I can think of people in my own community that are feeling the pinch of the continued economic downturn. Downturn sounds like a temporary dip, hoping for a rise in the future. I'm not so sure we're going to have that rise.

So I don't know, I wish I could see that yet. I think that people are pretty complacent in 2014 though. We have sports, movies. It's funny-we homeschool-we were doing a lesson on Rome. We were talking about bread and circus. We had three consecutive lessons that discussed the giving away of the grain and how important that was. All of the different types of sports you would have in the coliseum. It's really impressive when you think about it. The people of Rome did not feel that differently than say the people

in the United States feel right now. Whether or not it's an empire, or if it's even comparable. There are some critics that say that it is, and some that say it is not.

But regardless you can look around you and you can tell most people are not going to engage in a mass uprising. Because they have food to eat, and entertainment. They don't want to rock their boats. It's really dire to say this, but I don't think people are really going to care until there's like mass starvation and like martial law. Things that really dramatic apocalyptic things that like I don't see happening in this country. I really honestly see a bunch of mediocrity. And we just continue getting excited when we see things like the Olympics and the World Cup. And that's life.

KP: How do you think people are going to remember Occupy?

2:0:50

DF: Well that's all a matter of perspective right? Police officers who took a very negative view of Occupy that never did anything but give me a lot of overtime hours. People involved in Occupy may see it as last great outpouring of hope. You know people that-really wanted to see Occupy succeed, and now feel that it has failed, may see it as a forgone chance. I don't think most people really think much about Occupy though. If you talk to your average person on the street who has not had very much awareness or involvement in socio-political movements in general. Occupy was a bunch of people who got in a park, and sat there, and didn't leave. And that's it for them. You know--or they were ineffective. Or-you know-they were a bunch of privileged trust fund babies that took their iPhones and Nike shoes and went out to protest, and tweeted about it with selfies from the event.

Like there is this very disparaging viewpoint of Occupy. For a lot of people that didn't go to general assemblies and didn't participate in conversations, it was very easy for them to form their own perceptions of Occupy that were very negative. I think that is very similar to assessments that you saw of civil and political movements in the 1960s. The dirty and stinky hippies are out there with their long hair and their flowers and they were doing something. And-you know-you just wanted them to cut their hair right and get a job. You are always going to have this traditionalist versus modernist viewpoint-tension--develop over time. It's a different kind of change. Its cultural change. And cultural change is disruptive, and it's messy, and it's often very divisive.

2:3:30

Culture is probably more divisive as it has ever been. Because we have so much of it now. We can access information, we can spread information so quickly. I don't know if you use Facebook every day, it's incidentally one, two, three, four, five, six, seven. I'm mad about this. I'm excited about this. Whatever People are very emotionally connected to whatever issues they're interested in. I don't know how well that is going to go over time.

That was actually one of the scathing assessments of Occupy Dayton. That over time Occupy Dayton started to rely on Facebook groups, and conversations happening on these Facebook groups. Rather than meeting together and having the implementation of consensus models on a Facebook group. You have admins-you have hierarchies-at least two or three people, or at least one person who makes the decisions for everything in the group. Then you have people participating in conversations and whether they are allowed to speak is based very much on what the admins think of them. So you have that kind of develop. You have these various hierarchal models in place on Face book. One of the assessments of that is that you created inequalities there. And not only created them, but made them concrete. People

said: Oh it's so cold, why don't we just have a meeting on Facebook, instead of actually getting together in the streets in this public sphere? And that was a mistake. Really it was quite tragic.

Because Occupy Dayton had this space on Third Street. They were able to have a meeting space and be involved with this local community church which was doing some amazing things in their own right down on Third Street. And-I don't know. I think some people---especially people from the suburbs didn't want to go to the--this like church on Third Street because they felt it was like unsafe. There was that perception that I heard articulated a few times. There were mold issues, you know, simple as you go and you're allergic to mold its not very pleasant,

2:6:10

But it was a space. It was a public space. Not utilizing that space in favor of utilizing Facebook created a lot of-I can't think if a way to describe it-it created dissent amongst people more than it created a shared conversation. Because people are quite different on Facebook than they are in real life. I mean people-it's called the disinhibition conflict or disinhibition effect. I don't remember that got put forth. But it was someone talking about online interaction-I think we discussed it in the paper we wrote together. It's where people-they don't feel inhibited to be cruel or be. really snotty to other people in an online context. Even though it's very obvious you're not anonymous when you have a name and people know each other and they're all part of this group on Facebook. You're not saying it to their face, you're saying it to this posting board. People tend to be ruder than I think they would be otherwise-and that's myself included, to not point fingers.

