

Oral History Collection

Mr. Garrett Graham

Interviewer: Date: Fall 2015

Place of Interview: Denton, Texas

Interviewer: We are at the Media Arts Building, at UNT.

Mr. Graham: My name is Garrett Graham. I was born in Plano, but I consider Denton my home town, because I've been here since 2006 and I have been very connected to the community and the local politics.

Interviewer: So, what is your stance on fracking?

Mr. Graham: My stance on fracking is that it's horrible and it ought to be stopped immediately, and that's for a lot of reasons. But the big picture reason is that we should have ended the extraction of fossil fuels thirty years ago. When it comes to getting off of fossil fuels, it's not just a matter of, we need to do this in the near, foreseeable future. It's

a matter of the life-destroying consequences of climate change are happening all over the world, right now. There are people whose graves are being dug today because of what the fossil fuel industry has done to the planet. If you live across the street from a frack well, and you ask the obvious question, "Excuse me, what chemicals am I being exposed to?" "Well those are proprietary secrets that you are not allowed to know." And the only reason that they do that is not because they care about you and your family, they just do that to protect their profit incentive. They are an industrial capitalist enterprise. They are just doing what they do. So not only do I not like fracking, I think that the fact that fracking is a dangerous process is really uncontroversial and unsurprising.

Interviewer: And when did you first learn about that fracking ban?

Mr. Graham: This movement was when they began flaring [burning gas that can't be contained] a fracking rig outside of McKenna Park, which is--McKenna Park is, I think the street may

be called McKenna, but it's at the corner of Bonnie Brae and McKenna. It's a purple park next to a big, open field, that I think they are going to make into a shopping center at some point. And so some people want to talk about climate change. They want to relate this to the whole movement to end fossil fuels. And then you have other people saying "No, no, no, no, no, that's going to be, I agree with you, I agree with you, but that's going to be too hard to sell. Texans aren't going to vote for that. Politicians aren't going to get behind that."

Interviewer: What motivated you to make your documentary, your film *Don't Frack with Denton*?

Mr. Graham: Well, the Candice looked at me across the table and it's like Garrett, all your friends are involved in this struggle to ban fracking, and you're an environmentalist and you need to make a documentary. I thought to myself 'Oh my God, you're absolutely right!' And I originally made that as my second year documentary, which is what that twenty minute cut you saw is. It has to be twenty minutes.

That's the limitation. In the middle of editing--the premier is a few weeks away--HB40 was passed. And the ban was overturned. And then I knew I'd have to keep following the story. And thankfully, civil disobediences were organized, and I shot all of that, and I shot the training and I've got a much more interesting story now. Now the story is about how these good people became disillusioned with the system and then decided to take action for themselves. Which is a much better story, that I'm more happy to tell. And that's the story.

Interviewer: What response have you gotten since you put that out there, the documentary?

Mr. Graham: The response has been mainly good. And so people that are expecting a whole science-based argument about the fracking process are going to be disappointed, but that's because those movies have already been made.

Interviewer: What are your hopes for the future about fracking?

Mr. Graham: My hope is that, that will make what was mistakenly a Denton-only struggle, because it

never should have been a Denton-only struggle, but my hope is that they will have stirred up a hornet's nest of resistance where now every city in Texas, especially cities that are fracked, now have a common cause to overturn the same piece of legislation. Now again, it would be a mistake to say, "Our goal is to overturn HB40 and nothing else. And then we can all go home." My hope is that they will--you know, all of our struggles to fight climate change, to divest from fossil fuel extraction, and to fight racism, and white supremacy, and certain communities being thrown into the bus time and time again, my smaller hope is that the battle against HB40 will bring together many different Texas communities that will have a common goal and there will be kind of a Texas-wide, pro-democracy, anti-fracking coalition. And that's in the process. It remains to be seen how big that gets, and if it'll get off the ground. But I hope it happens. And I certainly hope they overturn HB40. And I believe if they overturn HB40,

then the fracking ban goes back into effect, but I'm not sure. But you know, I also hope that we fight climate change, and we get off fossil fuels and resist all forms of oppression. And you're going to have more of a critical mass if people's struggles are connected. Otherwise, you're saying to certain people, "Hey, I know you're going through some oppression right now, and that sucks, but it's not really my issue, I'm busy over here with fracking. So good luck with that."

[End of interview]

