Bret and Heather 17th DarkHorse Podcast Livestream\_ Evergree...

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**SPEAKERS**

Bret, Heather

**Bret** 00:09

Hey folks, welcome to this special livestream edition of The Dark Horse podcast. I'm here with Dr. Heather Hyang. Who was I kid you not evergreens most popular professor and for very good reason. We are going to talk today about what took place at evergreen both before and after the protests that turned so quickly into riots. This is a, an anniversary for us. It's the third anniversary of the day that 50 students I had never met showed up at my classroom, accusing me of racism and demanding that I either resign or be fired. I refused. And things descended from there into certainly chaos. And I would argue and argue, which was in fact, the, the plan of many of the protesters. Alright. Where shall we begin?

**Heather** 01:04

I think you wanted to start. Before we talked a little bit about what evergreen had been in its past and how it was founded, about the spectacular and public nature of the collapse. Just start there. That's what you had said to me.

**Bret** 01:17

Yeah. The problem for us is that we were for reasons that will surely come up in the in our discussion here. We were fully ensconced in a life in Olympia, Washington, and our, our teaching lives were the core of it. So we spent 14 years in my case, 15 years and years, teaching in an environment that freed us to do remarkable things, when the collapse happened. And suddenly, the existence of evergreen was on many people's minds who didn't know anything about it beforehand. And our roles there was suddenly front and center. It gave people an impression of the place. And inevitably, that impression would be misleading. I couldn't help it. Because, you know, at best, it was a vignette. And it was a vignette at a moment that things were very abnormal. But it has been kind of a struggle, since the thing occurred, to try to correct the record so that people, you know, we don't want it to be recorded in people's minds as a cartoon, we want it to be recorded as the actual descent into madness that it was but descent from what that's really the tough part, the public nature of the descent overrode the true nature of what was actually going on there, which wasn't all good. But nonetheless, there was nuance Yeah,

**Heather** 02:44

some, particularly on the political right would argue that this is the inevitable and of any place that had broken so many of the rules, the status quo model of higher ed, as evergreen did, and we have and will continue to push back quite firmly on that there was this, this didn't have to happen. Certainly evergreen ended up being game of ball and thus, as anything that is capable, will happen. It got gamed, but there was nothing about the original nature of the school and its attempt to get rid of some of the top down generic sit in rows and ask question, you'll speak only when spoken to or model of higher ed, that evergreen was resisting and had broken that inherently led to this. And in fact, you know, it's some of the evidence for that is that none of our students, and indeed, none of the students have the handful of other faculty there who were doing, and I'm sure there were more than a handful, but it wasn't everyone by any means. There were a handful of other faculty there whom we were close with. None of our students, one of their students were part of this madness. They were there trying to engage their brains, their bodies, their minds, in a pursuit of truth, beauty, compassion, any number of things. But they weren't they were not invested in or participating in the madness. Yeah,

**Bret** 04:13

in fact, the thing that occurred to me this morning, as I was reflecting on the anniversary, was that at some level, evergreen, where it worked was it was a an attempt to instantiate the sort of Star Trek model of getting along where basically one puts aside the superficial stuff, and you team up for some sort of a larger goal and you know, so the, the aspect of the college that worked, really did manage to look past people's superficial characteristics and to very good effect.

**Heather** 04:53

Okay, so it seems like we're kind of we're kind of going someplace, right? I thought you wanted to start with something spectacular, talking about what the madness look like. We're gonna get But as long as we're doing this, let's say we want this to be amusing and cathartic, and something that actually gets us someplace someplace new. But let's just Can I just go into what I what I had thought about us doing second since we're sort of easing into it anyway. So I'm just going to talk a little bit to begin, about what the mission of the college was, and, and in particular, a nearly founding faculty who died last month who was Of particular note, and I think he really epitomized what evergreen could be. So evergreen was founded by visionaries and innovators, by people who in the late 1960s, saw the status quo in higher ed as too nimble. I mean, it's too rigid, and not nimble enough, not interactive enough for the times or for the future that they imagined was coming. The founding faculty were an eclectic bunch. And you taught with a few of them, actually. And we were at evergreen starting in 2002 and 2003, respectively, for the tail end of the tenure of the founding faculty, just a few of them remained at the point that we showed up at that point. You talked with Tom Rainey and David Milam and I think, I think that was in terms of the founding faculty who you talked with. And the the faculty who weren't quite founding but got there really early included, Steve Herman, who died last month. And Steve was a great man. He was a great educator and naturalist, a great mentor and a friend. He was also an ornithologist and Khan, did he know birds? I don't, I've never met anyone else. Who knew birds as well as he did, although his students caught up to him pretty, you know, we're at work to catch up with him. His students adored him. His colleagues did not. And I think that was that was telling

**Bret** 06:46

if I can, if I can interject one thing. So students very frequently bounced between your programs and my programs and into the programs that we taught together. Yeah. In general, the best of our students during the summer would go off and they would take summer ornithology with Steve. So although I barely knew him, he was like the third member of the team in some ways, because what they learned from us on campus during the year, they then put into practice in the field with birds. And so anyway, he was a very important figure in our in our community.

**Heather** 07:20

That's right. And apparently, apparently, I didn't know this. But in looking back through some old emails in the last few days, I found that he actually used to talk about running his own separate college within evergreen, as as we did as well, right. So he also, not only did he know birds, he knew it was possible at evergreen, and in the natural world, and in the hearts and minds of students, and in so much else, too. So I was told that the position that I was hired to, in a common tradition in academia was to replace someone and that someone in my case was Steve. And it was clearly impossible to actually replace him. But I was I was his academic. So doppelganger. You

**Bret** 07:59

replaced him in the daytime curriculum. We continue to teach summer ornithology that's right route throughout the period that we were there.

