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David Hurwitz interview for a Wright State University History Course

Elise Kelly

David Hurwitz

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On March 1st, 2011, I interviewed David Hurwitz at Sinclair Community College. We conducted the interview in Sinclair's Library. David Hurwitz was born on September 11, 1947 in Butler, Pa. David comes from a Jewish family, that at were involved in activism as much as he is. During the interview, David tells how being raised by his father who was open and influential in activist in the community influenced him to become an activist. David graduated from Butler HS in 1965. David went to Ohio University and received a bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education (with a minor in fine arts & photography). David married in 1970, and began teaching in Dayton Public Schools in 1971. My first son, Eli, was born in 1972. In 1973-74 I went to Greeley Colorado and obtained a Master's Degree in Reading and Outdoor Education. In 1977 my  
2. 3/1/20011MartellBurleson Interview of David Hurwitz.
second son Sam was born, but we did not adopt him until 1980. In 1978 my 3rd son, Max, was born. Also at that time I taught part time at Sinclair CC, and the University of Dayton. In 1979 I started teaching at Wright State University. David retired from teaching on June 13, 2008 after 35 years of teaching.

In college David became a full time protestor as he took an anti-war war approach to the Vietnam War even though his own father was pro-war. David also protested against the wars in Central America, and both wars in Iraq. Wars is not the only thing David protested. David also protested for abortion clinics, environmental issues, civil rights and, education and race issues. David will to protest comes from his belief that we are all connected. We are all a part of the great cosmic ONE. Call it god, nature, or whatever; we are all inescapably linked with everything else in the universe – biologically, chemically, physically, politically, and economically!

2. 3/1/20011MartellBurleson Interview of David Hurwitz.
Oral History Interview

Name of the Project: Professional Protestor: An Oral History Interview with David Hurwitz

Name of the project director: Marjorie McLellan, Department of Urban Affairs and Geography, Wright State University

Interviewee/narrator name David Hurwitz

Interviewer name Martell Burleson

Others present

Place Sinclair Community College Library

Date 03/01/11

Length of recording: 1:12:41

Original format: m4a

Key words:
Activism
Vietnam
Civil rights
Father
Protest Community Service
Jewish
Draft Count
Teacher
Environmental

Indexed by Martell Burleson

Index

0:00:00-0:00:35 Introduction to the recording.
Information listed above.

0:00:35-0:07:58 Early life
Grew up in a small town in Pennsylvania his parents started him in activism talks about his first experience and raise charity money. He was a boy scout, fought for Civil rights. Talks about when he really started protesting in college, and goes over some of his earlier careers and summarizes his teaching career

Keywords:
Sisters of Charity
Immigrant
Italians
Holy Thursday
Good Friday

0:07:58-0:09:29 College Years
Talks about is career choice, and why he switched majors. Talks about the fields he got his degree in

MAJOR

Spanish

0:09:29-0:20:18 Current activism
talks about the new collective bargaining senate bill, also trying to improve world-wide human rights, also
talks about international politics, and international environmental issues. Also talks about the over population and women’s right and abortion issues. Talks about his motivation for activism. How his Family affects his activism. David gives his views on capitalism. Talks about his Family support.

**Keywords:**
- Human rights
- Environmental protection
- Abortion
- Women rights
- Wars
- Israel
- Palestinian
- Jewish
- Abortion clinic
- Selfish
- Over Population
- Capitalism
- Economics.
- Marriage
- Literacy.
- Project read

0:20:18- 0:32:23 Vietnam: College Vietnam protesting. Didn’t think we belong there and he let it belong. Talks about how people don’t care about the war issues here.

**Keywords:**
- Vietnam
- College protesting
- Economic interest
- Puppet government
- Gulf of Tonkin Resolution
- Johnson Administration
- Supportive
- Anti-War Movement
- Democrat
- Sixties
- Iraq
- Conservative
- Father
- Pro-war
- New york and friend service Committee

0:32:23- 0:41:46 Activism Timeline
We just sum up the interview by giving general timeline of his Accomplishments that deal with activism or protesting.

