

**Daniel Leahy**  
**Interviewed by Tony Zaragoza**  
**The Evergreen State College oral history project**  
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**FINAL**

**Leahy:** With the WPPSS, I was on Town Hall, Channel 4, on KOMO, during the WPPSS fights. I was the only person speaking against the four or five different nuclear power plants, and other people were for it. They had me mic'd with a lapel on my chest, and at one point, I coughed, and put my hand on my chest and it hit the mic. [laughing] Everybody went bananas.

**Zaragoza:** Where we left off, we were talking about your contribution to the undergraduate curriculum, and you told us some stories about the WTO class, about the Mexico class, and I wanted to see if there were some other classes that you wanted to talk about in those final years.

**Leahy:** I also talked about America 2000 with Stephanie [Coontz], which was really great.

**Zaragoza:** Yeah.

**Leahy:** We did a class on the question of social forums. This was after the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil. The question of the social forum was in the air, and the people at Atlanta—Project South—agreed to sponsor the first US social forum. So, we did a class on social forums, the question being whether social forums stimulate local social movements, or whether they retard them. We did a whole class on the social movement. What we did was we roleplayed all the actors coming to the Atlanta US Social Forum. Every person was, in fact, a member of the national planning committee. They also researched the organization that they were part of. So each student was a member of the national planning committee—that person—and then they researched that person's organization. Then we played the US Social Forum in the class. And, believe it or not, we pretty much came up with what actually took place in the Social Forum later that summer.

**Zaragoza:** Yeah, because you then took down the summer class, in addition to the—

**Leahy:** Yeah, I took a summer class—nine students, I think—and we were part of the Social Forum. We volunteered to do work down there. We were in Atlanta. We all stayed together in a funky motel. One of the great things was that some of those nine kids actually bumped into the person that they had played, and they knew them right away. [laughter] They knew everything about them.

But I thought was really interesting, because those kids, we roleplayed it, they stayed in their roles, and we really pretty much came up with what the Social Forum itself was able to do in Atlanta. That was 2007, I think.

There was another class that Anthony [Zaragoza] and I did. We were supposed to do a class on China in the spring. I had been reading for the last, I don't know how long, about China. I still have a lot of books about China. Then in September, after Katrina happened, we had our first meeting in the fall.

Anthony said to me, “I’m just going to say one word. New Orleans.” And I thought, you’re right. So we switched, and we did a class on New Orleans in the spring. That was an extraordinary class, because we had 50 students come into that class because they wanted to know what happened in New Orleans. That was an extraordinary class. We read about New Orleans history, and about what the structure of New Orleans itself was, what its relationship to the sea was ecologically, and then what took place during the quote-unquote “rescue” time in Katrina, and what the plans were for Katrina afterwards.

I think that was one of the richest classes I was ever a part of. Part of it, of course, was because the extraordinary interest on the part of students, but also because Anthony and I were able to set up a really great structure for them to learn, which is what Evergreen is best at, really.

**Zaragoza:** We also played some strategy games in that one, which also turned out to be quite true. The big thing of that, remember, was the conference that we put on. Do you remember the conference, where the students showed all their research, and we had folks from around the country come and speak? We had survivors who were based in Seattle come speak. You had gotten a firefighter to come down from Seattle that had done a rescue mission. I had helped to get Jerome Scott. We got Whatshisname from Common Ground. Don’t you remember?

**Leahy:** Oh, wait! Malik Raheem came up. That’s right! He stayed in the basement with his girlfriend. Yes, that’s right.

**Zaragoza:** You told the story of him filling his suitcases with supplies to take back home.

**Leahy:** Yes, he was going around getting—I can’t remember—I think he was getting stuff for his housing project, because some of the students went down there. Like that woman who became an attorney that you knew.

**Zaragoza:** Elizabeth Hendren.

**Leahy:** Elizabeth Hendren and other people went down and worked on the housing projects and stuff. Yeah, that was a super-rich class and conference. I had actually forgotten about that conference.

**Zaragoza:** Because we packed the Capitol Theater for Jerome Scott’s Project South and Malik Raheem to speak.

**Leahy:** That’s right. Jerome Scott was here, and Malik, in the Capitol Theater. Yeah, that’s a great resource I think Evergreen should use more often. We did it then. I did it once after the WTO, we packed it after the WTO. We did it with the Iraq War thing once.

**Zaragoza:** Yeah, when Scott Whatshisname came. That’s right.

**Leahy:** Yeah, Scott.

**Zaragoza:** Former inspector.

**Leahy:** And Dahr Jamail. We did this thing called “Support the Truth.”

Another class I did was in 2005, I think, there was a worldwide demonstration against the Iraq War, and marches all over the world. I think there was a feeling at that time that marching didn’t work, so I wanted to do a class called Marching, and analyze what it takes to put on a march that’s visible long enough so people see what it is you’re requesting.