**Heather** 08:05

That's right. So I was told by many faculty at evergreen during my tenure there that Steve was quarrelsome. And a curmudgeon and cantankerous and not worth engaging with. And I was then very grateful to become friends with him quickly. Once I was even told by a faculty colleague, when I was being a thorn in this person side that I was just like Steve Herman. And I smiled and gave thanks for the unintended compliment, which further work to this guy. As you I think you were in the room when this happened. Steve Herman, appreciated, honest and honorable feedback. He craved it, and not many people gave it to him because they found him scary, and they thought that he it had to be his way or the highway, but in fact, it was quite the opposite. He he had no patience, though, for complacency for sycophancy for cowardice, or for laziness. He had no patience for these things, and he gave people the truth whether they wanted to hear it or not. And this is of course, part of a big part of why he had a reputation for being cantankerous because people didn't always like what he had to say to them. He was kind and wonderful and honorable. But he he did not suffer fools lightly.

**Bret** 09:20

I was just going to say he did not suffer administrators like

**Heather** 09:23

well, and this is, he said, though, I did have a line here. He was not cantankerous, despite what some of his former colleagues have claimed what he was was totally intolerant of bullshit. He had courage, wit and humor, depth of reasoning, compassion and love for all forms of life except perhaps, for cowards and soulless bureaucrats, for which he had no love and no patience. So just two more things about Steve before we use this to embark on talking about what what evergreen was more broadly. One of my favorite memories of Steve is from sitting around a campfire, as so many deep and meaningful memories are especially from evergreen It was 2012 and He and I were at another pottier, a field station in Sonora, Mexico on the Sea of Cortez. Steve had first taken students had first taken students to this magical place. It's land and water together, birds and mangroves and cactus 10 years earlier, and in the interim, his daughter and son in law, Sally and Adam had turned it into a small, rustic, beautiful Field Station every year, every spring, I guess it was every winter quarter, Steve guts, some number of students, some of them between four and 10. To do field work down and have a patio. And this year, I was sponsoring the contract of those students. And I was able to go down there for 10 days. And I was I was visiting the students whose work I was overseeing and experiencing firsthand this place that I had heard so much about both from Steve and to some degree from Sally and Adam, who I didn't know well at that point, but also from the generations of students before. Steve had driven down with a friend, and it was already old, it was already retired, but he had driven down near the border of Sonora and Sinaloa in Mexico. And one night, after a full day of fieldwork that we all engaged in, under a nearly full moon, all of us sat around the campfire, on this thin strip of shoreline on the Sea of Cortez, and passed around a bottle of ludwigia, which is the local gavai liquor and play guitar. Steve did as well as a few of the students and told stories on Steve stories were always full of humor, and, and bashing of those who needed bashing and honor for those who deserved honor. Tales of birds and people mostly, and just just stunning. So then, in early 2017, when evergreen was blowing up, Steven, I had an in an interaction online about the vandalism that had taken place at the Natural History Museum, because one of the things that happened during the protests that turned into riots at evergreen, was that some of the activists went after not all of campus, but specifically the science buildings in the library. And a number of windows were smashed at the Natural History Museum and in the science labs. And other vandalism happened at the library and also at the newly named les purse Hall named for the former president, who was an excellent president of the college. So he and I were going back and forth talking about what to do and how it wasn't actually even safe to go on to campus to do the cleanup, but that the specimens and the collections were at risk. And he said, with regard to the anarchie on campus, quote, I, too am in disbelief. I've made some minor efforts to find colleagues to join me in supporting Brett silences a usual result. But some Express support, but want to keep it secret. Who would have thought we had evergreen? We're up Bob.

**Bret** 12:55

Yeah, this is such an important part of the story of what happened. And actually points rather exactly to what I think one of the major themes and lessons of the entire thing was for, for me and for us, which is that crisis reveals people's character for both better and worse. And we saw spectacular examples of both. We didn't buy will say we saw much less of it much less courage amongst the faculty than I would have hoped. And expected, hoped and expected people that we would have counted as friends were absolutely silent, or worse, or worse. Yeah, some of them are far worse. And that's a very troubling thing to discover. Amongst the faculty, the ones who did stand up some very surprising people came to our aid, but almost all of them retired.

**Heather** 13:53

Yeah, they were almost all Emeritus, which means that the college had no grasp on them anymore.

**Bret** 13:58

Well, it did. But it also meant that they came from an era in which the college was really about something much more substantive. And anyway, I know I got told and I think you got told that we were like founding faculty members in the wrong generation frequently. Which, you know, I take to have been a compliment. But anyway, the thing is, current faculty did not show up. A few of them did a very, very tiny number like

**Heather** 14:25

parasite protection is the one whose name most people will know if they know any of them. But there were a few others there were a few and some of the academic staff as well. And so I was gonna say that, like staff

**Bret** 14:34

staff were more likely to stand up even though they were far less safe than the tenured faculty. Yep. And then the people who shined the brightest were students, so

**Heather** 14:44

100% a huge fraction of our students. And I mean, really a majority of our students we heard from and we're, we're actively trying to fight this thing. And we've Of course heard from many other students and you know, many of you will be familiar with Benjamin boys who we came to know in the aftermath of this, and he has done stunning work documenting what happened in the year or two leading up to it and what happened afterwards. And you know that that points to the student body that actually did exist at evergreen, that evergreen has gotten mocked, for instance, for having an acceptance policy that was like 99%, off and 98 99%. And it always felt to us like this actually, was a positive thing. That No, this was not a selective college, it wasn't a highly selective college, or even apparently a selective college by most measures. But what it allowed, and you know, sure, there were people who came to the door that were not capable of actually doing any kind of work that was useful. And for the most part, we didn't see those because over in the sciences, students who really were not interested in doing any work, or or capable, didn't even show up. But we had so many students who had been failed by school. And they were, many of them were told that they had failed school, but I will say no, they were failed by school. And some of them came in to our classrooms saying, I know I'm dumb, because I've been told I'm dumb all my life by teachers, and not a single student who ever came to me and said, that was dumb, or incapable or lazy, or incoherent or, or incapable of developing deeper critical thinking on issues, evolutionary and beyond. So I want to,

**Bret** 16:29

there are a lot of things wrapped up in what you just said. And I want to highlight a few of them. Yeah. One thing is the lack of selectivity of the college produced two populations inside the college and the two populations have everything to do with what unfolded. Yeah, so you had people who showed up there, because it was the College of last resort, they could get in, they couldn't get in somewhere else. And many of them largely through no fault of their own, through the failure of the schools that they had come from, didn't have the skills to do the work. And then there were there was a large population of misfits, and odd balls and unusual people, people just who didn't have a taste for the elite colleges. And we saw them all. And because you know, it's a strange thing to say, but because you and I were both very, very popular, our classes overflowed. There were more,

**Heather** 17:20

we never didn't have a waitlist never didn't with declining enrollment, when everyone else was having nearly everyone else having a hard time filling classes, we had waitlist.