KP: That was one of the original questions I wanted to ask you, the role of social media. It sounds like it brought you guys together in the beginning.

2:7:30

DF: Yea-it was good. It was. Because having a tiny baby, I really appreciated being able to discuss things without taking that tiny baby into the cold or leaving them behind with a bottle of breast milk. For somebody like me-there were people with similar issues. Not wanting to be out in the cold. There were disabled people. There were people that didn't have transportation who couldn't take it down to a general assembly, or who worked on the weekends.

It-its circumventing things from people from being equal by using inequality to do it. Because not everyone can access Facebook. If you don't have a computer in your hand or in your house-it is elitist. That was a main criticism early on. If you take the general assembly out of the public sphere, the face to face sphere, you're limiting your discussion to people that only get on Facebook. And it's true, you are. That's not even including all the things Facebook created. That in and of itself is an elitist decision of that. I don't think everyone was comfortable with that, especially people who had a heightened awareness of subtle social issues like that. Something as simple as where you got your internet. Was it in your hand or you're house. Or the library. Or at a friend's house. We never really fully addressed that and probably should have.

KP: If you think do a timeline, like this was when Occupy Dayton started, this is when it got big, this is when it started to decline.

2:9:30

DF: Well things were all through October and November and December of 2011,

things were very, very active. That was probably the peak of Occupy Dayton. And then in 2012 things started to decline, they were already in serious decline by early 2012. Because we went to a conference in May, 2012, and by that point in time I was already starting to feel really strange. Continuing to publish and talk about Occupy. The local Occupy was barely meeting at all. We were still meeting, there were still meetings taking place. But by the end of 2012, things were pretty much done. They had fractioned off into small groups. There were serious disagreements by that point and the personal issues had become pretty serious by the end of 2012. So I would say by the time 2013 started, the only thing that remained--were things like the caucus meetings and the dinner meetings. Were just like dinner club affairs, get together. Let's talk about stuff--or not. It wasn't very political at all. But yea-2012. By the time 2012 closed out that's what it was.

Oh yea-and March against Monsanto. Which was never really an Occupy Dayton thing. It was more of a individuals participating in this broader movement that existed exterior to Occupy Dayton. And that's what it is now.

So there is still an Occupy Dayton Facebook page. I'm an admin on it, and I believe Shawne is an admin on it, and then a handful of people who never post anything are admins on it. I know Shawne posts a lot and I try to post a lot. But you're really just sharing the same information. It's really just like a public forum for news articles, and pictures, and memes. That's what Occupy Dayton is now.

Which is not necessarily a bad thing. If you locally can't sustain a full scale movement which we really couldn't in 2012 we had the ALEC protest. There was a local meeting-

2:12:00

KP: What's ALEC?

DF: ALEC is a group of banks and corporations and special interest groups that are focused on making the laws that are for corporate interest it's like a coalition that does. They're really pretty rabid. They go out and completely and destroy and lay low local structures that promote-the interests of people. That is probably the simplest way to describe it. They try to find loophole laws and they try to make sure that corporate interests are going to be able to always get along. And so they're kind of like-not a club--but like a professional organization for corporations basically. They network and they go and they lobby law makers and they try to make corporate interests able to get into the channels they need to get through. It's very closely to the conference of citizens united, you know corporations are people.

