

**Reining in the Bulls with Michael Marx**  
**Interview with Danna Smith of the Dogwood Alliance**  
**Recorded on April 2, 2024**

**Name:** Danna Smith  
**Title:** Executive Director  
**Organization:** Dogwood Alliance  
**Name of campaign:** The International Paper Campaign  
**Date(s) of campaign:** 2000-2013  
**Target companies/corporations:** Staples/office supply/ KFC fast food and other packaging/ International Paper/ Georgia Pacific

**Summary:** The paper industry is among the largest drivers of forest destruction. Large scale clearcutting and the conversion of natural forests to plantations for paper production devastates watersheds and biodiversity. The paper campaign was a 13-year effort targeting the largest U.S. corporate paper consumers and producers to increase protection for diverse forests in the Southern US and Canada.

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00:03 Michael Marx:  
Danna Smith, thanks for joining me.

00:06 Danna Smith:  
Awesome. It's good to see you again, Michael.

00:08 MM:  
Nice to see you. Danna Smith, Executive Director of Dogwood Alliance. I really wanted to talk to you about the paper campaign, which I know the ultimate target was companies like International Paper, but this was a pretty diverse campaign and I wanted to get a sense of how it unfolded because I think it's one of the seminal campaigns in the last 30 years for corporate campaigns. Before we go there, though, first could you give me just a brief history of the Dogwood Alliance and its mission?

00:41 DS:  
Sure. Dog Alliance was founded -- I was one of the founders -- in 1996, and it was founded because of an expansion that was underway in the paper industry at the time and the resulting destruction of forests that people were seeing all across the southeastern US. Our mission today is to advance climate action and environmental justice through protecting the forests and communities of the south against destructive industrial logging practices.

01:12 MM:

During the paper campaign, what was your role in that campaign at Dogwood Alliance?

01:18 DS:

At the beginning I was the campaign director at that time when we launched the paper campaign, but by the end of it, it was almost a 13-year effort to move the entire paper industry in a better direction. And by the end of that 13 years, the end of the paper campaign, I was the executive director.

01:44 MM:

What was it that really inspired Dogwood and other groups to focus on the paper industry and particularly ultimately companies like International Paper?

01:54 DS:

Well, I think at the time we were seeing some success from the Home Depot campaign. The Rainforest Action Network had launched a campaign targeting Home Depot to get them out of old growth forests. And we saw that strategy kind of helping to move the needle on protecting old growth in the Pacific Northwest and elsewhere. And at least speaking from the Southern US context, we were looking for strategies beyond government strategies because the influence that the paper industry in particular was having on politics in the South was way beyond what we, given our capacity, were able to fix at that point. And so we were looking for other ways that we could hold the paper industry accountable other than trying to pass some kind of government policy. And we saw these campaigns targeting the solid wood industry and the Home Depot campaign gaining traction.

02:58 DS:

And so we started thinking about actually how we might use that type of strategy to affect the paper industry in the south. And that's when Michael, I first connected with you out in Oregon at a law conference, and then subsequently you put me in touch with folks who were on your team and working in that space at what is now Stand.earth but used to be Forest Ethics. And so that's how we kind of both came together to create a campaign targeting the paper industry because at the time the paper industry was also having big impacts on forests in Canada.

03:40 MM:

So what was Dogwood Alliance's role, and who were your allies and what was their role?

04:12 DS:

Yeah, so I think our theory of change was that if we could get the big customers of the suppliers that were producing the paper, to demand that their suppliers clean up their act, that we would have a good chance and good leverage of actually getting the supplier companies to change their behavior. And so, we developed a very close partnership in this effort because as I said, at the same time, with folks who were working to protect forest in the Pacific Northwest and Canada, were also looking at a similar strategy.

04:53 DS:

And we realized that there were similar customer targets, even if the suppliers were different, there were similar customer targets in the US, big brands that were buying large quantities of paper from both the Canadian forest as well as the Southeast. And so we partnered with Forest Ethics in launching the campaign, identifying the office supply sector as the first target for the campaign targeting the paper industry.

05:23 DS:

And within that, we had identified the top players Staples, Office Depot, and at the time, OfficeMax was still around. And we together decided to launch the initial campaign targeting Staples because of them being the largest, because of their brand recognition, because of where their headquarters were located and all of their stores. So we literally launched the campaign together. And I think Dogwood's role in that campaign was partnering on negotiations with the company, partnering to develop the strategy around organizing protests out in front of Staples stores.