It was probably the first class I ever did in which I only planned the first two weeks. Usually I plan all the way through. Everything. But I only planned the first two weeks because I was looking for opportunities, either for the students to march, or to participate in marching. But that class was really great. I found a book down in California that was a history of why people march on Washington. Because it was something that was developed over time, and slowly, it became something that a protest movement or a social movement would do, march on Washington. We think it's common now, but it wasn't.

So, I found this book about why that became a part of social movement methods. We read that to begin with, and then all the students took a particular march and analyzed the march. I had a whole list, because I wanted to do manual about how, in fact, you move people over time in a marching formation. So they all had to look at not just the goals of the march, but the internal logistics that it takes to move people distances over time.

And [chuckles] I remember I decided to try and find a drill sergeant. I did find a drill sergeant who had been a drill sergeant for something like 25 years. I don't remember his name, but I met with him downtown, and he asked whether he should come in uniform. I said, "Probably not. Just come yourself. But I want you to talk about why you march."

This was the very first class, so the girls' basketball team comes in with their basketballs, and it turns out that it's 25 students. It's full for a class that was only titled Marching. [chuckles] I couldn't fucking believe it. But anyhow, it's full.

I turned to this man and I said, "Well, to start off, why don't you talk a little bit about why the Army marches." He said, "Well, to get from point A to point B."

And there was silence. I thought he was going to talk for probably a half hour, and I could figure out who's in the class, and what we should do next.

Then I said, "Well, actually, how did marching become a thing in the Army?" "Well, there was this German drill manual that we found during the Revolutionary War, so we kind of adopted that, and that became kind of our drill and marching manual."

I wasn't going to get anything more out of this guy, so I said to the students—this is really great—"Well, I've reserved the gym, so shall we all go marching?" [laughing] They all jumped up, and we all went over to the gym, and this guy put them in formations, and marches around. And while he was marching people around in kind of basic military style—by the way, he had promised to teach chants, but to make sure they were all clean. Because from my ROTC days, of course, I knew dirty chants. He said, "We have team chants now in the Army." That's fine.

So, he was teaching them chants and stuff, but while he was doing that, he picked out three kids from among the 25 in the class to teach them about replacing him, during the time we were there. I know this guy had been looking at young people—18-year-old, 19-year-old kids—for 25 years, but that man picked out the three leaders of our class—it was extraordinary, I thought—who became the leaders. I don't think it was because he chose them to do that, but they were the leaders of the class, however that worked out. That was pretty extraordinary. I don't know who he was, I forgot his name.

So, we did that, and all the kids made different presentations—Take Back the Night, the antiwar marches, Gay Pride Parade—and they analyzed the goals and the logistics of the marching. It was really great presentations. And then, they were supposed to come up with where they wanted to march themselves. So I gave them three possibilities, and we had speakers come in to say you should do this march, or that march. They decided to march against the Washington Assessment of Student Learning, or the WASL, the standardized tests. All of them pretty much had taken it, because a lot of them were from Washington State, and they hated the fucking WASL.

They decided to “[tossel? 00:12:23] the WASL,” and they made up chants, they made up signs, and we marched from Evergreen down to Capital High School, and Capital High School down to Jefferson Middle School. Then we went to Garfield, and then we went through downtown to OSPI. And we stopped at each place. The reception was extraordinary.

We had a guy who was a bail bondsman from Centralia, and he became our guy in charge of the police. He was great! Great, big guy. We made him in charge of the police. And we were all prepared. I can't tell you how we prepared. We had a backup car in case somebody couldn't do it; we had the medical team. Based upon Sun Tzu, we had all hand signals. Because one of the things about marching is you can't tell oftentimes what the front of the march is doing, so you lose contact. So, we came up with these elaborate hand signals to say what we were doing or not doing. [laughing] It was an extremely well-organized 20-person march.

We got to the Capital High School, and the first people that met us were the local cops. It was perfect. So we sicced our bail bondsman on the cop. Then we went to Jefferson Middle School, and there was nobody at Jefferson Middle School. We kept going, and the next one was Garfield. And Bruce Walton, who was the principal for my sons, he brought everybody out of the school, and watched us walk by as an example of what a march is, so the kids could see what a march is. It was really great.

To make a long story short, I bought everybody dinner at Ben Moore's. But the next day, one of my neighbor's kids was at Jefferson Middle School. She was at our house for dinner, or I was at their house for dinner, and she said, “Something really extraordinary happened today.” I said, “Really? What happened at Jefferson?” She said, “The school was locked down.” I said, “The school was locked down? Why?” “Because these protesters were coming by.” [laughing]

So, we got a cop, a lockdown, a general greeting. It was a truly wonderful example.

I guess the other thing about that class which happened was that we were practicing marching down the back road, toward the back parking lot, down whatever that road is. And when we got through, we came back and we decided to march through Red Square. So, in military formation, we marched through Red Square.