**Bret** 17:28

And what this meant, oddly, we weren't in most cases, except in the rare case of study abroad. In most cases, we were not allowed to decide who came into our classes. But there was a backdoor mechanism. And we used it. So there was this tradition, before any term began, was the thing called academic fair, in which you could sit down with any professor you wanted to and talk to them about the program they were teaching. And

**Heather** 17:56

before registration happens, so yes, is this a way for students to I'm going to hit the consumer metaphor here, but shop for the full time program that they would be taking for a quarter or two quarters or three quarters. And this was a month or so before registration, or you know, the date of registration a month or more before classes started.

**Bret** 18:12

So when students asked us for advice, we told them a lot of stuff, we would tell them whether the program they were considering taking was likely to be any good. But the key thing was, it made all the difference in the world who was teaching a good professor who was teaching something you maybe weren't that interested in would probably give you something of high value. That terrible professor who was teaching something that you were nominally interested in was very unlikely to teach you anything. And you reliable to feel because these were full time programs you reliable to feel trapped. So anyway, the academic fair was like an opportunity to interview professors. But I also took it and you took it as an opportunity to interview students and figure out whether or not they were a good fit. And in my case, in particular, often, they weren't because I wasn't a normal kind of professor and so you know, you weren't had to be ready for my deficits. And if you were prepared for them, there was a lot you could get out of it. But But in any case, by discouraging students who wouldn't be a good fit for the program, and encouraging those who would be a good fit. And in my case, I always let in a few extras, people who showed particular promise but didn't, you know, didn't register in time or something, didn't make it into the class, I would let those in. And this would adjust the the character of the room, the room would be really high quality. And my feeling was, as long as you have one person in the room who was willing to volley with you, you could teach the others to do it, and you could get a really great teaching environment up and running pretty quickly. Absolutely. So anyway, that created an opportunity for us to build a community of people who were super high caliber, even in a college that wasn't selective, right? We weren't allowed to be formally selected, but informally it happened. And this,

**Heather** 20:02

we also, students would often show it from past programs and sit in on one or more weeks of classes simply because they want it to continue to be part of the conversation that we're having the ongoing evolutionary conversation. And so having these, having these basically alumns of our programs in the room very often also raised the level of discussion in the room.

**Bret** 20:24

Oh, absolutely. They functioned like ta is, and they were there just because they were hungry to find the community was still having the conversation that they had benefited from. I late in the game found out that there was a proper term for this, which I borrowed from Steve Jobs. Steve Jobs, who famously dropped out of was it read? Yeah, I think, I think okay, Steve Jobs dropped out of college. But he didn't stop going. I kept going, he was trying to save his parents, their tuition money, but he wasn't interested in not learning. And so he went and just took what he wanted. So he called himself a drop in, right. And these students who came back to our programs became drop Ian's, in any case, it created a couple of things. One, it created a very delightful teaching environment for us, which I think made us a little bit less aware of just how bad things were descending into madness in the larger college, because our community was healthy. The larger communities descent into madness was mean, we were aware of it, but I don't think we were as alarmed as we should have been, which meant that it until the last year, it would have caught us off guard.

**Heather** 21:36

Although I do remember conversations certainly between us and a few of our other colleagues who were saying that students remain amazing what we can do with the curriculum and with education with this model is amazing. But when I come onto campus, I just keep my head down and go from my classroom to my office and home, I don't want to increasingly, we were fighting over the last several years, that are our supposed peers, or going off the rails

**Bret** 22:03

are supposed to peers were going off the rails going after each other and the good ones were keeping their head down. Actually, maybe as long as we're here, can we look at some of those pictures from our

**Heather** 22:13

sure you got these up? I don't know, I don't know what you've got in store. So

**Bret** 22:17

let me just set this up a little bit. So Heather became excellent at creating study abroad programs at a price that was unheard of. And the price really shouldn't matter. Except that what it meant was that a range of students could go on these study abroad programs who never would have been able to afford it. At a normal college doing this at a normal rate,

**Heather** 22:38

the price was incredibly low, it was incredibly and I worked with them to the students who are eligible for Pell Grants. I worked with them to get them some some funds basically scholarships that over half of my students who applied every time I did study abroad got the such that they actually went into debt very little for the experience of a six 811 week study abroad and Panama Ecuador, right. So

**Bret** 23:01

these things were inexpensive, which meant they were more diverse than they would otherwise be. They were intensive, you got them help you work with them to be able to go. And they were also just much better than you would be able to source anywhere else. So the final one, the one I went on with you I didn't that we did together. Yes, we did together. And you know, I'm plenty good at showing up and teaching. But I was not responsible for making this happen. That was that was all Heather. But

**Heather** 23:31

it was it was a totally different experience. I mean, all of my study abroad were amazing, and flawed and glorious. But this last one that we did together was the two of us, our two children, 30 students 30. So 11 weeks

**Bret** 23:46

back would have been with all yours. So we had learned so again, evergreen classes are full time or at least they were full time, which meant you a professor teaches one class, students take one class, you're with each other full time, it's your job. And it's

**Heather** 24:01

already been in the field with them in the Pacific Northwest. For a couple of weeks, we'd really we'd seen them. And we'd selected them from all of the applicants to get to the 50 that we started with in the fall. And then we trimmed that number farther to travel with 30 students to Ecuador for 11 weeks in January through April of 2016.