06:08 DS:

And we were bringing the story of the southern forest to the conversation. We were able to pin Staples to the destruction of forest in the southeastern US. Forest Ethics, on the other hand, was also partnering on negotiations, also partnering on organizing days of action and getting folks in front of stores. We covered the southeastern region, Forest Ethics covered stores out west and some in the northeast of the US. And then Forest Ethics was really bringing the story of the Canadian forest and the Canadian destruction that was happening to supply Staples.

06:51 MM:

What were the demands that you were making of Staples?

06:58 DS:

We were demanding that they stop sourcing from endangered forest, that they give preference to Forest Stewardship Council certified paper products. In other words, pushing their paper suppliers to become Forest Stewardship Council certified, which at the time there were two certification systems for certifying paper products. One was the Sustainable Forestry Initiative, which was essentially a bogus industry certification system certifying status quo practices as being sustainable. And the Forest Stewardship Council, or FSC was requiring a higher standard. So we were pushing Staples to demand that their suppliers start supplying them with FSC certified paper. We also wanted to dramatically increase the amount of post-consumer recycled paper that Staples was providing customers opportunity to purchase, because at the time you'd walk into a Staples store and there would be no recycled paper. So we were also pushing Staples to push their suppliers to supply them with more post-consumer recycled paper.

08:14 MM:

Were there ever any letters sent, for example, to the CEO of Staples, to International Paper, making these demands and then proposing a meeting? And if so, were there (meetings)?

08:29 DS:

Oh, yeah. That was one of the first things that we did was we sent a letter to the CEO of Staples and said, look, we've got a problem. You've got a problem. Your paper's destroying our forests and we want to talk to you about it. And these are the things that we think you can do about this problem. And by the way, if you don't, there's going to be a campaign targeting your company. And the first letter we sent was completely ignored by Staples. I think we sent two letters, actually if I recall, the second letter was also ignored. And then we literally started organizing around a day of action targeting, getting people to get out in front of Staples and protest in front of their stores. And we communicated that to Staples in another letter and they said, oh, wait, wait, wait. We'll sit down, we'll talk to you. And so that's when we said, fine, but the day of action is going to continue. You've had several opportunities here to respond to this. And now people are really gung-ho about getting in front of your stores and protesting the fact that you're destroying forests. And until you actually take some action, that's going to continue.

09:52 MM:

So that leads me into the question, what were the tracks of the campaign? Because I know sometimes there is the field track where people are actually out demonstrating in front of the stores, then there's sometimes, and even more so now, the digital track where there's use of social media, I imagine that was not quite as effective in those days. There's the shareholder track, oftentimes; sometimes there's a legal track. Was this predominantly a field track kind of campaign? And were there others?

10:28 DS:

Well, Staples was so ripe for the protests because they had so many storefronts everywhere, just about everybody had a Staples in their backyard, right? Like in their town, in their community at this point. And it was very ripe for that track of grassroots organizing and protesting in front of the company stores. So that was definitely a really important part of our strategy. But we also did rebranding of the company. We rebranded the company. There was a whole communication strategy around trying to rebrand Staples as a forest destroying company. There was a very sophisticated communication strategy that went along with our campaign, both in terms of visually rebranding the company from Staples, I think we rebranded them to Stuckles and had stumps in their logo, and to literally getting on national TV.

11:30 DS:

I think we got on CNN National headline news. We got major media coverage. We also got, during the course of the campaign, some celebrities involved. We got the rock band, REM involved. They're a big rock band from the south. And so we were able to leverage their Southern connections and where they did a public service announcement for us on the campaign that we aired on MTV in Boston, which is where Staples headquarters were located and we also had a shareholder strategy where we literally would go into the shareholder meetings. And I remember one in particular where we had bought some shares and gotten shareholders to give us their proxies for getting into the shareholder meeting, where we pretty much took over the meeting with questions to the CEO about Staples' lack of action on protecting forests, given all the controversy and all the concerns that had been raised.

12:43 DS:

That was a pivotal moment in the campaign. The CEO did not like being overtaken in that way and having to respond to question after question after question about their track record on forest protection because he wanted to get to other things. And then we had an inside strategy where Todd Paglia and myself were the key negotiators in the Staples campaign. Todd Paglia being now the executive director of Stand.earth, which was Forest Ethics at the time, he was their campaign director.