**Keywords:**
- War Protestors
- The Movement
- Civil Rights movement
- March on Washington
- Break
- Family
- West side of Dayton
- Peace Core
- Wright State
- Anti-nuclear
- Central American War
- Bush Iraq War

0:43:10- 0:53:15 Hispanic Community’s needs and what American citizens can do to help them
She explains what the Hispanic immigrant’s main concerns are, which included legalization and discrimination. Describes the difficulties the immigrants face having to put their spiritual life and values on hold while living in a different country. (Don’t get married, while here because family not here. Would wait to get married after go back to their home country). Discusses the talks she gives about welcoming the immigrant. Also, explains what Anglos can do to reach out and help the Hispanic community.

**Keywords:**
Legalization
Discrimination
Human Rights
Legal Rights
Money
Faith
Values
Dayton Police Chief Richard Biehl
Combine Pastoral-Welcoming the Stranger among Us
Mexican and U.S. Bishops
Immigrants
East Dayton
Hospitality
Worshipping
Teach English
Lou Dobbs

0:53:15-1:12:41 Director of Catholic Hispanic Ministry of Dayton
She discusses the most interesting programs and events that she’s involved with. Explains the frustrations she faces when doing community work for Hispanics and what she does to overcome these obstacles. Explains how the Catholic Hispanic Ministry has changed over the time she’s been director and discusses the most gratifying contributions. Lastly, discusses the lessons she has carried away from involvement with community and the advice she would give someone who is working in the similar field.

**Keywords:**
Way of the Cross
Our Lady of Guadalupe, the Mañanitas (the night before)
Mexican youth dance groups
Health Clinics
HIV/AIDS Testing
9/11
Lou Dobbs
Anti-Immigrant
Civil Rights
Government
Oral History Interview

Name of the Project: Professional Protestor: An Oral History Interview with David Hurwitz

Name of the project director: Marjorie McLellan, Department of Urban Affairs and Geography, Wright State University

Interview transcript

Martell: First Question is do you want to tell the listeners how you got involved with community issues?

David: I grew up in a small town in Pennsylvania. My parents were active in community issues they felt it important and those types of issues were important so I carry them on

Martell: Do you just want to tell me about your childhood and maybe some particular experiences that made you want to get involved in community issues.

David: I grew up in a small town in Pennsylvania middle upper middle class family I remember one incident when I was young it was my older brother’s paristfia so I must have been eight or nine and my parents were having people over I knew but I forgot what the charity was but I stood at the bottom of the steps where the bathrooms was and charged people to go upstairs for the charity and it was kind of my idea to do that.

Martell: What are some obstacles or some challenges you face in doing community work

David: Well anytime I try to get people involved to protest the war or protest some action I thought was wrong by the government, getting people to come out in get involved people may be supportive but they’re not motivated to stand outside with a sign you know that kind of thing so getting people involved is one. Sometimes restriction, I remember one time I was at a rally and I was holding a sign that a police officer thought was holding inappropriate it was a Pro-choice sign even those against abortion have worse sign, mines was a picture of a woman who died from an illegal abortion. It was disgusting but it was supposed to be but at the same time the other side was showing pictures of cut up fetuses, the police officer made me take my sign down my alternative was to go to jail even though the officer was wrong at the time.

Martell: What are some obstacles or some challenges you face in doing community work

David: What are some things can you do to get people out and involved in activism

David: Good question because I’m not sure about what I would do.

Martell: Ok so was you always involved in community activism or were there other things or careers you did before.

David: I did something’s growing up, I was a boy scout and did some community things, but I really got involve with activism when I went to college during the Vietnam war and the civil rights movements those two things and my hometown got involved and my
father got active African Americans couldn’t get a haircut in my town they had to go thirty miles away and i remember Julian Vaughn came to my house cause my dad brought him to be an activist, my father was very involved in the community he would get awards for his community service I remember onetime he was going to get a award at this country-club but that didn’t accept Jews and my dad said no we are not going to have it there and it was that kind of attitude that wore off on me. Then in college I use to protest the war and doing draft counts after that it continue when I moved to Dayton in the early seventies teaching and doing activism and doing both environmental and etc.