**Bret** 24:23

And for those of you who don't know Ecuador, Ecuador is a small country by some measures, but it is terrifically diverse. Not only does it contain the most diverse habitat on Earth, as far as we know, in the Amazon, one of the places that we visited, but it also has, you know, the Altiplano high in the Andes. It's got cloud for us. It's got an amazing diversity of habitats and creatures and cultures. And so anyway, it's a spectacular place and to spend hours in the Galapagos Of course, to spend 11 weeks touring with students that you know really well who are You know, because this was evergreen we were biologists but we were teaching about paleo anthropology. We were teaching about evolutionary ecology, we were teaching about evolutionary dynamics,

**Heather** 25:10

and cultural history and, and modern cultural norms and expectations in Ecuador as well. And so

**Bret** 25:17

we got to basically use Ecuador as the test case for all of these things, we could go look at it. So anyway, this was happening the year before evergreen came apart. Now we want you to see what evergreen looked like when it was firing on all cylinders. So let's, let's put up some some photos. All right, well, I'm going to set this image up, and then hopefully, Zack will be able to put it on the screen for you. The image is a picture of 30 students plus Zach, with a bus in kind of the distant background. And these students are experiencing something utterly remarkable. Now, what has just happened is these students have just encountered the headwaters of the Amazon, they have just crossed into the watershed that becomes hundreds of miles away the Amazon River, and where they are standing it is but utricle. Behind them, you can see the first cecropia trees they've ever encountered, these will become a very common feature of our discussions, because they're such an important feature of tropical forests. But in any case, they're up here in the clouds in this cold location watching, you know, essentially the process that creates the Amazon at its very beginning. And they're excited, you can see that these are students that are happy to be having this experience. They didn't expect it. But they're excited by what they're able to actually walk up to and touch.

**Heather** 26:53

It's such an amazing picture really takes me back. And we've heard from two of the people in this picture in the last couple of days with regard to this being an anniversary that's coming up. And we've been in touch of course with another we work with on a regular basis. So you know, yeah, 333 of the people in this photo we've we've been in touch with in the last week, and you know, probably another 10 of them. Were in regular contact with.

**Bret** 27:21

So in fact, for those of you who are watching and not just listening, the woman kneeling in the front row is Odette who will come up here in a couple of other photos. She's a good friend of ours, we've seen her recently. But anyway, her story actually tells the story of what happened at evergreen so well that anyway, I think we just can't avoid exploring. So let's go a little further here. So this image is of Heather and Zach and Toby although Zach is barely recognizable in this photo and a student of ours who we've run into this is karneval This is the night before Carnival, which is the night of the grandfather Night of the grandfathers and the tradition in in Ecuador, basically is for people to run around like mad men spraying each other with foam and anyway our students have taken to this and they're participating and we're participating and this is a great cultural lesson and you know I don't know that the foam tradition is wonderful or absurd or whatever it might be but it's the reality of what takes place in this beautiful colonial city in Ecuador and you know here we are having run into a student who's obviously fully integrated himself this tradition yeah let's see maybe the hat factory alright so here are our students is a day trip from kuinka day trip out of kuinka these students are watching women make Panama hats in a a an all female hat collective that exists in Ecuador and so we saw the whole process of of how they made hats again no debt here is front and center let's see

**Heather** 29:12

how's it gonna be car has another day Yeah. Oh, okay. From conecuh

**Bret** 29:17

so this is a very surprising habitat that we are hiking through this is Ka Haas ka Haas natural National Park you can see these peaks which are almost always in shrouded in clouds it's ultra cold anyway in a really magical place. And I think we have a picture of let's see.

**Heather** 29:39

Another debt picture.

**Bret** 29:40

All right, so here's a debt. Alright, discovering car Haas National Park. Now, I hate to do this because in some sense, I don't want to Sully carhouse National Park or the wonderful reality of Odette with the terrible thing that happened to In some sense, it's parallel to what happened to us. You know, we were teaching in a way that was extremely rewarding and then something monstrous came for us. But I think I should read something that did not intend for this to be public, but I did ask her if it was okay if I read part of what she wrote. I will try to adjust it so that it makes sense. So she's discussing When did she write this? She that she sent it to me out of the blue this morning? Oh, this is today? Yeah, she she was realizing that it was the third anniversary of may 23. And that's important to her for the same reason it's important to us. So you know, a year after she was here in Costa National Park. She is discussing the meeting in which George bridges the president of the college has ostensibly, a agreed to address the concerns that the students have advanced. And he says that some left the address with confidence and assurance leaving the rest with even more confusion and questions, but as you know, there was no room for questions. These activists were acting as if they were bored, they wanted something to do. All in all students were upset that they had failed at college and decided to get the institution to pay for their shortcomings. I was diligently on campus that week, this would be week nine and 10. She said the museum got vandalized. Okay. This is the same thing you were referencing, that Steve had discussed. The cows windows were broken and shattered, people were roaming around with bats. There were no police campus was covered in graffiti. Normal students in quotes would not make eye contact with me on campus. They were afraid of me. They were afraid of my skin color. I was followed and prevented from entering lab one lab one building surrounded by a group of activists who were screaming all sorts of nonsense that were in fact shouting, I shouldn't be studying science. Their exact words were a piece of shit for studying science, crazy. People's lot our people's lives so corrupt, that they are going to actually take time to target and accost complete strangers. Do you know how much effort that takes how exhausting it is. She says I was able to leave the library which was barricaded by the protesters who were really writers at that point, he says I was able to leave the library solely based on the way I looked in comparison to the captors. I was confronted at lab one for the same reason. The second resistance was displayed proving myself not going along with the crowd. I was either deemed a lost soul, a trader or a white sympathizer. You're benefiting from white privilege. My captor said, I'll never forget that, by their own logic. So were they one thing I will never understand is how people cannot think for themselves. No matter where you fall, you must be able to think this is a college. There are supposed to be 1000s of thinkers present. What happened to them? Where did they go?

**Heather** 33:02

Oh, it's amazing. Yes, they are dead. I

**Bret** 33:04

know. It's It's so dead. And so it

**Heather** 33:06

never heard though me. She and you and I have talked a lot, many, many, many hours and three years since evergreen blew up. And I'd never The one thing in there I hadn't heard before was the other students who weren't part of the protests, avoided her were scared of her because of her color because of her skin color. It's astounding.