13:19 DS:

And, we worked really hard to develop a positive working relationship with the executives at Staples and really tried to help them to understand where we were coming from, tried to listen to what was preventing them from being able to do what we wanted them to do, and really developed the type of relationships that allowed us to get to a yes in the negotiation at the end of the day when we ended up winning the campaign.

13:53 MM:

So you had a field track, you had a communications track, a shareholder track, an insider track. When you look at that combination, were there certain factors or even moments in the campaign that you thought were really pivotal moving the company towards some kind of resolution or negotiations?

14:18 DS:

I think all four of those tracks had pivotal moments. In the course of the two years of getting protests out in front of their stores, we had 600 protests in two years, out in front of Staples stores. On one day of action, we had 120 actions. We had 120 cities where people were going in front of Staples stores and protesting. So that was pivotal. I talked about the pivotal moment of the shareholder action. And then, we just got so much national media on the campaign, it was really just putting the public pressure on the company to the point that they really had nowhere to go but forward.

15:05 MM:

Let's talk about that then, because now you're in negotiations with the company. Describe that for us, who was there, and how did it progress?

15:22 DS:

Yeah, so I think at first we were, to the credit of the company, we were negotiating directly with the vice chair of the board, which I felt like was very interesting. But a major investor in the company, obviously, and somebody with a lot of power. So that put us in a really good position because that person actually had the ability to influence the CEO directly and to make a difference. We weren't dealing with like two steps down from the CEO, we were dealing with somebody who had a regular point of contact with the CEO. And I think that made a huge difference from the outset. Also, during the course of our campaign, Staples became one of the first companies during the time to develop an executive level sustainability person -- a VP of

sustainability. That person was hired from within, promoted from within during the course of our campaign.

16:25 DS:

And so that person also became a part of the negotiations with the company. And again, I think that was also a really good development because this was the company, this was the person who the CEO was entrusting with figuring out Staples' bigger sustainability sort of platform and initiatives. So we had the vice chair of the board and we had the director of sustainability, the VP, vice president of sustainability for the company during the negotiations.

17:01 DS:

And it was really interesting because the vice president, or the vice chair of the board was this very, kind of like reminded me of somebody out of the Sopranos, you know, Italian, like not taking any crap from anybody, but kind of a softy at heart. And I think he really appreciated the gusto at which we were coming at this company, these young kids, essentially this younger generation of kids that just really had the company, had a strategy and had the company having to think about these things.

17:41 DS:

And so I think there was a part of him that really wanted to help us figure out how Staples could become a force of good for the issues that we were concerned about. At the same time, there were business decisions that had to be made that had implications for the company. They're going to commit to 30%, 50% of their products being post-consumer recycled was a big jump for them. And they did not know how they were going to get there, and they did not want to make a commitment that they could not achieve.

18:17 DS:

And so they kept saying, we'd rather under promise and over deliver. And we kept saying, we know you can do this. The federal government is even doing 30%. Like we know you can do it. Like we need you to; so it was really a lot of back and forth.

18:37 DS:

And I remember at one point they drafted up a policy which was woefully inadequate, and they came to the negotiating table and they said, we're going to make this public, and so, we will be the first company in the office supply sector to have come out with an environmental paper policy. And they thought that was going to take the wind out of our sails. And I remember sitting there in the meeting and saying, you can come out with that policy, but if people are still protesting in front of your stores, people are going to realize that that policy is not sufficient. And that you're going to continue to be faced with more and more protests in front of your stores if you put out a policy like this that doesn't address the concerns that people are raising. And they went back to the drawing board.

19:35 MM:

They did!

19:37 DS:  
They did.

19:41 MM:  
And, ultimately made the commitment that the campaign was asking for or something very close or...

19:48 DS:  
Yeah, we were asking for 50% post-consumer recycled. That was one of the big sticky points. And they committed to 30. And I even remember internally it was a struggle to get our organizing teams on board with that being a win because people were like, we've organized all these people and they want 50% and this is such a sellout, and so we were in the middle of this trying to negotiate on our end too, to meet the company where it could be in a way that would be a leadership position, but may not be exactly what we had originally been asking for.