So there was this big protest we planned. We planned like gorilla theatre. This was in I'd say-February 2012-it's whenever they had the ALEC meeting. And we had like gorilla theatre, and we went out and did this midday performance of it. It was like ten people. I wasn't even able to be there. I participated in the planning, and the painting of the props. I made the sashes that people wore. I was teaching during the day. We have work and school and things we had to do, and it was like in noon, right down at Courthouse Square. I think like hardly anyone even noticed. We made a YouTube video and put it up and like fifty people looked at it or something.

2:14:40 Things of that scale. It's really hard to continue ramping up interest to do things like that if you don't really have much of an effect when you do them. If like ten people pay attention. Eventually you're not going to want to put all that energy into something no one really seems to care about. And so as time went on and the process

became more difficult-like process became really hard for people to make group decisions together in 2012. People were getting frustrated because in their perspective, their ideas were not being heard. Because we had this unspoken cobble that dominated everything-it did dominate the conversation. It dominated whose proposals were heard. It dominated whether those proposals were able to turn into concrete actions. Because there was kind of a group think mentality. If one's friends, everyone wants their ideas and proposals to work. Then one person comes in and says oh that's outlandish we'll never be able to do that. When really if you go back and look at those ideas they were pretty reasonable. It just became difficult for people to that were kind of that unspoken core that unspoken cobble to open up to those outside ideas.

And that's normal I think for like any kind of social groups. You know like I watched it develop in like boy scouts. I used to be a Boy Scout mentor and that developed. At the day camps. You would have like these kind-I hesitate to natural hierarchies-but I guess in essence they kind of are. They are natural forming hierarchies that dominate social interaction. You know it happens in the derby team I'm a part of. It happen in kids' activities. My kids did ballet at the studio they went, absolutely there were hierarchies that emerged over time. So---I don't know. I'm rambling again. [Laughs]

I think we have a long way to go. I really do. I really appreciate what Occupy was able to---on the whole. I appreciate the conversation that was introduced for everyone. I'm hopeful that we can find better ways to improve social interaction.

2:17:15

Because that was really at the heart of Occupies quote unquote failure. Anywhere you saw failure, 99 times out of 100, you can find some kind of failure on the part of the people to be able to organize together. I think this is something that has been recognized in social and political movements for years. Which is why community building is often such a huge part of social and political movements. Because it's recognized that if you don't have that strong foundation, eventually once there is really work to do, you're not gonna be able to do it. You're not gonna be able to be an active participants. And without active participants you don't have a movement, really. I think that-that's just the way movements work.

2:18:30

Hopefully in the future, I think people from Occupy Dayton are still talking, and they're still engaging- perhaps not in the same ways but-things change. Movements evolve. I mean you if you take something as landmark as the civil rights movement, I mean the civil rights movement didn't happen overnight. And it didn't develop and explode and then decline overnight either. And yea-I think we are often too hard on ourselves in the modern day. We expect everything to be instantaneous, and we expect everything to be perfect and to happen fast. You know that's part of what's wrong with our discourse right now.

2:19:15

From my own perspective in the United States and I don't know about those other subtleties in the other states as well-at least in the U.S. we're in need of being okay with failure. Which on the whole we're not. We want all kids do to well on standardized tests. Like we were going to bludgeon that education into them anyone they we can. We can't have models look like they actually look, we have to airbrush them to perfection. If apples in the supermarket aren't perfectly red and perfectly shaped, we tend not to choose them. It's kind of scathing number of issues that all mean the same thing. We have unrealistic expectations for how our society is going to run on a day to day level. We just want everything. And we've done nothing.

KP: So, is there any thoughts that you want to get into before we start to wrap this up?

2:20:30

DF: I am actually curious about what you're impressions of Occupy were. Because you were watching and you were engaged. You know, what did you think Occupy was going to be?

KP: Turning the tables-

DF: I'm honestly curious, because I find it fascinating you were not part of a movement but you're fascinated by it and you're interested in it. So what did you think was gonna happen?

KP: I thought it was going to go somewhere. I remember watching on the webcams like I was telling you before I started recording. I remember it was exciting. It was like something was really going on. Something really important was going and people, all these thoughts that people had been thinking about b;mks-just the whole feel of the country at the time. We were in the middle of a recession. And people were angry. And everyone was kind of on that same wave. And it was cool seeing people going out and doing something about it. Because that's kind of one my peeves about things.