**Bret** 33:30

It's the most upsetting feature of this whole thing. Because I mean, I must tell you, I learned something about race from a debt as I've mentioned elsewhere, I took a debt to be black. But in talking to her about and she was very open with us. You know, her family his

**Heather** 33:56

mother mother has a Caribbean Afro Caribbean mother's European dad

**Bret** 33:59

is of European descent. And the fact is as one can easily imagine when somebody points you to it in her case, she doesn't feel black or not black. These are the two sides of her family and you know that, you know, one does not default to mother or father or one way of thinking or the other The point is, that's the nature of the way human beings are.

**Heather** 34:23

She's just she's just an extraordinary human being who's a scientist and a ballerina, and a writer and an artist and brilliant at phylogenetic trees and at field work and it's and she she was actually one of the students who came to evergreen entirely of her own volition she could have gotten in nearly anywhere. She She was an excellent student and not because she was a follower or sheep but because she was just an excellent student who is creative and hardworking and analytically beyond competent. She came to evergreen because she loved the model. And so she was not a misfit in any way arriving in our classroom. And, boy at this point, the point this picture was taken. She had been my student consistently for almost two full years and yours for only one quarter less than that. Yeah, I met her. And as with so many of the students, including almost all of the ones who were in that boat accident with me later in the same trip there as they entered college for the first time, yeah, went to college.

**Bret** 35:23

And so this, this highlights one of the things so Odette was simultaneously a student of ours and a friend of ours. And these two things were not in conflict. She put her trust in us for good reason, I think and it paid off for her. But this did not mean that we couldn't also be friends. And so she shows up all kinds of places. Those of us who've been following us carefully will know of the terrible boat accident that you were, you were in a debt was in the boat accident with you as badly injured as you were. The day before that boat accident, she and I had walked down the face of this crater together, the class had been looking at this volcanic crater. And we had spent, I don't know, half an hour an hour involved in conversation. I don't even remember what it was. But I do remember how fun it was walking down this crater with her and remarking on the biology that was there and talking about lives. I think she was talking to me, she she loves live theater, and she was talking to me about some of her favorites. But then also she shows up on the day of absence, I did not have class. It was a Wednesday and I did not have class scheduled. But I had said in the letter that became famous, I had said you should expect to find me on campus. And I didn't want not to live up to it. So I went to campus, and I ran into a debt. And we went and had a conversation for an hour. And I later asked her if she had arranged to find me to keep me out of trouble. And she said no, it hadn't even occurred to her. And in fact, we didn't even talk about day of absence. It wasn't Of course it wasn't worthwhile to have a conversation from our perspective. Yeah.

**Heather** 37:17

So do you want to take this down? You want to show a few more pictures before we move?

**Bret** 37:20

Let's move to a couple more pictures about this one. Yeah, let's look at this one. All right. This is a picture of students involved in a mud fight in the Mapco River. I love this one. I love this moment. So the napco is a tributary of the Amazon and later in the trip we will find ourselves in a different part of the Amazon and another tributary called if you're a punto a tributary of the Navajo but anyway here are these guys are having a mud fight they're having a mud fighting

**Heather** 37:53

in a tributary of the Amazon in in the Amazon basin in Ecuador. And you know what they're learning Yeah, this act this is education. This is the picture when I wrote that New York Times op ed on nature being risky and that's why students and everyone need it. This is the picture that I hoped could accompany that but it turns out that if you're writing about college students that they have college students do the art for the piece so it wasn't an option but this this qualifies as some of the highly educational work that these students were doing and of course they also did field work and they took data and they did analysis and they were pointed them out to us often by candlelight while swatting mosquitoes in remote places with you know no doors or screens or running water but this too they're having fun and learning okay what else did I hear

**Bret** 38:47

maybe that's oh I guess let's see

**Heather** 38:52

what is this that's a picture of a house again

**Bret** 38:58

yeah it's car house again. I guess if we go yeah, there's one last picture of car house this is interesting. Lucas leading a group of people Lucas who I also feel like could have gotten in anywhere but

**Heather** 39:17

oh yeah, for sure. really appreciated

**Bret** 39:19

the the unusual model and then maybe the last thing that's a self portrait that I took of you and me the night after the boat accident in which you very nearly died and I spent 45 minutes sure that you had So anyway, I don't know what that picture is doing here. But it's something important to me so I figured I'd include it.

**Heather** 39:45

Okay, maybe we can go back to non photos now. So you

**Bret** 39:52

go for it. Well, the thing about you know if we can just I hate to take advantage of What Odette has supplied us here. But what happened to our debt being confronted by other students accused of basically being a race traitor for studying science. This so encapsulates that confusion that was at the heart of the Evergreen riots and meltdown. That I just think it makes sense to spend just a moment thinking about what it implies somebody without race on their mind at all has decided that they even I mean, she didn't know that she was science oriented until, you know, she encountered you in that first program and saw that there was just all of this amazing power to understand that was potentially at her disposal did brilliantly. And then here she is being confronted by violent thugs who are trying to shame her into abandoning what she's discovered that's so wonderful, rather than what should have happened, which is that the whole college should have, you know, led people in the direction of ideas that actually empower you rather than turn you into into monsters. And so something about it just strikes me as the confrontation between the Civil Rights Movements understanding of the objective and this new intersectional garbage that is its its most dangerous foe.

**Heather** 41:29

So that's it. That's a good segue, I think I wanted to share something from one of the faculty, the Emeritus faculty, who stood up in defense of, of you and us and truth and reason, beginning in January of 2017. And it totally unexpected, and neither of us had any knowledge of Him, except that we imagined that he might fall on the other side of this, but he very much did not. So just an excerpt from Alan Nasser, who in his sign off reminds his sign off to this email reminds his readers that he is in fact not white. He says, I've been following the remarkable, truly remarkable posts on the alleged epidemic of racism rampant among evergreen faculty. This is in January of 2017. Let's be clear, he writes that there are no traces whatever of racism at evergreen is highly unlikely given the unmistakable force of racism in American society. But what is alleged by some very privileged people of color I should add, must be thought by the complainants to be a virtual epidemic. Given the sweeping and sometimes vitriolic nature of the complaints issued on this thread. There is in fact, no such epidemic on this campus. Later, in the same email, he says a small number of faculty and staff here have embarked upon a campaign and a series of posts that would look ludicrous and quasi pathological to most decent readers outside of this campus. And the real white fragility here is to be found among the white folks dripping with guilt and liable to intimidation.