20:32 MM:  
So were there communications now that things are getting more serious with Staples, were there also communications happening with, or progressing with International Paper or any of the other companies?

20:45 DS:  
No, actually one of the big benefits of going after Staples was that Staples was beginning to have some conversations with International Paper. We were not having conversations with International Paper, but Staples was pretty much on our behalf. And so that was way more leverage than we had ever had or could ever have had imagined having as a small grassroots organization that was just a few years old, having one of the biggest customers of one of the biggest players in the region talking to Staples about how do we get more recycled paper? Where are you guys sourcing from these endangered forests? We (need to) get these activists off our backs essentially.

21:38 MM:  
So when you look back on it, is there anything that you think in terms of the Staples campaign, we might have done differently that maybe would've accelerated or, change the outcome more in our favor towards the 50%.

22:06 DS:  
Yeah, I mean, hindsight is always 20/20, and I do think that our demand set, we were just trying to get our heads around what companies could do in terms of making an impact on the ground in the forest, and so I think we could have had a more sophisticated demand set that, if we had known what we know now in terms of what companies could do to move the needle on the ground forest change, I think we would've had a little bit more sophisticated of a demand set. And I think we would've probably held out a little bit longer in order to be able to get some traction, some real traction of protected areas on the ground.

22:57 MM:

How did the campaign roll out? So once you got the agreement from, or the commitment from Staples, how did it roll out to the other office paper companies after that?

23:09 DS:

Yeah, we did, and while we were running the Staples campaign, we were trying to get Office Depot to jump ahead. We were trying to get Office Depot. We were in minimal conversations, but conversations with Office Depot to like jump out ahead and develop a policy, to meet the demands of the campaign and be the leader, have the opportunity of being that leader, that first to move, right? It is always the one that's remembered and they wouldn't do it.

23:40 DS:

And so after we won the campaign, and we were able to give major public support to Staples for the steps that they had taken to green their supply chain, we went to Office Depot and we said, okay, we want you to match this. Oh, and by the way, we've learned something new and we actually want you to go above what Staples did, because you had the chance you could have done this, but you didn't take it.

24:08 DS:

And so now we're actually going to ask you to be doing more. And I remember that was met with resistance at first. And so we ended up having to run a campaign targeting Office Depot after we ran the campaign against Staples for two years. I think it took us a year to get Office Depot to finally adopt a policy. And they did strengthen it in some ways. I can't remember all the details about it, but it was a stronger policy than the one that we got from Staples.

24:43 DS:

And so we were able to announce that Office Depot had not just met what Staples had done, but had taken it a little bit further. And then we had to run a very short campaign targeting OfficeMax after that, I think it was like six months. So it went from having to run two year campaign to having to run a one year campaign to having to run a six month campaign to get the three biggest players in the office supply industry on board with setting new standards for their paper and holding their suppliers accountable to those standards.

25:20 MM:

Wow. So did this start to have an impact on International Paper? did you ever have negotiations with them?

25:29 DS:

Yeah, so interestingly enough, we started to realize it's like, okay, now it's time for us to take these commitments that we got from the office supply sector and start to move towards getting the suppliers to actually make some hard commitments. And so the first, in the same way that we did with the office supply campaign of looking at the different players and figuring

out what's the best strategy of who to target first, we did the same with the supplier companies.

26:00 DS:

So with the big paper companies themselves, and we identified that Bowater Company, called Bowater at the time, which was a big news print manufacturer, but they also were supplying paper to Staples and Office Depot, were a really good target for a lot of reasons to start off with, because they were smaller, because we had a lot of dirt on them in terms of the impacts that their particular company was having on these really diverse forests on the Cumberland Plateau in Tennessee.

26:32 DS:

And so we started a little campaign with the Natural Resources Defense Council targeting Bowater. And it was a very short campaign because the CEO did not want to have any controversy around Bowater. And we literally got an agreement from Bowater within maybe, less than a year, I want to say maybe six months, where they agreed to stop converting natural forest to plantations on the Cumberland Plateau to protect these really important ephemeral ponds, which we consider to be endangered on the Cumberland Plateau. And a few other things, I can't remember right now, but the big one was around not converting forest to plantations. And then after that we had our sights on Georgia Pacific, which was the second biggest paper producer in the region. And so we started negotiations with Georgia Pacific while we were implementing the commitments that we got from the office supply companies.