**Martell:** When you say teaching do mean just like telling people or was you an actual teacher?

**David:** I started teaching in Dayton public schools in the early seventies. I taught for a couple years then I went in got my master’s degree in Colorado came back taught another couple years at an outdoor education center and a environmental education center taught another year in Dayton, taught another couple of years at Central State. And for the last thirty years I taught at wright state. Then I retired from Wright State

**Martell:** What was your field of study when you were in college?

**David:** I started off thinking I was going to be a doctor but that changed real quickly floundered for a while deciding what I wanted to do. Decided I was going to be a teacher I was going to do it by first getting a bachelor’s degree fine art and photography and sculpture but then Richard Nixon became president. See what I was going to do was get my bachelor’s degree and then enter the teacher’s core but when Nixon came in he eliminated that so I switched my major to elementary education. When I got to graduate school my masters was in outdoor education and reading which is a combination of using natural resources and the environment to teach.

**Martell:** What are some of the issues of today that you are actively promoting or protesting?

**David:** Well the big one right now is the senate bill five that the republicans want to push through that has to deal with collective bargaining. They all center on human rights and that’s the main issue and human rights worldwide you know things that affect people’s ability to try and built community. Obviously the wars civil rights in the Middle East for the Palestinians as a Jew I’m supposed to support Israel but I believe what Israel is doing is wrong how they are treating the Palestinians. You know the environment is important we as a species are killing are planet. You know it’s all about making this a better place to live. Another part of that is I use to escort an abortion clinic, and the issue of population how we are effecting the planet by over populating but it’s also a women’s right issue. Which is another issue that is important, making restrictions on abortion all it does is kill women, and it doesn’t reduce the number of abortion.

**Martell:** Would you say you motivation for activism has changed over time?

**David:** I was pretty selfish, not being a Vietnam War protestor in the sixties wasn’t one of the most popular things; People go into groups with people that they wanted to be with, so part of my motivation then was a social thing, who I wanted to hang out and that kind of thing. My motivation I’m, that now I’m stronger in my belief that we need to help each other so I think it’s less selfish motivation then it used to be.

**Martell:** You said how your parents affected you growing up, do you think being a parent affected you involvement in activism today?
David: Yes absolutely that’s why a part of it is why i do it, is that I want my grandkids to have a decent world to grow up in and if we keep destroying our planet we are not going to have anything left. If the economic situation, the political situation, and the environmental situation keeps deteriorating from what it used to be from greed and selfishness that what unfortunately motivates what happens.

Martell: What do you see as some of your most satisfying contribution or accomplishments?

David: Well one thing that I do now that I really like and this goes along with my economic thing, is I have a pickup truck that I decorated is like art truck, and park it places and put a whole bunch of books in the back, with a sign that says free books and I give the out around the neighborhoods and so on that’s satisfying to see people be able, and that encourage literacy. See part of the idea is I work with an organization called project read which provide literacy tutors for what we trying to do if you can read a book and teach to another person to read maybe you can become a literacy tutor.

Martell: Can you remember the first major event that you protested.

David: In college Vietnam and we also started the first Earth Day as well.

Martell: Can you tell us just for a historical reference what exactly what you were protesting against during Vietnam? What your gripe was?

David: I just didn’t think we belong in the war Vietnam. I thought we were over there again just like most of our wars have been to support business interest not really protecting democracy over there. We were destroying the Vietnamese people. Ho Ching Ming had helped us during World War II. Against the Japanese then the French were in there in the fifties then the Vietnamese kicked them out but we wanted our business interest protected so we stepped in set up a puppet government. We didn’t belong there in the first place. The excuse that was given the gulf of Tonkin never happened it was a lie the war was based off a falsehood and over fifty thousand Americans died over a war that should have never been.

Martell: For people who may not be familiar what was it that you just said was a lie?