**Bret** 42:52

Yeah, I did not imagine that island was going to show up in our defense. But I must say, it was so heartening and, you know, it goes back to the theme that we started with, which is the crisis reveals everyone's character. Exactly right. And you know, for those of you who are potentially facing such things in the world, this is an important thing, you should expect it to happen, and you should expect people to disappoint you. And you should expect people to show up with strengths you didn't know they have, because both things happen. What you shouldn't do is assume that because somebody is decent enough on a day to day basis, when there is no crisis, that they are not going to flee or turn on you. Just because they're a nice person. The fact is, cowardice is a very dangerous drug.

**Heather** 43:45

Yeah, it sure is. Now, you had mentioned some of the some of the crazy happening behind the scenes that, for the most part was not revealed to the world. I'd like to share just two examples of this from the first from February 15 2017. So when it was good and clear that this was going off the rails to us on the inside, but the rest of the world didn't know. A student by the name of Mike Penhaligon. I'm probably mispronouncing his name, writes, Dear Brett, to be clear, this is to all staff and faculty, I think and so some students were on this list because they were stupid. They were student employees. So he writes dear Brett, to be clear, as a scientist student, you and your racist colleagues. The reason I won't recruit future students, which independently incidentally was his job to recruit future students, you and your racist colleagues are the reason I won't recruit future students if the current reorganization that I support makes you uncomfortable. I have no question to lean in on supporting those plans. thoughtfully. Mike Penhaligon. I was thoughtful, so thoughtful, and then may 27. So four days into the riots, Stephen plasti, who signs off as Professor fortune, I have no idea what that begins on May 27, email this way. Thank you. And he names a bunch of people including Zoltan and Nyima who some viewers will be familiar with. And my apologies for slipping your words to which I now had far too many of my thoughts. This is I'm just including this as an example of the kind of language that critical theory produces in academics. So this this is an academic so. So in the grievant studies in critical theory that this, he thinks this makes sense. I am merely an adjunct attempt with little real status here and thus in a particularly vulnerable position. As such, I have remained silent in public. I have remained while silent while supremacist evolutionary just so stories as Stephen Jay Gould rightly called them with an entirely appropriate call out to the flatulent poet laureate of white supremacy. Rudyard Kipling have been promulgated, I have remained silent while privileged, whinge and moaned interminably as it tried to usurp the status of a beleaguered minority. And just skip some of this. It's ridiculous. And now propagandizing steps of the most thoughtfully self absorbed sort of been taken that invoke outside violence down upon a great many of my students, my partner, and myself, all of us truly vulnerable persons at evergreen, and in the larger region beyond on numerous axes of identity plainly visible, and otherwise. That's marvelous.

**Bret** 46:23

It is so marvelous. is Professor fortune like soldier for? Does he know what that means? That's a mercenary professor. I mean, that fits perfectly actually.

**Heather** 46:38

Oh, wait, there's one more from him. Later in the same email he thanks, Brett. Please be aware that this like all similar communications received previously and any that may be coming in the future are also being forwarded under separate cover to legal counsel.

**Bret** 46:53

Yeah, quick, and you put yet that I have not quite but yeah, that's so I was,

**Heather** 46:58

this is what caused us to look at each other over and over again and go, I can't believe that they keep on doubling down that they keep on doing these ridiculous things. And isn't it a shame that the world will never know? As it turns out, that the world did come to know. And yet still, they kind of

**Bret** 47:18

won? Oh, that they clearly one Sunday won

**Heather** 47:21

the college and it's failing, but amazing. Well, look, I

**Bret** 47:25

would love for people to get the full context of the marvelous thing that was going on at the same place that the terrible thing was going on. And what that implies it's really it's a deep lesson. And it's it's a difficult one. I have to say, my favorite email of all, I can't find out, either. So my favorite email, and I've it may be fluffy, I'm not sure. But anyway, the the idea was that it he was describing a conflict, I think during the riots, and he said the important question here is not who's right here, but who's white. And I thought, hey, what does that mean? Be? It does, I mean, how that's the important thing.

**Heather** 48:17

I mean, it just it just puts into such completely stark relief. This, this dichotomy that Jonathan Hyde has pointed out many times, right? That you can maximize truth that even if the seaching the searching for truth, or you can maximize the quest for social justice, but you cannot maximize both simultaneously, and that quote, not who's right, but who's white here? Yeah, just is the perfect synopsis of the choice.

**Bret** 48:45

Well, it's almost like that was the secret behind the scenes thing that he wasn't supposed to reveal was really the core organizing principle of this thing like that right and wrong has been replaced by white and not white and it's like, at a college and you're gonna you know, that idea isn't good enough for the brainstorming session when somebody then shoots it down. You build a movement around this

**Heather** 49:10

Yeah, God we've got I mean, there's lots and lots from from this one, but Naim Alo posted to her Facebook page just before the canoe meeting the famous canoe meeting a proposed rule for the upcoming meeting. Now it did not end up getting adopted but she proposed this rule for the upcoming faculty meeting for the upcoming canoe meeting

**Bret** 49:31

so wait in fairness This was I'm pretty sure tongue in cheek but I do think it mean why is the joke funny to her is the question anyway.

**Heather** 49:42

What she says is only appointed or approved whites can speak and only when spoken to

**Bret** 49:48

Yeah, I I don't think that's a good Yeah, I Does that surprise you?

**Heather** 49:56

Yeah, no, it doesn't. I mean, I could I could go on but maybe this is Yeah, the point is made. Yeah, that inside the school, it was a pressure cooker for the last year. Right. And there were many there. Many students, some on staff, fewer on faculty, fewer on admin, although there were few brave people on admin, who were watching the thing and could not figure out how to STOP IT admin had some power should have. But you were doing more than anyone. You were, you were trying everything possible. And it was unstoppable. And they said, so in as many words as many ways there began to be a cabal of first a couple and ultimately, a good 10 or 14 faculty members, who every time you wrote any email to the staff, faculty, thread, the all staff faculty thread, they would respond almost as a unit, and just pile on and accuse you of all the things we've now become familiar with UN been accused of, with, of course, no evidence, because there can be no evidence for something that isn't true.