The next day, the *Cooper Point Journal* said—they took a photo of us, apparently. We didn't know this. And then they did this thing “Another Day at Evergreen.” And that was really such a great event, because everybody got to have a lesson about what the press says about something. It certainly wasn't another fucking day at Evergreen. Evergreen has never had a disciplined military march go through it. We were the only ones that ever did that, because most people just kind of want to walk along and scratch your nuts or something, but we marched in formation. So they wrote to the *Cooper Point Journal*, and it was really great. That was a great class.

**Zaragoza:** That spring of '08, I think.

**Leahy:** Yeah, it was near the end.

**Zaragoza:** That may have been one of the last.

**Leahy:** I think it was.

**Zaragoza:** Then you did that class in on pipelines. Do you want to comment on that? Because that resulted in a big conference, too, where you had all kinds of folks.

**Leahy:** Yeah, that was later. I had been retired for, I don't know, several years, but I got interested in the movement of oil trains from the Bakken oilfields in North Dakota. They started making unit trains, which is 100 to 120, so that's three million gallons of highly flammable Bakken oil, moving on a train. It was coming through our communities, and trying to move it to various marine transfer stations in Vancouver, Grays Harbor, Tacoma, up the coast.

I started researching it, and decided to figure out how to stop it. I wanted to have—I got in the car, and I went—like any organizer, you go horizontally to look for movements, or to even create one. So, I went horizontally, and I talked to all the people in Vancouver, Longview, Grays Harbor, Tacoma, up in Anacortes where they were building expansions of the Tesoro refinery. I talked to all the people. I went to Spokane.

**Zaragoza:** Went to Quinault Nations, Spokane.

**Leahy:** Yeah, I went to Spokane, Quinaults, and talked to them about what they were doing. And one thing that was very clear is that a lot of them were definitely on the ground, but they weren't connected to themselves, other than perhaps by email. But I think social movements only really develop with face-to-face interaction and contact.

So, I decided to pull them all together. But I needed a space. And the space I wanted to use, which I've used before, was the Longhouse, because it's a great space. But in order to get the Longhouse free, I'd have to do a class. Plus, I didn't have any money to finance a conference, because I was going to pay for anybody who was outside the Olympia area—pay their travel costs—so that it's equalized. So I needed money, and I also needed staff, because I didn't have any staff or organization.

Basically, what I did was I decided to sponsor an eight-credit class, summer class, at Evergreen, which I was lucky enough to do, mainly because of Sarah Ryan, because I was way, way late. But Sarah Ryan approved it, and I got on the curriculum. I got seven or eight students. I got their money, because I'm kind of high on the pay list, I got \$3,000 or \$4,000 for that class, I think. That gave me the ability to finance—because I didn't need the money personally, so that was my pot to finance travel and propaganda. And then, as a result of that class, I got the Longhouse free. I scheduled the Longhouse.

It turned out to be a region-wide conference, but initially, it was called the Statewide Strategy Summit on Oil Trains. What we basically did was to show people the mainline constituents that were worried about this new phenomenon. So, Native Americans spoke first, not only because it's their place, but because they were in the front foreground of fighting against oil terminals, coal terminals, and oil trains.

We had people from the Quinaults; we had a person from Athabaska Indians out of Fort McMurray. I actually went up to Fort McMurray before the summit, and looked at the tar sands, because a lot of the

oil that's coming down is not just Bakken and this tar sands' oil. So, we had an Athabasca Indian; I got him to come down. We had representatives from the Quinaults and two other—I can't remember who they were. But we had a panel, and then we had a labor panel.

**Zaragoza:** Lummi, right?

**Leahy:** Oh, yes, Lummi. Then we had a labor panel, and the labor panel was extraordinary. I had IBEW there that does the electrical work inside the tunnels that these trains are stored in oftentimes, or parked in. I had a guy who actually drives a 120-car oil train. I had Longshore from Vancouver, who were nervous about having an oil transfer station on the Columbia River, and one other one. And then I had community members, the people on the ground, like the people associated with the Sierra Club down in Vancouver; the Friends of Grays Harbor in Grays Harbor; the people with Evergreen Islands in Anacortes.

So I had basically three strands of plenary presentations. There were several things that happened, but one of the things that happened was workers are extremely matter-of-fact oftentimes about what they're doing. But in the middle of the conference, this man, I think his name was Rob Hill. He lives over in Gig Harbor. He's an engineer. He no longer does it, but he was driving 120-car unit trains up the I-5 corridor.

He said to this crowd, "You know, you'd better be really strapped into that chair when you're driving this train, because if you hit a rough spot, all of a sudden, you have 100-plus cars that are rocking back and forth, left to right. And you've got three million gallons of highly flammable Bakken oil slushing back and forth, north and south. You'd better hold on or you're going to get bumped off your seat."

When he said that—and he was just saying that as a matter of fact, he wasn't trying to scare anybody; it was just a matter-of-fact statement—that thing just silenced everybody. You could have heard a pin drop. There were 120, 130 people there. It was like, wow. It was something.