2:21:50

Just to put it this way, I used to work at the physical plant when I went to college as an undergrad. I even worked at the physical plant here for a while. Working on the grounds department and people would just litter their trash everywhere. Trash--! mean they couldn't even bother to throw their stuff away in a trash can. You know? And that bothers me. And I'm like these people are going to universities and going to colleges and they can't bother to take their McDonalds bag and throw it in a trash can and they are supposed to be our future leaders.

So it was really exciting to see someone get up and start doing something about it-

D F:--Indeed-

KP: And then it just kind of fizzled out.

DF: Its interesting, the analogy you're making right there is pretty much at the heart of what social political movements are. Its people doing something, and not just being willing to be complacent. And yea-I agree. It was very exciting.

2:22:40

KP: Like I've been-I've exchanged a couple emails with a guy in Occupy Youngstown-

DF: [Laughs]

KP: --and it seems like Occupy started out as as a like grassroots movement, and then it got big, and it got popular, and now-what remains of it has kind of gone of back to a grassroots movement.

2:23:18

DF: Yea, that's true. Youngstown I think is where they're putting together a collection-like an Occupy-I forget what they-I think it's just a collection of articles and stories. I know the last falling out that Shawne and Karen and I had was when-if it's the same individuals-I don't know if it is--we were

contacted by these individuals putting together our collection and they originally wanted us to submit the article we had written to their collection, but they wanted us to like revise it a little bit to fit the collection. And so we were working on doing that and then they said-no-can you just write something completely different? And so we started getting together and talking about it and writing about it and then-you know there's a personal issue that developed and everything went [phew]. I contacted that publisher and said like hey: I'm totally not working with these two people anymore, and they're going to do their own thing. 'Cause we weren't using the paper we had all written together, so they could just co-author their own paper together right? And I was like I just want to let you know I'm pulling out right now. I'm not involved any more. And they were like well: Would you like to write an article? And I was like-yea-I don't know if I could do that. I tried initially. The turnaround time was really short. It was weeks or something. But it was like write this thirty page paper in four weeks-you know. And so I started too, and I was writing about the topic of "Is Occupy dead" actually. That was the topic I started researching and writing about. And then it just got to the point I was like. I don't even have time for this. There is no way I'm gonna be able to pull this off. There is no amount of all-nighters that are going to make this happen. I was like: Sorry for you and your collection. And me. But I can't.

I don't know if they actually went on to publish an article-I think it was Youngstown. I'll have to look back in my emails and I'll forward you the contact if I find it.

DF: Very nice people. They were trying to get together this academic co-action. Like a written history of Occupy they were angling at.

2:25:24

KP: The whole reason I ended up getting in touch with them is that one of them was a librarian and he kind of put together an oral history project. But his were more like short, like ten minute long talks-like videos. It's called like the People's Library. You could probably google it and find out.

2:25:36

DF: So like the People's Library in New York City? Like kind of like that same thought process?

KP: Yea, that same process. And I was just wondering like how he went about doing it-

DF: --interesting-

KP: --and why he choose to do it in the way he was doing. It and that's what started that whole conversation.

DF: That's how happen things happen though right? You start a conversation, and that's where it goes. I mean and-I really do hope more people from Occupy Dayton get in touch with you. Because I think there are also--differences in the stories. And I think it's viable to have all of those, or as many of them as possible. Of course you can't get everybody but-I think that it would be interesting to get some of the voices that were not heard as much over time. Because I'm pretty sure my voice, and Karen's voice, and Shawne's voice were very well heard over the scope of Occupy Dayton.

I personally would be interested in seeing like what Vernalia Randall had to say at this point in time. I don't know how much time she has to get together, but it might be worth contact her. Because she was

really one of the original ideologues of the movement. And her reasons for-as a person of color-for not being very happy with the way things were going in Occupy Dayton I think are very important. And not discussed as often as they should. She's doing work on the schools to prison pipeline right now in Ohio. Like the private prisons issues. So she's continued to engage, like everyone else has in their own issues that they've been working on.