27:37 DS:

They're saying, we're going to get FSC certified, we're going to go post consumer, we don't want our paper coming from endangered forests and we want to discourage the further conversion of natural forest to plantations. So with that customer leverage, we started applying that to Georgia Pacific because they also were supplying all of these companies that we had targeted previously. And it just so happens too, at the time that Rainforest Action Network was also targeting Georgia Pacific and in conversations with Georgia Pacific about their sourcing in Indonesia.

28:17 DS:

So we all teamed up -- NRDC, Dogwood and the Rainforest Action Network teamed up and negotiated a pretty groundbreaking agreement from Georgia Pacific in 2009. Then we had all these office supply customers, we had two of the competitors of International Paper in the South that had created stronger standards and we were able to then pivot and say what a laggard International Paper was for not meeting the standards that some of their competitors had adopted in terms of forestry practices.

29:01 DS:

And we also at the time knew that while the office supply sector was a pretty large part of International Paper's customer base, the packaging sector was really the biggest customer base of International Paper. So we launched a campaign targeting packaging companies. And we

went after a whole bunch of companies and at the time they were still making CDs out of paper, so we targeted Universal Music Group. The easiest thing we ever got was like one meeting and it was done. And they were like, yeah, that industry certification system is a lot of greenwashing, isn't it? We were like, yes, it is, so we quickly got the music sector, was really easy to get. Then we went into the health and beauty and, got Johnson and Johnson, and GlaxoSmithKline, but then the real holdouts were the fast-food companies.

30:05 DS:

So we ended up running a campaign targeting Yum Brands, which is based in Louisville, Kentucky, and as Kentucky Fried Chicken, Pizza Hut, just a whole bunch of fast food conglomerates this company owned. And so we launched the Kentucky Fried Forest campaign, and targeted Yum Brands for like two years before getting some traction there. And that campaign put the nail in the coffin with International Paper.

30:40 DS:

I remember we were at the height of that campaign. We had just gotten an op-ed published in like the business journal in Memphis, which is where IP's headquarters are located. And like two days later, I get a call and it's the woman who's the VP of sustainability at International Paper, and she's wanting to set up a meeting where we could talk about how we could work together.

31:08 MM:

Which makes me wonder whether she also got promoted as partially...

31:14 DS:

Probably, probably. I think that whole series of corporate campaigns, and in particular the paper campaign really elevated social responsibility within the corporate sector at that time. We were kind of on the leading edge of that phenomenon that happened. And so, yeah, I think a lot of companies were hiring these sustainability directors in the same way that now companies are hiring diversity, equity, and inclusion directors. Right? It was a new area of focus and we were a part of driving that.

31:49 MM:

Which is one of the reasons why I consider this to be a seminal campaign because so much of the early work of forest campaigns was really aimed at timber and companies like, as you mentioned, Home Depot, Lowe's, Maynards, that really were selling wood products. But the Staples campaign really represented a shift more into the paper side of the game and forest protection now over time. So it's interesting that you came in originally from the paper customers and then got the success there, went to the competitors of International Paper, had success there, then went to the packaging side of their customers. - it was like multiple stages of the campaign to finally get to the kingpin in that paper industry.

32:47 DS:

It was 13 years, Michael.

32:49 MM:  
13 years.

32:50 DS:  
It was 13 years of just dogged campaigning, taking them down, one after the other.

33:00 MM:  
So one of the things I want to ask you about is campaigns. I know many of us started with protecting of trees and protecting of the ecosystems around trees, but how has Dogwood Alliance's campaigns built on that into the larger set of issues that forests are a part of?

33:23 DS:  
Since the paper campaign, we've really grappled with issues around the forest products industry and its pollution and how that pollution is disproportionately impacting low income and communities of color, and having to recognize and grapple with the fact that you can't separate the logging from the pollution. You can't just separate the paper company from the environmental impacts of the logging, from the environmental impacts of the pollution.

34:01 DS:  
It's all one and the same one and the same dirty, destructive industry. And by being willing to embrace and broaden our scope to be thinking about and campaigning to try to help reduce the pollution associated with wood production as well as the impact in the forest, we've created stronger allies. We've been working with folks who are directly impacted by the industry on the pollution side from the smokestacks.