Then we had workshops, of course. Some people reported back; some people didn't. Overall I think it went pretty well. The difficulty was that there was supposed to be—it was planned to have—a coordinating body set up, but the people responsible for setting up the coordinating body, that room was full of existing Seattle-based environmental organizations. And as far as they were concerned, they were already the leadership of the movement. So they, in my mind, didn't want a coordinating committee to take place. So it didn't.

But one of the things I set up after that meeting, and that's still existing, is a discussion group called the Solidarity Round Table on Oil, and it's sponsored by, and hosted by, the Washington State Council of Firefighters in Olympia. About every three or four months, we have a strategic discussion about—it's usually—and we have it with 20 people at the most. It goes from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. It's an update, but it's also a discussion of ongoing strategy. Sometimes we do sign-on letters; sometimes we just talk strategy; sometimes we decide what we should do all together. But it is a discussion group, it's not a decision-making body. That means that people can come to that that don't necessarily—they're not going to get tarred with any decision that's made. We've had the Farmers Union come, Northwest Farmers Union. Representative Kent Wright has come.

**Zaragoza:** Wasn't there a rancher there at that conference?

**Leahy:** Yeah.

**Zaragoza:** You also brought someone out from Montreal, whose neighborhood exploded from—

**Leahy:** Oh, yeah, I forgot. We brought the people from Lac-Mégantic. Yeah, Jacques. Yeah, we brought him out. That was really great. I forgot about that. Yes, we brought him all the way from Québec. Seven hundred bucks. But we brought him out. He was wonderful. He stayed here, and he talked about Lac-Mégantic, where 47 people, if I remember right, were killed by a train that ran into the town and exploded. That town, by the way, doesn't exist. They moved the town. Yeah, I forgot Jacques. He was great.

As a result of that, every July, I think, there's been memorials to those people that had died in that train fire from Lac-Mégantic. We built a wall. People in Grays Harbor built a wall. They put all the names on it. So that was an important thing that happened as a result.

The other things is that the leadership—from Vancouver to Longview, Kalama, Grays Harbor, here in Olympia, up to Anacortes, some in Tacoma—they all know each other, face to face, and they still meet. Now we're focused on trying to take over the ports so that we can stop them being used as fossil fuel export platforms.

But that was a great use of a summer class that I did.

**Zaragoza:** What year did you retire, Dan?

**Leahy:** I retired in '08, so the winter of '09, I think, I was officially gone. I retired when I was 65.

**Zaragoza:** You were mentioning earlier, when we were talking, that you didn't want to do emeritus.

**Leahy:** Yeah.

**Zaragoza:** You were talking a little bit about that, and I wanted to hear more of your thoughts on why you didn't want to be emeritus.

**Leahy:** I just didn't see any reason for it. In some ways, after the deans canceled my—right in the middle of all the trouble with my Mexican class, they canceled my—this would have been 2004, because we got expelled in 2002. But my class was in the curriculum for 2004. They took it out of the curriculum right in the middle of all the controversy. And that really angered me a great deal, because it took a lot to get that in. Plus, they didn't know whether or not we were going to get it annulled and I'd be able to go again, or anything.

That really soured me on Evergreen in lots of ways, or at least soured me on staying at Evergreen. I certainly had a great time when I was at Evergreen, but I wasn't interested in staying anymore. But I couldn't leave because I wasn't 65, and I wasn't Medicare eligible. So, I waited till I was 65 and became Medicare eligible, which reduces your healthcare costs for myself and my wife. Then, I left right then.

There was a question of emeritus, which is something I realized that Evergreen wants. I didn't ask for it, but I kept getting these messages, first from the faculty, then the Provost. I think I even got something from the President saying that there's going to be an emeritus thing for you at some fucking board meeting or something. I told the faculty or whoever it was I didn't want it. I think I told the Provost I didn't want it. And then I had to write a letter to [Les] Purce, and I said, "I really don't want it."

And I never thought that it was something that Evergreen needed to do, but it became clear that the institution needs it. I don't need it. I don't need a free pass for parking. I don't need a free pass to the fucking library, or free parking, or whatever you get when you're emeritus. And I don't need emeritus after my name. I've always liked my name. Dan Leahy is just fine, and I don't need emeritus after it to make myself more than I am. Dan Leahy is fine. I don't need emeritus after my name. So, that's pretty much why.

**Zaragoza:** In the time that you have retired, these last almost 10 years now, how have you used that time instead of being emeritus, or whatever it may be?

**Leahy:** My wife, Bethany, and I have done a lot of traveling. In those last 10 years, we've lived overseas in Europe. We've done at least a couple of six-month stretches. We lived in France for four months one time, and then we traveled to Spain, we went to Morocco. We traveled again, we went to Ireland, to London. We went to Greece. We volunteered in February 2016 with the refugees on the island of Lesbos.