I think a lot of people that were activists before Occupy Dayton are still activists. I think I probably do more derby now more than anything else but-you know. I-don't really have the heart to sustain a movement any more. And I think that for me, that was what happened for me. Towards the end, after things were so bitter, and like these people-these women that I considered my friends-were-they'd just become like these very different people than I thought that they were. And that really left a bad taste in my mouth. It made me start to disengage more. Chris had already disengaged, a lot.

2:28:40

DF: He distanced himself from Occupy Dayton. And I held on because come on, I was publishing. It was very easy to want to stay invested and to want it to work. It's kind of like a bad relationship. You so desperately want it to work out, because if it fails-you've basically made this bigger idea fail. I mean if Occupy Dayton failed then-the whole world is not gonna be saved. That's what it feels like after a while. I think-at least from my perspective-towards the end-I was making more excuses for Occupy than anything else. I was like it will get better. It will be better next year. We won't have so many personal issues. No it's not just rubber stamping. Come on, we're talking about important issues. Really no we weren't.

We were forming the same kinds of hierarchies that existed in the non-occupy world, and that we wanted to ideologically destroy, but we weren't really doing that. We were just kind of recreating these same models-and that was very sobering in a lot of ways. Because I personally wanted Occupy to be so much more than this. Watching it fail on a local scale was actually worse than watching it fail in like the national scale, or the global scale. Because it's one thing to watch a camp get destroyed. I mean you realize that everyone engaged in the building of that camp knowing they were-you know-they were walking a fine line between acceptable agitation and unacceptable agitation. And you realized that. And you knew it wouldn't be forever. There was a sense of impermanence to that camp setting, but-I think that in the local sense, in the building of that community, to see that fail was really-for me it was pretty devastating.

I mean because-it's like a child, right? You participated in the creation of this amazing thing and then just watched it like-slowly spin out of control until it was lying drunk in the gutter. Not doing anything with its life. I mean that's what it felt like. So-jeesh, waxing poetic about Occupy Dayton. Something I haven't done in a while.

2:30:38

But it's hard to separate that out, and I think that we tend to be very sterile-you know we have our groups that we are members of. We tend to be like we are all going to be professional. We are not going to have any personal connection. But it's all personal connection when you think about it, right? It's just that we have this sense of being polite, and being like-towing the line. You know? We're-that's not even an accurate way to say it. You know what I'm saying though? You have this sense of everyone needs to link arms, even if things are terribly. It's like the group think mentality, but it's out of like, you have this desperate hope. You want it to work. And then when it doesn't, it's just awful. But-any way.

KP: Anything else?

2:32:12

DF: No, I think that's a pretty good synopsis of how I feel about Occupy. That's-a wonderful idea. How to implement it? Well-you know that's yet to be seen. I don't think we've succeeded yet. So-maybe this year? 2014 will be the year. I don't think so though. I honestly don't think we're going to find it within ourselves as Americans to organize until things are really bad. So saying that I could even foresee something like Occupy again, and being successful, would be to say that-you know-I want to see things get worse. But-you know-that's actually been a topic of a lot of conversations I've been having lately. Especially about issues like the farm bill and the food stamps issue. Issues of security. Issues of internet neutrality.

You know these kinds of conversations-people are so complacent that they're not really going to be able to revolt until things are really bad. And-that's a pretty dire reality when you think about it. Because who in their right mind wants to get to that point? I mean at some point, if like, if things continue to degrade in the manner that they are, I mean at some point we're not going to have a choice. Eventually the-houses of cards that have been constructed will simply fall to pieces. You will have to respond to the situation as it exists. I don't think we're voluntarily headed down that path. Because we're-human beings. We're creatures of---of-that we're creatures that seek comfort. You know we want-we want a nice warm bed and-technology and-running water. I mean that's pretty sad that it breaks down to that. But I think if you look at history, that's been the downfall of every social-political movement that ever existed. Is that-people want to maintain the existing status quo. At least the part that benefits them.

So you're fighting a really uphill battle there right? But yea-that my assessment of Occupy.

KP: All right.

DF: [Laugh!>]

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