

**Interview Records of Ella Dietrich
Completed for the Black Lives Matter Oral History
Project**



**Ella Dietrich was interviewed By Stewart Buchanan
10/30/2023**

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Interviewer: Stewart Buchanan

Interview date: 30 October 2023

Location: DuPont Library

Length: 19:59 Minutes

Interview with Ella Dietrich

Ella Dietrich was born in 2003 on July 15th, in Madison, Wisconsin. She has worked in Milwaukee inner city Episcopal churches throughout her young adult life. She has also protested for many different causes such as BLM with her politically and socially active family. She attends Sewanee the University of the South and is a Neuroscience major, an active member of Kappa Delta sorority, and a sacristan at All Saints Chapel. She discusses her experiences within her community learning about BLM and their reactions to it, she comes from a “white middle class” neighborhood. They are progressive and supported the BLM movement with protests and signs. She explains that many people did not know, including herself, that they had never heard of BLM till the George Floyd incident. She describes her experience at a protest and what all went on during this time period in her community. Her experience with the inner city churches is what brought about her social activism. We discussed the current state of the BLM movement and how it is fizzling out because people no longer feel the need to be a part of something larger now that the covid lockdown has finished and people are back to their normal everyday lives. If people are not willing to be active in the movement again it will dissolve but eventually something similar will take its place. This is a part of the Black Lives Matter Oral History Program to document BLM in America.

FIELD NOTES – Stewart Buchanan

(compiled October 30th, 2023)

Narrator: Stewart Buchanan

Interviewer: Ella Dietrich

Date: October 30th, 2023

Location: DuPont Library ATC

Narrator: Stewart Buchanan is a junior at Sewanee: The University of the South, in Tennessee, pursuing a degree in History with a minor in Business. He has lived his whole life in Dallas, Texas with a short two-year break for boarding school. Currently Stewart is a full-time student as well as a defensive linebacker for the Sewanee Football team.

Interviewer: Ella Dietrich is an undergraduate student at Sewanee: The University of the South, currently completing an oral history project for the seminar course “Black Power to Black Lives Matter” taught by Dr. Maginn.

Description of Interview: The interview was conducted in the DuPont Library ATC at 8:30am. The interview starts right away, with background information. Dietrich starts the interview with the date and time of the recording and the basic information about where Buchanan is from and where he was raised. The interview lasted approximately 16 minutes. On the whole, Buchanan was helpful with giving his own perspective coming from a more conservative background. Buchanan answered all questions that were asked even if it felt repetitive. This was a short interview and I hope to do a follow up to extract a little bit more information

Additional Notes on interview: I recorded the interview in study room C of the DuPont Library ATC.

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Stewart Buchanan ([00:01](#)):

This is Stewart Buchanan from Sewanee, the University of the South. It is Monday, October 30th, 2023 at 7:30 AM I'm with

Ella Dietrich ([00:15](#)):

Ella Dietrich

Stewart Buchanan ([00:17](#)):

And you are from

Ella Dietrich ([00:18](#)):

Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Stewart Buchanan ([00:20](#)):

Thank you Ella Dietrich for being here.

Ella Dietrich ([00:22](#)):

Thank you.

Stewart Buchanan ([00:24](#)):

So where are you originally from?

Ella Dietrich ([00:26](#)):

Madison, Wisconsin. I haven't moved much around.

Stewart Buchanan ([00:30](#)):

Where'd you raised in Virginia for a little bit.

Ella Dietrich ([00:33](#)):

Yes, so my dad went to seminary and I was raised in an Episcopal background. That was in Alexandria, Virginia. And then we moved back to Wisconsin and I'm in Milwaukee and I've been there since I was about four years old.

Stewart Buchanan ([00:47](#)):

Where did you find community as a child

Ella Dietrich ([00:50](#)):

Being raised the Episcopal community, a lot of my community was in church, so there were a lot of older people that was kind of fostered by my dad, just kind of being the leader of that organization. I've also found community at school just in friends and I kind of continue to find that today because different groups of people from all over and I still have that Episcopal background. I work in All Saints as a ston and I get to prep in services, be a part of those services. I organize people to come in and greet and serve on that team.

Ella D Interview (Completed 11/10/23)

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Stewart Buchanan ([01:27](#)):

Where do you find community today?