**Zaragoza:** How long were you there, and what were you doing?

**Leahy:** We were there for one month, and we worked with a volunteer group. Lesbos was the island where, in the spring, summer and fall of 2015, 850,000 people came onto the shores of that island, primarily the north shore of it, which is four miles from Turkey. They came in rubber boats. All kinds—families, kids, parents, old, new. Everybody. And that community on the north shore there—Molyvos and [Scala Scandanios? 00:31:00]—absorbed all that. And then, once it became known, volunteers came, and made it even more of an international event. It certainly helped, in lots of ways, and we were some of the people.

We were living in Ireland. I read an article about the dirty girls of Lesbos—because there were a bunch of Irish women who were in Lesbos, and what they realized was that there was an environmental crisis, because a lot of the clothes that the refugees—they were wet, and they got rid of them. So they decided to pick up all those clothes, so they set up a pickup distribution system throughout the island. They picked up all the clothes, and then they laundered them, and then they redistributed them back to the camps, along with also the UNHCR blankets, which were everywhere. So they became this environmental clothing distribution and redistribution system. So, we read about it, and we thought we'd go help.

We ended up working for a local NGO called Starfish, which was started by a restaurateur in this very small—it would be like if, in Budd Inlet down here, where the restaurant is, if 850,000 people came into that area, 2,000 people a day—and most of them were sinking offshore in these fucking rubber boats, or other little boats that the smugglers stuffed them into—what would you do? That's what was happening in Molyvos. And the Greek people, who knew what it was like to come onshore from Turkey, because they did it, almost a million people in 1923, when there was a population exchange. When Turkey became a republic, there was an exchange of Christians and Muslims, and all the Christians were supposed to come. Well, a lot of them came by boats from the Turkish shore, the same place that all these Syrians, Iraqis and Iranis, Afghans were coming, escaping the bombing from the U.S.

We did port watch, which means you're on duty to watch for people that might come into port, or into shore. And if you did, you provided them with water, some basic food. You got them on a bus, and they



either went to a transition camp for a couple of days, or they went about 50 kilometers, to the southern end of the island where the ferryboats were. They'd stay in an open camp there for a couple of days, and then they'd get on a ferryboat and go to Piraeus, and then they'd try and go through Greece up to Macedonia and into Germany.

We worked on that. We sorted clothes, we did sandwiches. We worked in the transition camp, and then we worked also in the major camp down in Mytilini, at the southern end of the island. People would come in, they would register, and then we had to get them housing. There were, I think, something like 60 large kind of tent houses with a simple mat. There were no facilities in them, and no heating.

They would come to our tent, and poke their heads in, and we would try and see who they were, if at all possible, and put them in with other people. We'd try and put the Syrians together, and the Iraqis together and the Iranis, the Pakistanis. We'd put all the men in those things. We stuck them in there 20, 30 people. And then, if they were families, they were three facilities farther up the hill that actually had a kind of a dormitory thing. They had one bathroom in the dormitory. We were in charge of one of the three. That was mainly for women and children. So, you'd sit there and help people get settled when they'd come in, and show them what the deal was. We had clothes for them there, so sometimes they'd come and get new clothes, the clothes we had for them.

But it was pretty good there, even though it was somewhat exhausting, because, of course, nobody knew Arabic. I knew some Turkish. Some of the people knew Turkish because they had spent a couple years in Turkey trying to raise money in order to pay the smugglers to come across to Greece, which was Europe.

We did that for a month, and then we traveled along the coast. We'd never been to Albania, so we went through Albania and Montenegro, up the coast through Italy, and then back to Paris, and then back home. But that trip was about six months, too.

Also, I always wanted to go to Mongolia. I always liked Genghis Khan, ever since I was a kid. So, on one of these trips, Bethany went to Paris, and I stayed in Turkey, flew to Ulan Bator, and spent three weeks out on the steppe looking for traces of Genghis Khan and the boys, which was super fun. I wrote this thing about "Rules for Driving on the Steppe." That was really great.

In 2010, Bethany wanted to go to Palestine, so we decided to fly into Jordan and go to Syria. We traveled throughout Syria. We were in Damascus, Aleppo, went to Deir ez-Zor.

**Zaragoza:** This is before?

**Leahy:** This was just before. Bashar al-Assad was in power, but everybody was super hopeful. The border with Turkey was open. There were all kinds of Turkish tourists in Aleppo. Bashar al-Assad had given up the [Hottai? 00:37:20] Peninsula claim. [Hottai] is where [Al-Takia? 00:37:11] is, and it was assigned to Turkey after the post-World War I settlement, but Syria always still claimed it. Syria had given up the claim to [Hottai]. The border was open. There was lots of tourism. Big Turkish construction outfits were in Syria taking advantage of the cheaper labor, which was non-union, unlike the Turkish labor.