**Bret** 51:15

Yeah, and, you know, the, the hard part to understand is that this energy existed on the campus and you know, not unique to evergreen, but it was catalyzed the nucleating event was the hiring of George bridges, who, you know, there's a debate amongst those of us who've followed the story closely about whether or not he is diabolical or just inept. And really the answer is, well, he's clearly inept, but that's not you know, you can be both. And what he did was he partnered with this madness in order to advance his own agenda. And, you know, it unleashed this on campus, which I don't think he expected, but

**Heather** 52:08

less purse, the previous president had been holding it at bay, and frankly, less purse because he happened to be a black man could more easily dismiss out of hand without giving any time to these people at all. Any such complaints that came his way. I presume he was doing it. You know, we basically never saw it until he stepped down. And we got bridges. Well,

**Bret** 52:31

we did see it. And it's one of variances of video. No, not, not during his Oh, yes. But famously, as one of the main buildings on the campus was remodeled and then renamed in his honor. He came back from retirement for the dedication. And the very same people who show up again and again and again, in the protests of, of you and me, the student activists, the student activists, those same students confronted him and this is the place where they reveal You know, he invokes Martin Luther Gaynor, he reasoned with them, and he says, Look, I'm not deaf to your concerns, but there's a right way. And there's a right objective and what you all are doing is dangerous to this. And, you know, they shut him down, and he invokes Martin Luther King and one of the protesters says, Yes, but Dr. King is dead, as if that's an indictment of what he advocated. But anyway, so yes, ultimately, even less purse. You know,

**Heather** 53:33

Frank can't make headway against them. On the other hand, he can't make headway against them coming back to campus for an afternoon, having ceded power, having stepped down after a long tenure, 18 months or so before. So I don't I don't think that though, that group of activists could have done that in the middle of last versus as President. No, I

**Bret** 53:53

can't, I can't imagine that they would have nor would he have done any of the foolish things that George did that empowered the mob, so that they had such great leverage.

**Heather** 54:03

So where, where do we? Where do we point our fingers? Right there. There are many types of players and there are many individual players, and some of them are awful. But most of them aren't simply awful, right? There's admin level, George bridges being the most famous. There's faculty and staff and their students. And as it happened, because the video that went viral that the students themselves took and posted and then someone unknown to us took that video off of someone's Facebook page or something and put it on YouTube. It was easy to point a finger at the students and say they're entitled they're ridiculous. They, you know, belong, and this is this is Maoist and they're at the base of this. Neither you nor I find them to be central in the story, actually, the activist students, right.

**Bret** 54:59

I mean, I think One of them clearly is, yeah. But this actually goes to a discussion I've been having on a number of fronts with a number of different people, where I hear people give advice. And the advice is of this nature, you will be better if you imagine that everyone is acting in good faith. And my feeling about this is when people even if somebody is advocating something terrible, very often, they don't understand that that's what they're doing. And assuming that they are acting in good faith relative to what they internally believe actually works, it's helpful. But if you just make this a universal approach, you are signing up to make yourself vulnerable to every truly bad actor. And these truly bad actors exist not in large numbers, and small numbers, but they do prey on those who use a heuristic like that, and make themselves incapable of fending off an attack. And so I think one of the things that I believe happened is that a place like evergreen UK accumulates people who are basically cowards I mean, academia in general seems to but evergreen, maybe even worse. And an assumption like that is basically a neon sign advertising for people who are really just in it for themselves. And, you know, I saw something um, Benjamin Boyce, put up a, an interview that he had done with a student of mine was a student at the time the protests broke out. Actually, Zach, could you put up the video of George talking and then put up the maybe. Alright, we will see if this works. It's not working. That's unfortunate. So in any case, this is a student of mine, who says that she had worked as a waitress at a restaurant near near the college, and that George would come in frequently, and she would end up serving Him. And she describes that there is a moment at which he realizes that he has met her before and that she is an evergreen student. And she describes that he puts on this smile, and he asks her how her studies are going. And he inquires about whether or not she is liking evergreen. And her comment is, I just had the sense that he that that is the moment at which he decided to care to seem like he gave a damn,

**Heather** 57:46

this reminds me of so many of our former colleagues, the I'm probably you're going someplace else with this, but I was marveling reading through some of the past emails, at the kind of thinking that we know, everyone now is sort of immersed in, believe all women, right for the me to movement, but back in the year leading up to the Evergreen protests. We had a lot of believe all students and believe all people of color. And it's the same horrifying game of ball idea that any demographic should be inherently believable because any demographic is inherently truth seeking and lovely in every regard is obviously simply going to be false. But it's

**Bret** 58:36

what are you telling me, Zach? I don't know. I mean, people can hear you. Alright, folks, here's what we're gonna do. We are going to continue to forge ahead, we are hearing in the chat that people are having trouble with the audio, if it becomes intolerable. Come back when we've uploaded the video, we're recording it locally, so we can do a fine version and put it up quickly. We apologize for this, it is downstream of us that much we know.

**Heather** 59:06

All right. And that's unfortunate. Um, so I was talking about this, believe all students logic that was showing up a lot in conversations and emails in the 2016 2017 academic year. And I will say that I tended to see this from exactly the people who will talk about him, we need to be student centered, and we need to be student focused, and almost always when I knew anything about these faculty, and in some cases I had taught with some of them. I know that as soon as the doors were closed, and there wasn't any possibility that students were listening and these are exactly the faculty who were dehumanizing students refusing to learn their names, much less anything about them. And you know, this is this is one of the things that was absolutely possible and necessary to use evergreen in the maximum level. way possible, which was to take the opportunity of having a full time program for 10 weeks, or 20 weeks or 30 weeks, and not just learn everyone's names within a couple of days, obviously, but learn something about them. So that you actually had an ongoing sense of who they were as people, they're not brains in jars. And they know I developed this rubric late in the game at evergreen at the point that I had grown quite tired of most of our colleagues precisely because of this, and said, cut, there should be just a, you know, I have a low bar for what it should take to be a successful faculty at evergreen. And it's two things, you should actually believe in the fundamental humanity of your students. And you should have something real that you know that you're capable of communicating. And so many faculty failed one or both of those one or both of those rubrics. And this thing that you say about your student who was waiting tables at a place where George bridges came in, that she saw the mass go up, yep. Which means the mass sometimes comes down. And this is certainly the sense that we had of him throughout. It was not who he appeared that, you know, hapless genius. Who knows, but you know, some kind of combination of the two. And certainly the evil genius trope would use haplessness as a thing to hide behind.