Ella Dietrich ([01:31](#)):

I think those little spaces and pockets that I can weave my way into. I think a lot of my community comes from working at Sterling's and that's a lot of different people coming then a lot of people who are in different circles than maybe the neuroscience community or the church community, people who are not as religiously motivated, and even just people who come in. There's a lot of really fascinating professors that maybe have been retired and I haven't worked with.

Stewart Buchanan ([02:02](#)):

What is your occupation and what was your journey to this job?

Ella Dietrich ([02:07](#)):

I think that I have multiple jobs on campus. As I talked about, I'm a sacristan, I help bring people in to greet. I work behind the scenes at services and then I work as a barista or Sterling's shift manager. I organize everyone on my shift, make sure everyone's there. If anyone's not there I have to call them and get a cover. And then I am working as a nanny at home and I do babysitting all over. I think that that progression has been just having an brother, always watching him and then just being a person in the community that is trusted with their kids being watched by me.

Stewart Buchanan ([02:48](#)):

Who inspires you and what traits do these individuals have?

Ella Dietrich ([02:52](#)):

I think my mom inspires me. She gets doctorate of physical therapy, which is really cool. I've seen her move throughout her and I've always wanted to do something with kids and then a helping profession. So I am on my occupational therapy route. I'm very excited. I'm doing neuroscience here and then hopefully going to grad school and she works with kids who are from birth to three and they have various physical disabilities and I hope to do something like that in my future. I'll see my dad move throughout his career and that's what inspires me to work at the church because I know what community he has fostered and I want to be a part of something like that.

Stewart Buchanan ([03:31](#)):

What traveling have you done?

Ella Dietrich ([03:33](#)):

I've always wanted to do more. We do a lot of trips in Canada, just a lot of backpacking, canoeing. This past winter break we went to Korea. We were in Seoul for one of my cousin's weddings, which is really fun. And past that we've done Stockholm Oslo in Norway. I think that we've traveled to London, but I really enjoyed that.

Stewart Buchanan ([03:57](#)):

What's your favorite type of food?

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Ella Dietrich ([04:00](#)):

I really like Indian food. I don't know what led me there. I think my dad's a really good cook and he's always wanted try new foods. He makes the best non for some reason. As a man from Israel, I really like Teka Masala. I think that's my favorite food.

Stewart Buchanan ([04:18](#)):

How have you experienced international cultures in your life?

Ella Dietrich ([04:23](#)):

Well, I think a lot with my dad's family, even though he is a priest, he's raised ethnically Jewish, so I have a lot of that. His side of the family has a lot of different foods that I've tried. I've been to Temple before because my grandma just wanted me to be exposed to it. And then on my mom's side, we have a lot of different Swedish dishes. We are in our mixed in that Swedish culture in Rockford, Illinois. For some reason they have a lot of Norwegian and Scandinavian folk there, so I've gotten to know lots of stories.

Stewart Buchanan ([05:01](#)):

How do you receive the news?

Ella Dietrich ([05:04](#)):

I think my phone, I'm in Snapchat, which is really not the best news, but a lot of it comes through Instagram and then just talking to my parents pretty often they kind of bring it up sometimes.

Stewart Buchanan ([05:17](#)):

What was your experience with social media?

Ella Dietrich ([05:21](#)):

I got social media on my iPod Touch when I was probably 10 years old. I think 12 downloaded Instagram and was on Snapchat pretty often, so it's been a while. I'm kind of getting frustrated with it right now. So many notifications going on and I'm in charge of all of these organizations, so it's kind of pressury with All Saints and I do the Growing Grace posts and that's just community outreach. And then I'm also in

charge of the Kappa Delta Instagram, which is in its own pressure. I don't, we have to get involved with nationals and make sure everything's approved.

Stewart Buchanan ([06:06](#)):

What apps do you have for your social media?

Ella Dietrich ([06:10](#)):

So probably most used TikTok, unfortunately, I don't know. And then Instagram, Snapchat, dunno, maybe like AB reel. I don't think that's still downloaded my phone, but I think, yeah.

Stewart Buchanan ([06:27](#)):

How did you first encounter the Black Lives Matter movement?

Ella Dietrich ([06:31](#)):

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I think that living in Milwaukee and already being historically segregated place, it's always been in the background. I worked in a church in very inner city Milwaukee that always had posters up, hashtag b lmm and then just signed in the community. I live in a very kind of progressive community, mostly younger people, a lot of millennials that were very involved, but I think me, myself, probably only post George Floyd, our church was very involved. We did protesting in Milwaukee downtown and in our own short wood community, which is a little bit of a suburb.