In lots of ways, it seemed extremely hopeful. The people were saying that Bashar was married to a well-educated woman, and that he's going to be a lot easier than his old man, Hafez al-Assad, and things were going to be good. We ran into just extraordinarily wonderful people. It was a country that was 30 years behind Turkey. I took a taxi from Aleppo to Antakya, and when you go into Antakya, the level of development was so shocking, such a difference; whether it was environmental, hotel, tourism, all that stuff, Turkey was 30 years ahead of Syria.

Nonetheless, there was a lot of hope there. Bethany went back and went to Israel and Palestine to meet with people there, and I didn't want to do that, so I went through Turkey, and then I hung out with the Kurds. I really like the Kurdish people. I went to [lists several cities, need spellings 00:38:55]. Then I flew back to Antalya, and then up to Istanbul. I met Bethany, believe it or not, when the [Mahdi Marmia? 00:39:11]—remember that attack? Bethany actually flew back. I thought she was flying back with the bodies, on the same plane that was taking the bodies back to Istanbul. Because it took her a long, long time to get out of—but it wasn't on the same plane. The press was all there. It was on a different plane, but they came in at the same time.

We did that in 2010, and then just recently, I went back to Ireland, and then to Thessaloniki in October of 2016. I volunteered for a month in a refugee camp called [El Pida? 00:39:58], which means hope—just outside of Thessaloniki. I got an apartment in Thessaloniki. I took a bus every day. It was like a job. I got up at 8:00, I went to get on the bus at 9:00, I was out there at 9:30, and I reported in to the kitchen. And there, they had stainless kitchen facilities for 135 people, and the women would come in and cook the food. Sometimes it was catered food that they cooked, or we cooked. But we shifted to a grocery thing, where we basically bought foodstuffs. They would come at 11:00. We would have prepared all the foodstuffs for distribution for distribution per family. That's everything, eggs to flour to sugar to fish to whatever, plus canned food that was donated. Everybody would get their portion, and then the women would come into the kitchen and start cooking. My job was to sit inside the kitchen and make sure that the little kids didn't come in. So my job was to scare the little kids, and keep them out of the kitchen, because I realized that this was actually the only time the women were left alone. So, it was actually a really important job, and I did that.

Then I slowly started ingratiating myself with the women, because there was 15 stations, and each station was a place for three families. So the three families rotated one of the 15 stations. All the utensils were underneath in a large container. But if you're a woman, and you're cooking for all these kids, that frying pan better be there. Sometimes it wasn't there because the woman would take it to her apartment, so the next woman would come in and there wouldn't be any fucking frying pan. The first couple of days, I realized that there was going to be a frying pan war.

I had raised \$4,000 from friends, because the first time we went over, I didn't ask for any money. When me and Bethany came back, people said, "How come you didn't ask for money?" So this time, I sent out one request; people sent in checks for \$4,000. Bethany put it in an account here, and I started buying stuff for that kitchen. I bought everybody a brand new frying pan. I bought everybody a stainless steel cooker. They had an extremely cheap two-burner hotplates that one of the burners wouldn't work, or they'd blow up, or the core would get burnt. So I bought everybody a 5-euro two-burner hotplate. That's how we used the money.

And then, it was a very interesting discussion, because there were two friends of Peter Bohmer's—one of them was a friend of Peter Bohmer's—two guys—and I met with them. They said, "It's interesting

what you're doing, because when I was a young person, I was helping all the Afghans get to Italy. And they were pursuing this dream of Europe. It was really funny, of course, because I didn't believe in that dream, but I was helping these people meet their dream, even though it was a dream. Why was I doing that? So, I want to ask you, why are you doing that? Why are you helping these people pursue their dream in Europe when it's not there? Because one of the things you're doing, Dan, is you're buying them all Arabic-English dictionaries"—which I was doing. I was buying everybody an Arabic-English dictionary. He said, "Why are you doing that?"

I didn't have an answer. So basically, what I did is I switched, and I started buying everybody Arabic-Greek dictionaries. I became the main dictionary buyer in fucking Thessaloniki. Every bookstore knew me, because I'd go in there and take all their dictionaries. I not only gave one to every household in [El Pida?], but UNICEF was just starting to put the kids into Greek schools, so these little kids would get a UNICEF backpack, and in the mornings, they'd get on bus and they'd take them into Greek schools for the day. There was a Greek group there, so I talked to them and I said, "I'd like to give one to every kid, and I'd I want to give one to every school." They said, "Sure." So we did that.

That was really fun. I stayed there for a month and did that. That was October 2016. I was just back there again in Lesbos. In fact, I just got back a week ago.

**Zaragoza:** So you've done three different refugee support tours?

**Leahy:** Yeah. I was there in February 2016, October 2016, and I was just Lesbos in [EL Pida?] these past two months in 2017. I spent the month of July on Lesbos, and then I spent 10 days in Thessaloniki. It's an extremely different situation now, so I didn't do refugee work during that time.