34:31 DS:  
And, that has really given us a lot of new wind in our sails, if you will, because it's creating a stronger coalition. It's creating a broader group of people who are working and going to bat to protect forests and to protect their communities from the destructive industry that is polluting and destroying forests. So that's one thing. The other thing that we've done is really embrace too, the impacts that industrial logging is not just having on the ecosystem or nature, but the impacts that industrial logging is having on communities as well. So beyond folks who are on the fence line of the pollution that's coming out of the smokestacks from these facilities are communities that are living in high flood prone areas, and these wetland forests that are being destroyed and logged to make things like wood pellets which is our big campaign right now, is focused on the wood pellet industry that is tearing down forest, turning them into wood pellets and then using them to be burned in power stations over in Europe under the guise of green energy, renewable energy.

35:44 DS:  
But the logging impacts of this industry on the community are huge. And in terms of the loss of natural flood control alone, it's making the impacts of climate change where these communities are already experiencing increased flooding, it's making that worse. Because if they had

standing forest along the rivers that were growing old and intact again, the buffer against the flooding would be optimized. Whereas right now it's highly degraded because of all the industrial logging.

36:19 DS:

And then we've also had to look at how this industry impacts the economics of these communities. Because a lot of times this is happening in these relatively low income under-resourced, predominantly black and indigenous communities. And the idea is that we need wood markets in order to grow the economy right in these communities. But the reality is that this industry is actually restricting economic development in these communities, more sustainable types of economic development.

36:51 DS:

We're talking about the world's largest wood producing region where these communities are at the epicenter of the biggest global market in the world, and yet they still have the highest poverty rates of anywhere in the country. There's no evidence that this industry actually generates economic wealth in communities where it operates. In fact, the reverse is true that it keeps communities economically depressed. And so we've had to grapple with the economics of this too, because we want to be able to get to long-term solutions in these communities, economic solutions that work for communities and that work for forests.

37:36 DS:

So all of those things have taken us out of just talking about forests as the most bio biodiverse forest in North America, the southeast, the industrial logging impacting biodiversity and tree species diversity. And instead we've broadened our narrative and our scope of the impacts that this industry is having. And in doing so, it's allowed our movement to be a lot more inclusive and diverse and more powerful as a result.

38:06 MM:

I was just going to take you there, I would imagine that as a result of bringing these communities in and for them to see the more systemic implications of the logging and the power of these companies, that it actually builds some of your political power. Did that lead to a more constructive role by government in managing this whole process where in the early days government was pretty much missing an action?

38:36 DS:

I think we're in the middle of, I would say, if this were the paper campaign and it took us 13 years in to win that campaign, we're in a new era where we are trying to build that political power. And I would say we're probably around 25, 30% of the way there, right? We still have a long way to go because the industry still has so much political power and landowners and most of whom are white still. Even though in a lot of these communities, the majority of the population is black or indigenous, the deep inequity in who owns the land, who has a say in the politics, who controls the policy, is still very much prevalent in the southeastern US as it is in many places around the world.

39:34 DS:

And it's another reason why one of the big lessons that we've learned is rather than having some big campaign frame where we come into these communities and we say, we have the answer, join our campaign, stand out in front of a Staples store tomorrow, like we're really doing more to share what we've learned with communities and to learn what communities know about what they need and what will change the dynamic in their communities.

40:07 DS:

And we're finding that we each have something really valuable to offer. And so we're co-creating strategies now around, some of our community partners actually are going to the shareholder meeting of Drax, who's a big wood pellet manufacturer and burner of wood pellets in Europe. They're driving petitions targeting Enviva, the biggest wood pellet manufacturer, so we are sort of sharing lessons and strategies and we haven't completely abandoned the idea that you can put pressure directly on companies.

40:50 DS:

And I think what we've learned is that, at least in the issue of the biomass campaign, is that if we can paint the biggest players as the worst forest destroyers that they are, we're not making stuff up -- they really are, and if we can get that information out there in a compelling way, rebranding them as not being green, but being destructive and dirty, that we can both move government policy in the right direction and we can have an impact on their shareholders.