Stewart Buchanan ([07:24](#)):

Sorry. What is your opinion of the Black Lives Matter movement?

Ella Dietrich ([07:31](#)):

I don't think I have many negative views on the Black Lives Matter movement. I think it's been mostly positive, just raising people's voices who have not necessarily been heard in the past. Just getting people talking I think has been their biggest win. I think. I know a lot of people in my community had never heard of Black Lives Matter, and when George Floyd happened, they were really, I avidly protesting and just getting involved through social media and I think that there may have been overstimulation of the media. I think it's in the media. I think it's so easy to just go on Instagram and repost something and have no emotional connection to it.

Stewart Buchanan ([08:22](#)):

So

Ella Dietrich ([08:22](#)):

I think that getting people out there in the streets or some kind of protesting that has been beneficial for

the movement.

Stewart Buchanan ([08:32](#)):

You already talked a little bit about your community's reaction to BLM, but would you like to go more in depth on that?

Ella Dietrich ([08:39](#)):

Yes. So I live in Charlotte, Wisconsin, which is just right outside Milwaukee, which is a pretty big city in terms of the landscape of Wisconsin. So we are probably a more progressive town village, so everyone's pretty involved in social media, what's going on. Everyone was pretty pro Black Lives Matter. There's a town adjacent that's not so, but we had lots of protesting going on. I was very involved. I did protesting inside the city, which was a lot more beneficial to me because I was surrounded by people who were personally affected by Black Lives Matter. My town is mostly Caucasian, white, middle class people, so there was not too much difference in affluence or background. It was really cool to talk to people who were maybe older African-American inside the city because they had a totally different perspective than I've ever experienced. So it was really good to get those outside perspectives.

Stewart Buchanan ([09:52](#)):

So you went to a protest, what was that like?

Ella Dietrich ([09:57](#)):

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My parents have been always interested in letting us speak our mind, so we've, because Madison is pretty close, that's the capital of Wisconsin. We've been to Madison a couple of times just for governmental protests, so I've kind of been exposed to protesting already. But it was very much, a lot of the people, especially when I was in inner city Milwaukee, were very passionate about this topic, had been personally affected. It was a large group of different backgrounds, different races, and I mean it was really cool. I'd think that I felt a little bit out of place.

([10:45](#)):

I think I was, we were 18 when we were going through this, so I wasn't exactly super mature. I was just kind of trying to find my way around with all of these adults who knew what they were talking about. I think I did feel ill-informed on the topic. I had just known it through social media, so I wish I been, I knew more about the background, people were talking about Trayvon Martin and I wish I had known who Trayvon Martin was at the time because then I could have been more applicable to me and I had just heard about George Floyd and been talking about it with my peers and I dunno

Stewart Buchanan ([11:26](#)):

Which generation was most affected by Black Lives Matter movement.

Ella Dietrich ([11:32](#)):

I think that when we've talked about it as a class, the older generations aren't as pleased with the Black Lives Matter progression and what has really been prevalent is the youth's reaction. So social media reposting it, getting people involved. When we talk about, oh my gosh, the national poet who spoke at the inauguration, she was really good. Oh, I forgot what the question was. I'm sorry.

Stewart Buchanan ([12:00](#)):

The question was which generation was most affected by the Black Lives Matter movement?

Ella Dietrich ([12:06](#)):

I think definitely our generation, because we were in that Globe pandemic, we were exposed to the video of George Floyd and it was a shock because I mean I am a white person, so I have never been racially profiled, but looking at the depth and the complexity of, oh my gosh, these are what, this is why my peers are maybe cautious around the police or something like that made me want to stand up and get involved through protest or just making conversation with those people who had been affected. So I think definitely our generation.

Stewart Buchanan ([12:47](#)):

How's the Black Lives Matter movement impacted your life?

