

Oral History Collection

Ms. Emily White

Interviewer: [?]

Date: Fall 2015

Place of Interview: Denton, Texas

Interviewer: What's your name?

Ms. White: My name is Emily White.

Interviewer: Okay, and what's your occupation?

Ms. White: I am a professor of writing.

Interviewer: Okay, cool. And so, can you give us a quick explanation or just define fracking for me?

Ms. White: Hydraulic fracturing is the process of digging beneath the earth's surface to extract--oil and gas.

Interviewer: Okay. And what becomes the issue?

Ms. White: The issue becomes an environmental one.

Interviewer: Okay.

Ms. White: Basically, the position of the Denton Drilling Awareness Group and Frack-free Denton is to educate the members of Denton and beyond the

dangers of fracking. The chemicals are stressful. Denton, Texas, currently has the worst environment report in the state.

Interviewer: Oh, really?

White: We were up against a lot. Just before the election, we learned that the oil and gas industry were hiring people to go to the square in Denton and have people sign a petition to keep fracking, with confusing language. When you went to go vote, you could either vote for the fracking ban or vote against the fracking ban. The oil and gas industry confused voters and said if you voted for the fracking ban, you were voting for fracking. And so on election day, in the rain, there were volunteers outside the polls, with this sign, to make sure that voters understood that language, because they had been fooled by industry. There were also several [unclear] proposition. The industry was saying that if we banned fracking it would hurt our schools. The actual statistic here is only 2% of mineral rights are able to be retained. Also, the tax revenue that goes to our schools is

0.5%. So, we with Frack-Free Denton and the Denton Drilling Awareness Group and all activists and volunteers believe that this is false information and so this is what was mailed to people's houses. [Break]

White: Have been supportive of, openly been supportive of Frack-Free Denton. I remember most recently at a city council meeting, one of our city council members said HB40 is a draconian bill. And the word draconian just one adjective that was said in the city council chambers. So this city council member was able to reveal his views about what had occurred in our community. [Break]

White: I could read my "Ten Reasons to Ban Fracking."

Interviewer: Sure.

White: I'll do that real quick. Number one: Fracking is bad for property rights. Forty-three families have sued Eagle Ridge [Oil and Natural Gas Company] for \$25 million for damage, nuisance and trespass. It poisons neighborhoods. Benzene has been found to be at unsafe levels. Currently frack wells can be 250 feet from homes and playgrounds. It is

dangerous. I spoke to you a little bit ago about the May 9th blow out that lasted for 14 hours.

It is uniquely invasive we find, it's the only industry that is allowed to be in residential areas. They are not required to disclose the toxins that are released into the environment. They are allowed to release toxins into the environment, but they don't have to tell us what they are. It harms air quality. As I said before, Denton has the worst air quality in Texas. The oil and gas production at DFW is worse than all the cars on the road. Twenty five tons of volatile organic compounds, that's VOCs, are released.

Number six: It's under-regulated. The oil and gas industry is exempt from key provisions of seven Federal environmental acts. I'm going to repeat that, the oil and gas industry is exempt from key provisions of seven Federal environmental laws.

Number seven: Local government has not been able to work, and this is where the tension over local control occurs. It's only getting

worse. Experts predict 14,000 wells in the area. It's a drag on the local economy, like I said, only 2% of mineral rights actually go to property owners in Denton. Taxes from wells only account for 0.5% of all city property tax revenues. And when you turn on the news, I know that we had a very important--religious figure recently visit our country. And this religious figure was very--has made many statements about the importance of the environment. The conversation about the importance of the environment again continues to be an emerging one. And with our science, and with our empirical data and our earthquakes and our diseases and our premature births, hopefully we're getting smarter. I'm interested in seeing this new this--current conversation about spirituality and taking care of the environment, I'd like to see that to continue to emerge as well, because that means that education is continuing to occur. Right? So I'm optimistic, that we will continue to see a growth in greater education about the dangers of fracking, and about the

health and safety of our community.

[End of interview]