**Zaragoza:** What's the difference?

**Leahy:** It's a long story, but the difference is that in March 2016, European Union changed its policies, and they basically made a deal with Turkey, which they're enforcing in other countries, which is basically keep all the refugees in place in exchange for millions of dollars of euros. Do your best to keep them in transition countries, like Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, or Libya, and get rid of all the NGOs that are there, because they basically tell the world what's going on. So it became more and more difficult to be an NGO in that context, because NGOs disagreed with a lot of what was going on, which was sending refugees back to Turkey, which the EU decided was a safe country, and a lot of people don't think it's a safe country. It's against EU law to send people back to a non-safe country. They designated Turkey as a safe country. They designated Kabul, Afghanistan as a safe country, and Germany is sending planeloads of Afghans back to Kabul.

So, not only was there a program shift in March 2016 to keep refugees in the transition countries—Turkey, which has three million Syrians in it; Lebanon, which has, I think, one-quarter of the population is refugees; and Jordan—and pay them money to keep them there. And also, they initiated a return policy, which meant that people really basically can't get asylum, and they return them to the countries of origin.

**Zaragoza:** So it's a kind of not-in-my-backyard scenario.

**Leahy:** Not in my backyard, and we'll pay you to keep them where they are. That meant getting rid of a lot of the NGOs. A lot of the NGOs disagreed with the Turkey-EU deal. They also disagreed with the

notion of sending the refugees back, or keeping them in detention while they're waiting to be sent back. So [Morya? 00:47:45], which was the camp that I was in outside of the southern end of Lesbos, is not a closed facility, but there are 4,000 people there. They can't leave the island. They have geographic detention. The refugees, if they're on an island, they can't leave the island. They couldn't leave the island after March 2016, so they're stuck on the island. There's no deadline when they can get off the island. And if they don't make it through the asylum process, they're put into prison. They're put into detention. Then after detention, they try and send them back to Turkey, or to another country, if that country is willing to take them. So Turkey is building detention camps right now in order to receive people. What happens to them after that, who knows?

So it's a very different scene, and [El Pido?] in Thessaloniki, which was really top-of-the-line—if there has to be a refugee camp, [El Pido] was a top-of-the-line refugee camp—it is closed. They closed it. And all the people apparently were distributed either to a European country—although I don't think so—I think they were put into apartments or hotels spread throughout Thessaloniki.

The Kurdish camp I was in, which was about a three-kilometer or four-kilometer walk from [El Pido]—it had 1,000 Kurds in it when I was there in October 2016—that thing is pretty much empty. There are 200 young men there. What happened to all those Kurds, I don't know. I know that they were willing to go back to their homeland if they could go back by some route other than the sea. But I don't know where they went. And, of course, you can't find that out. I went to [El Pido], and the kitchen was empty now, and all the apartments were gutted. But they won't tell you where people went.

So, we've traveled a lot. Actually, right after retirement, me and Bethany moved to Portland for three years. We lived in an apartment. The reason we did that is because every senior would tell me—I'd ask them what they were going to do after they graduated and they said, "We're going to go to Portland." "Bethany, I think we should go to Portland." So we rented an apartment in the northwest section of Portland, and tried to hit every happy hour for three years in a row.

**Bethany:** Oh, Dan.

**Leahy:** It was true.

**Zaragoza:** Senior solidarity.

**Leahy:** Yeah. We had a great time there. But at the same time, we were involved in this community, and we spent two years fighting to keep a 711 off the corner of Harrison and Division. We did that pretty much while we were in Portland. We'd come back periodically for strategic meetings with the neighborhood. But we had 60 people in this neighborhood that decided to stop that, and we did. As a result, there's a park there now. But that was the result of people in this neighborhood getting together, and fighting a campaign to stop that from going on. Eventually there was a decision at the Superior Court level to tell the city that they violated their own rules, and that they couldn't have a 711 there.

**Zaragoza:** And the one thing in this time that you haven't talked about yet is the Wisconsin campaign.

**Leahy:** When was that? Do you remember?

**Zaragoza:** I thought it was 2012, but I could be off.

**Leahy:** Yeah. People in Wisconsin, they took over their state capitol. One of the things that was wonderful about that was they said they wanted to walk like an Egyptian. [chuckles] Because Tahir Square was going on, and I thought, damn, I want to get in on that action. I started calling all my union friends, saying, “Get me back there.” But I couldn’t get back until the spring.

I took a job, working as kind of a senior organizer for SEIU, out of Milwaukee. Supposedly, my job was to help the young organizer.

[Taping interrupted 00:52:11 through 00:52:23.]

**Leahy:** So I couldn’t get back there until the spring. But one of my friends was kind of high up in the—what was it called?—Our Wisconsin, or We Are Wisconsin, or something. And she was from Chicago, and she said, “I can look at your job.” So I went back there.

I knew the head of the SEIU, the guy who was a very interesting man whose name I’m not going to remember. But I knew him by reputation, and I was really proud to be in his office. And I took a job, I got paid, and got a place to stay. I stayed initially with the former Peace Corps volunteers from Turkey that I knew. I called them up and asked if I could stay there. I stayed in their home for about a month, and then I rented a place.