David: the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. An attack on an American war ship in the Gulf of Tonkin which is off the coast of Vietnam which is fabricated but it was used by the Johnson administration to get a resolution to support increasing and accelerating our involvement. We have had military adviser there during the sixties but that accelerated it.

Martell: Do remember how much people were people were protesting against the war in the beginning and how that number grew toward the end of war?

David: At the beginning the majority of country was in support of the war but as it dragged on I think the country got tired of it I don’t think people minds got changed we did the same thing in Iraq again it just that people get tired of the war it’s not that people are against war they just get tired of it Which is unfortunate. What we have to change is people mindsets about allowing us to go to war because we end up going to these wars illegally we went to Vietnam illegally, we went to Iraq illegally, To begin with. The country supports the war to begin with but overtime eventually the anti-war movement increased. The war probably started in the early sixties and the Gulf of Tonkin happened in 64, 65 and I started college in sixty five, And the mindset was pro-war with the world When I started coming home and talking against the war my dad supported the war. My dad was good democrat and Johnson was a good democrat. The wars raged on my father begin to see that the war was wrong we didn’t belong over there. And the same with the
majority of the country it took a long time. In 1971, 1972 when we were finally get out of Vietnam the majority of the country was against the war, it wasn’t that they didn’t believe that we should be over there in the first place they were just getting tired of it. We were seeing bodies on TV every night we didn’t see that with the Iraq war was completely different it was hidden but the same thing.

Martell: was there a disconnect between your generation who protested in were seen as radicals and the older more conservative Americans. Did your father’s view effect how you viewed the war?

David: Yet there was definitely a disconnect between older guy like my father and even some young kids that come from conservative families, had that attitude love it or leave it. Well gradually overtime that changed there were a lot of college kids the war pro-war. My team was small we didn’t have a lot of support except like when we rode a bus to like Washington D.C we would get bus load but then when we wanted to go to the locals schools in town like we went to the high school to talk about education importance. There’s just a small group of people who did the work. All those people on the bus maybe they were against the war but they went on the trips for a good time more for the social.

Martell: What was your major source of information to even know what was going on in the war?

David: I was from western Pennsylvania but I went to schools in Athens at O.U I never been to Dayton in my life but the information I got for my committee came from New York and Friends Service Committee in Dayton Ohio and which I ended up coming to later on and meeting people there but that was a lot of the source of information and Philadelphia was there main headquarters but we got a lot of stuff from the Dayton office. A lot of my professor where also politically active and progressive and provided a lot of sources of information and a lot of the literature that we use came from that.

Martell: What year did you leave college?

David: I left about seventy and came to Dayton. My first wife was Dayton I moved here after college and started teaching here.

Martell: When you was teaching I assume you never took a real break from activism, but did activism take a back seat to your career?

David: It did, I didn’t know people to be or who to be connected with I was more involve in starting a family and settling down but I taught for a couple years here, it really took a back seat until I got, well back in fourth I went from here to where I went to graduate school in Colorado, I was moving around a lot I was involved a little bit I was involve in more race issues here because I teaching at a mostly African American school on the west side of Dayton mostly a black school, so there was race issues involved in that so my activism was more education issues not anti-war the war was kind of over by then not quite we still protested the war when we can but I didn’t see much of that going on around here. Since then I learned that it was some of that going on here people that I am friends with now were involved in anti-war issues in the early seventies but I didn’t know them back then. When I got to wright state I got involved with one of the professor there who got me more involved with the peace movement and then I got back into more activism here.

Martell: Moving alone this timeline in the 80s what were the main thing you protested?
David: In the 80s it was a lot of anti-nuclear movement, the wars in Central America El Salvador our government again like we do everywhere support the dictators and very repressive regimes and people revolt. That’s what happened in El Salvador and all through Central America and when then when was it that bush invaded Iraq the nineties was the first Iraq war then the second Iraq war, environmental issues so I was involved but not quite involved because I was raising kids and I was doing stuff for literacy

Glossary (Any special terms, events, people referred to in the interview and/or transcript)
Richard Nixon
New York and friends service committee
Gulf of Tonkin Resolution
Johnson administration
Ho Ching Ming