Ella Dietrich ([12:53](#)):

I think it's made me more cognizant, cautious of what I bring up, what I'm talking about with my peers, not racial bias, but my own, what I bring in my lack of racial profiling that's happened in my life, the things that I've never experienced because I'm white, I always need to think about that sometimes because some of my peers have experienced that. I've talked to some people that have been pulled over for no reason and that happens a lot in Milwaukee. So it's just given me perspective into why that happens, why they may be cautious. And then also just my peers voices I think have been amplified because they have a voice now. We had a large protest at my high school and I got to hear personal

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perspectives from talk about their experiences. A black person, one of my best friends is a really good poet and she did a lot of work with that Milwaukee community and especially in the more affluent side of our community. But the community's over, she reached out to them and they had Black history month stuff and we did a lot of presentations during the BLM time, which is cool.

Stewart Buchanan ([14:07](#)):

Has Black Lives Matter affected how you talk with your family and friends?

Ella Dietrich ([14:11](#)):

I think that, as I said before, it's probably made me more cautious on what I bring up. I think that I,

seeing what we saw during George Floyd and doing further research past that has made me more informed in maybe how I talk about, I dunno that I bring up the police very often, but if I did how I would be representing them or how I would be talking about it, especially if there was someone of color there.

Stewart Buchanan ([14:46](#)):

How has the Black Lives Matter movement changed how you interact with people of other races other than not bringing up the police?

Ella Dietrich ([14:55](#)):

Okay. I think that Black Lives Matter has opened my eyes in terms of historical racism. How have they felt their voice has been heard in terms of the whole community. So how can I amplify their voice is really how it's impacted how I talk to them. Recognizing what just being a white person means in terms of what can I get away with kind of stuff and knowing that maybe it might not be the same, and how are some ways that we can treat that and discuss it in which people of the black community can be further understood and not always criminalized right away.

Stewart Buchanan ([15:55](#)):

How do you think the Black Lives Matter movement has succeeded? You talked a little bit about that earlier.

Ella Dietrich ([16:01](#)):

I think that just getting the youth involved, I think we were 18 what happened, but I saw tons of little kids going around with the little tattoos or screaming, the protests or just continuing to be amplifying those voices is really important and especially as kids get involved with screens, they're going to be looking at all, all these terrible influences, which I have the same stuff. Things come up on my TikTok and I'm like, I do not want to see this. But getting that more positive news in their lives. How can we lift up these people who have been historically put down?

Stewart Buchanan ([16:43](#)):

Do you think the movement has failed?

Ella Dietrich ([16:49](#)):

I don't think that they have gotten the results they've been looking for. I think that we're looking for simple freedoms, simple things that should not be biased, that are bias in terms of police brutality as we

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were talking about before. I think it happens not almost more now, but there is that. What has really changed?

Stewart Buchanan ([17:17](#)):

What is the state of race relations in the United States, in your opinion?

Ella Dietrich ([17:23](#)):

I mean, I don't think very good. I think people would describe it as better than it was before, but I think now that it's more in the open, I think there is some passive aggressiveness and it's not always in your face racism as much just racial bias that a lot of people have. I think that when I talk to older people about it, like my grandma, she's like, oh, everything's good. But they did not have the same conversations as we do now. Interactions between races, maybe what races are higher on the hierarchy or think they were racism in your face and we are racism behind the screen or racism in the media or in the police.

Stewart Buchanan ([18:12](#)):

What do you think is the future of the Black Lives Matter movement?

Ella Dietrich ([18:15](#)):

Really hard to describe what that future is because our future or our history with Black Lives Matter as what 21 year olds, 20 year olds, is that we were in lockdown. This terrible thing happened with George Floyd. Everyone was informed. This hashtag went around BLM and suddenly everyone was involved, or at least everyone in my community was involved. And because we were so isolated, it was so easy to get so closely involved that now that the world has opened back up again, everyone's kind of gotten distracted and you don't see as much protests and activism, especially coming from the white community.

([18:59](#)):

I don't think that that's the Black Lives Matter's fault. I think that that's everyone getting distracted and everyone having their own priorities. I think that prioritizing people's freedoms needs to be involved. I think that needs to be more motivation, especially coming from the white community in conjunction with helping these people working for the Black Lives Matter. I think getting the youth involved is really what has pushed the BLM movement forward. I think that's really important for sustaining the movement. And yeah, I think that if they don't continue to get the youth involved, continue to have that voice out there that it will fizzle out and something will get to place. But I don't know, I guess we'll see. Right?

Stewart Buchanan ([19:55](#)):

Yep. Alright, well thank you so much for your time, Ella.

Ella Dietrich ([19:58](#)):

Thank you.

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