**Bret** 1:01:21

Yeah. The irony, of course, though, is that many of the people who were leading the charge would tell you that the enemy was old white men. And from the outside, it really looks to me, like the college, they've now announced that Georgia will retire at the end of his contract, they're going to give him the right to teach at the college after he's retired, which is very unusual. The college is now selling a false story, that it's, you know, the the the pandemic that is caused the failure, and they were before that they were selling the false story that the decline in enrollment was going before bridges arrived. And of course, it's not that there wasn't an enrollment issue. But it's quite obvious from the graph, that there's a precipitous catastrophe surrounding George and you know, his plan for the place. And somehow, as he's brought the place to its knees, and they can't bear to have a conversation with him, in which they say, actually, George, you've done a rotten job. You know, don't let the doorknob hit you on the way out?

**Heather** 1:02:34

No, they're still talking about him having used wisdom throughout difficult times is the

**Bret** 1:02:38

thing they're praising the man and so they they liquidated a college. And what did that college do that college served underserved people? Who did they liquidated for so as not to embarrass Georgia bridges? What kind of upside down world are we living in? Like now? How did they not notice that they were in some sense, doing exactly the thing that they declared the world was guilty of? That's right. All right. It's an hour it shaves an hour ish.

**Heather** 1:03:12

You know, there's there's a ton more that we can talk about, of course, we were planning to take a break at some point and take Superjet questions, but only those relating to evergreen in the second hour, and to choose choose as we see fit, you know, we may see one or two that we end up talking about for the entire time, or we may go through many of them. I feel like there's so much more to say, oh, let me just say this. So the the thing about crisis revealing everyone's character. Yeah, we've talked a little bit about the expected places where we found support, mostly in students. And a little bit also about the unexpected, including from Alan Nasser. And let me just say one more of those and then mentioned that some previously unknown to us that the public records officer at the college, I had, I had, I had done a Freedom of Information Act request, after there was an assault on campus by protesters of a student, which Stacy Brown who we heard from today, who was the police chief at the time, who was amazing. She had told me about this and said you need to do a FOIA request. And then they were someone there was was blocking access for a long time. And Wendy Morris, got it to me, and she sent me a CD and included a handwritten note, notably, that could not be tracked via other FOIA requests, in which she said that she really hoped that we were doing well and that she was so sorry for what we were going through and that we were all part of a community. This is from a staff person who we had never met. Who actually turns out as a woman of color, black woman who took took time out, and frankly, probably some risk to make a point of reaching out. And there were many, many emails like that from people as well. People we'd never heard from before, never heard of before. But let me just say that of course, as you know, the reason we can do this now and have an audience is in part because so many people that we had not previously known but we're out into the world reached out to us right away Nicholas Christakis, Jonathan Hite, Jerry Coyne, Michael Shermer, you went on Dave Rubin and Tucker Carlson and Sam Harris and Joe Rogan. And you know, all the more and more and more and more, right. And all of those people and many more that I'm forgetting to list here and wouldn't have time to have Bob Woodson, one of the one of the original civil rights leaders who actually wanted to come and get some of the original civil rights leaders with him and come to campus in March on campus with us during the protests, and we were ready to say yes, and then it descended into into actual violence.

**Bret** 1:06:06

It was actually Yes, it dissented in that he was still ready to go. The problem was it was week 10. And so there was no way to get him here in time that students were attending last the last week of the quarter so people were gonna scatter to the winds. Yeah.

**Heather** 1:06:21

So let me just end with one. One more. This is someone we we don't know we never met who wrote to the all staff, faculty, email, and I'll just I'll just read the email. He says Dear Mr. Bridges, and evergreen faculty and staff. I am one of evergreens earlier graduates I entered as a junior the day the college's doors open and graduated in 1973. I later got my doctorate in zoology at UC Davis. I remain in close contact with Dr. Steve Herman. And many of his students, I am very proud to be a gooey duck that's the mascot of evergreen, especially as a part of the tremendous tradition of field biology that Dr. Herman and other faculty have maintained over the years, our tradition virtually unique in the nation. Thus it is with a sense of shame that I witnessed the treatment of Brett Weinstein by a mob of close minded students who seem to mistake the purpose of a liberal arts education. You sir, must take a more forceful role and supportive Dr. Weinstein I imagine I'm one of many 1000s of gooey duck alums waiting anxiously to see the doctor Weinstein keeps his job. Further, I suspect that many other alums like I question the wisdom of the college's new equality of outcome agenda, described in Dr. Weinstein's Wall Street Journal commentary. In closing, please get a grip people. This is my college you're messing with. Sincerely, David F. Whittaker class of 1973.

**Bret** 1:07:39

Class of 73. So that's like, it's like

**Heather** 1:07:41

the second year that it was up and running. Yeah. And, you know, we, you ended up receiving 1000s of emails, and I went through most of them. And there were, I think, two really heinous death threat level, anti semitic things, and a couple of other mildly negative things. And otherwise, it was from all demographics from all parts of the world. Ages, sex races, everything educational level, career interests, political spectrum, to say, thank you. And please keep fighting the good fight.

**Bret** 1:08:23

Yeah, it was it was like 1000 to one. Yeah, it's amazing. All right, shall we take a break and then come back and answer some questions? Let's do it. All right. Sorry for the technical difficulties. It's downstream of us. I wish we are trying to switch ISP is in an effort to get away from this but anyway, for now, it is what it is. We will see you in a few minutes. The link to the next stream will be in the description of this one. Like Subscribe, notify, comment, and I will see you shortly.