41:25 DS:

And we've seen that with Enviva, the big wood pellet manufacturer in the south because of all the investigations and all the communications and all the grassroots organizing and communities where they're operating, we've painted them as highly polluting, committing environmental racism and destroying wetland forests. And they're painting themselves as green in the meantime. And so this has resulted in the shareholders, a class action lawsuit from shareholders against Enviva for fraud. And the company is right now they've filed for bankruptcy, it's also that effort targeting and painting Enviva as the forest destroyer and polluter that it is, got the force or helped to move the Netherlands government, which is importing a lot of these wood pellets to pass a measure saying that they would no longer be subsidizing utility companies in the Netherlands who sourced from suppliers who were dishonest and they specifically referenced Enviva. So we're starting to see how you can go after companies in a hybrid way and get hybrid results that are both corporate driven, from the corporate side of things, but also on the government side.

43:00 MM:

Which is so significant. Because I know that one of the early criticisms of corporate campaigns 30 years ago, is that they got a commitment from companies, but it was a voluntary commitment and you relied on them to fulfill their promise, but it rarely turned into some kind of government regulation or something that was enforceable. And it seems like in recent years, that's really changed. The corporate campaigns become a vehicle for generating public support,

for drawing attention to the egregious corporate behavior and resulting in some kind of treaties or regulations that are potentially enforceable. Which in a way tells me your campaign is like this case study of the evolution of the environmental movement, particularly the forest branch of the environmental movement. It starts with forest, it moves to the front frontline communities and how they're affected, moves into the larger communities that are further downstream potentially, and collectively that moves into potential for government action and not just nationally as in the Southeast, but internationally as in the Netherlands.

44:19 DS:

Yeah, absolutely. I mean, you'd hope that every campaign is both a victory at its core, but also regardless, a lesson learned for the next campaign. And I think that you have seen this kind of evolution, at least I've seen it in our work, an evolution in our strategy and our thinking so that we can tackle bigger problems and build a bigger movement that's more powerful to get at some of the root causes of what's going on right now. And looking back on the corporate campaigns, I think the one thing that I think is the biggest lesson learned is that corporations are only going to self-regulate to a point. They are not going to fundamentally transform their whole model of capitalism, they're beholden to their shareholders. They've got to deliver on those quarterly profits and I think a lot of us are coming to the realization now that the capitalist corporate model is fatally flawed.

45:39 DS:

And that we need to transition forward to a more local centric, community driven economic model and not a global corporate capital colonialistic model that has pervaded for, persisted for hundreds of years and has gotten us into the mess we're in right now. We're not going to get out of it by tinkering around this, the edges of that system and even the IPCC reports that have come out have said we need deep transformation in our industrial model of economic development in order to tackle the climate crisis. And I think that corporate campaigns, to the extent that they can get the attention of companies, they can get the attention of policymakers, they can get the attention of shareholders and investors, play a really important role. But in terms of deep transformation of society, unless we're shutting these companies down, which they're not going to voluntarily commit to do, we're just going to be tinkering around the edges.

46:51 MM:

Well, that seems like the perfect place to end this interview. And it just convinces me all the more of why I just felt like this has been such a seminal campaign in the last 30 years. It's such an insight into the way campaigns are conducted and how they evolve and how certain issues may trigger them, but how they also evolve and become more inclusive and as a result, build a movement and make it more powerful.

47:28 DS:

Yeah, absolutely. Well, I think it is too. It's definitely been one of those that I've felt so blessed and honored to have been a part of, because of the growth opportunity for me on a personal level, and a professional level to have just been a part of this pioneering work to try to figure out how to solve the problem of forest destruction on the planet. The south is the world's

largest wood producing region, and that's where I live, that's where I grew up. That's what Dogwood is focused on. And to have been just able to be such a part of this whole movement has just been a blessing, really.

48:15 MM:

The perfect ending. Danna Smith, executive director of Dogwood Alliance, thank you for giving us such a great insight into this seminal campaign. It's very much appreciated.

48:28 DS:

Well, thank you, Michael, because you played a pivotal role in my career when we first met and really encouraging and supporting me to pursue this strategy of corporate campaigning for the southeastern US. So appreciate you right back.

48:50 MM:

It's an honor. Okay. We'll leave it there.

48:55 DS:

Okay. Talk to you later.

### **Why they became involved in the movement**

48:57 MM:

Why did you get involved in this movement and why did you stay involved?