Basically, I tried to build a community base to the campaign. But, of course, even though all the rhetoric was about we’re going to build an alliance of community groups that will exist way past the recall, that really wasn’t the institutional motivation on the part of the main players, which was primarily AFSME. What had happened was the Democratic Party and the AFSME unions shifted the movement to an electoral recall campaign, to recall Governor [Scott] Walker.

The thing about recall is you don’t get to recall. It actually should be called replace, because a recall election is about putting somebody else in office. It’s not about getting rid of the person in office, it’s about replacing that person with somebody else.

What happened was they were going to replace him with the mayor of Milwaukee. The mayor of Milwaukee was a terrible candidate, for lots of reasons. So, would the people of Wisconsin had recalled Scott Walker? I think they would have, but were they going to elect the mayor of Milwaukee? No, they weren’t. And there were a lot of mistakes made, I think, in the campaign, because they don’t think like organizers.

Nonetheless, one of the things that happened in Wisconsin—which is still the case, I think, in the United States today—is that the organizers to recall Walker met their quota with the number of votes they thought they needed to recall him. They actually met that. What happened to them was the precincts and neighborhoods surrounding Milwaukee—which is all white—they voted in an extraordinarily high percentage rates. They voted 85 percent of registered voters, and they won the vote, based upon that, to keep Walker.

I spent time in the communities outside of Milwaukee. I formed a group, and we had forums, and had presentations about what Walker was doing to the progressive infrastructure. Because Wisconsin is a progressive state, it’s not a populist state. It’s a state that La Follette and the Progressives created. The university system was one of their greatest accomplishments, I think.

**Zaragoza:** Which has since been gutted by Walker.

**Leahy:** Yeah. And also, they lost, and so I think the AFSME itself, I think, doesn't have—somebody told me once, I don't know any more—but they can't have dues checkoff. It's also the case with the Teachers Union. And I think there's also other restrictions, like I think you have to get re-sanctioned each year or something to keep the union. It was Draconian measures.

So they were able, I think successfully, to weaken the union structures there, plus the public infrastructure, plus universities and the rest. And it was clear that that's what they were doing, but they accomplished it.

One of the things that was happening then was Obama never showed his face in Wisconsin during all that fight. Nothing. People of Wisconsin were left by themselves. So, they lost that campaign. And the social movement that initiated it got redirected in the electoral arena to basically support Democrats, and that killed it right there, I think.

I went back for the vote itself on my own. I rented a car, and I pretty much drove people to the polls in the all-black neighborhoods of Milwaukee. Milwaukee is one of the most segregated cities in the United States. I mean, downtown, for 60 blocks, going northwest, I guess, it's all poor, African American.

**Zaragoza:** We've talked about a lot of things. I just want to give you a chance to see if there's anything else that you'd like to touch on, cover, a story you'd like to tell.

**Leahy:** [Sighs] I don't think so. One of the great things about Evergreen I want to say is even when you get disappointed sometimes, the students were the ones that were always extraordinary. I really found the students at Evergreen to be people who are really prepared to experiment and learn, and do it in a responsible, respectful way—with each other and with the faculty. And especially with my stuff, with the communities that we got involved with, I thought they were really great.

And all the *expulsadas*, the people that got expelled from Mexico, I'm in touch with all of them. I've been to most of their weddings. I know where their kids are.

I'll tell you a great story, and then I'll stop. [chuckles] When we were in Mexico, when we were marching into the Zócalo, the Atenco farmers spotted the beautiful blonde, and her name was [Shawn Keety Nelson? 00:59:56]. She was from Bellingham. And she was also a physically fit person. They put her in the front lines, and she was the one that pointed the machete at the National Palace of Mexico, along with the other Atenco farmers, and her picture became the hit of the day in a lot of the media.

A couple years ago, I got a mailing from her saying, "Dan, this is the first time in 15 years that I'm on the front page of the paper," and she was at a folk festival playing her banjo.

But I tracked her, of course, like I kept track of everybody else. She was a wilderness expert. She got her Ph.D. in environmental sciences. Then the next thing I heard was that she had gotten a job as a faculty member at a university.

**Zaragoza:** Do you know where?

**Leahy:** She got a job as the full-time faculty member in the MES program at the Evergreen State College. [laughter] Which I think is great. And she's going to be a great faculty member. I think maybe that's one of my best student stories. That's a good one.

**Zaragoza:** Well, I'm sure somebody she will be interviewed for this project.

**Leahy:** Oh, yes, maybe. [chuckles]

**Zaragoza:** She'll tell stories about you.

**Leahy:** Yeah, right. I don't know about that. Anyhow, she'll be a great faculty member at Evergreen.

**Zaragoza:** Thank you very much.

**Leahy:** You're very welcome.