49:29 DS:

Definitely. Well, I guess it starts, I grew up in the southeastern coastal plain in the rural south. And in my lifetime, I've seen the impacts that industrial logging has had on the place that I grew up and the forest that I love. I was fortunate enough to be like a free ranging child, literally the trees and butterflies were my neighbors and my friends. And so, I developed this really deep sense of nature from a very early age. And I went on to go to graduate law school, but sort of went into a different direction and then wasn't satisfied with my corporate career. Ended up going to work for Greenpeace and I did that for three years and I loved it. But then Greenpeace closed its office in Atlanta where I was working, and I had like a little bit of time to try to figure out what I was going to do.

50:19 DS:

And I got wind of the Rainforest Action Network wanting to do an action camp. And I happened to live on a farm at the time. So I said, Hey, I can host an action camp. And the action camp was centered on the ship in the port of Savannah, Georgia, which was bringing in illegally harvested wood, mahogany wood out of the Brazilian rainforest. And so I literally, had this action camp. I went down to Savannah, and I hung a banner on the ship, and I'm like sitting in this harness for six hours on this ship, and to protect mahogany, to protect the Brazilian rainforest and the indigenous people that depended on those forests.

51:06 DS:

And I'm literally right across the river is the forest where I grew up. And I just kept thinking to myself, I've got to do something about what's going on in my own backyard here, and that's going to be my next step. It was like an 'Aha' moment. Like, I literally walked off of that ship and I was convinced at that moment that I was going to turn my efforts towards protecting the forest of the southeastern US.

51:35 DS:

And I've never looked back because I love southern forests, I love the people of the south, I love the culture of the South. And to be able to do this work in the world's largest wood producing region is no small task. Right. It's like a big giant that we're taking on a big dragon that we're trying to slay, you know? But, we just keep having these little victories and we keep building our alliances along the way, and I just keep feeling like we're the hobbits and the Lord of the Rings. And it gets challenging. And sometimes I have felt like quitting, just to be real. There are times when I've just like, this is just too big. I just can't do this anymore. And then some little thing happens and it's like, I can't stop! So I'm in it, I'm in it, I'm in it to win it.

52:34 MM:

Yeah. It is amazing to think of us as the David's in the Goliath fight, and it's remarkable what we are capable of and have accomplished when going up against the biggest corporations in the world. I think that that also gives you just a sense of purpose and it also gives you a deeper sense of the urgency of doing this. And in many ways I see that as our gift and even this interview as a gift to the next generation to absolutely inspire them to take on these fights and to make the kind of changes that the earth is going to need and society is, too.

53:23 DS:

Absolutely. And I'd like to think that we've at least created somewhat of a pathway for the next generation to take and then, move it even further. Right. Because we know we haven't won yet. We know we have not won yet. But is our movement stronger and bigger than it has been? I think so. I think it absolutely is.

53:51 MM:

I think it absolutely is. And, even the example that your campaign represents, which is diversifying the movement, where frontline communities, fence line communities now much more engaged, much more see the impacts of what this is and the larger system of which it's a part.

54:12 DS:

And I think even a lot of them had seen the impacts, or understood the impacts before, but didn't have the resources, didn't have anybody engaging them, it was all groups that looked like us. I think that has been changing, that has definitely been changing and part of it has been our willingness to embrace new leaders in the movement and engage and share resources quite frankly. And part of that has also just been like those folks are just so incredibly passionate that

they do so much work with so little resources, which isn't something to celebrate, but it is the reality of how much they've done to move the needle is just tremendous.

55:02 MM:

We're so much more powerful together.

55:08 DS:

Together. Yeah, absolutely. So much more.

55:10 MM:

Powerful. Yeah. And I think so much more fulfilled together, you know?

55:18 DS:

Absolutely. Absolutely.

55:20 MM:

I just know that I first got into forests because I love trees and rivers. And once I got into them, I went, oh my God, there's these indigenous communities that have lived in these forests for thousands of years whose life and history is being destroyed by the greed of these major corporations. I couldn't stand it.

55:44 DS:

Yeah, it's true. It definitely provides a new level of inspiration, you know? And drive for the work for sure. Yeah.

55:56 MM:

And be educated, educated by them. And to see the world through their eyes too. I suddenly went, wow. It's a much richer world than even I thought. So, alright, let's leave it there, Danna.

56:18 DS:

Okay. Talk to you later.

56:21 MM:

Bye. Bye.