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### Mary Hargis

Robert Sammons

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## Mary Hargis Interview

Interviewer: This is a conversation with Mary Hargis for the Kentucky Marriage Equality and Religious Liberty Oral History Project. We are in the studio room of Breckenridge Hall on Morehead State's campus located in Rowan County, Kentucky. It is 9:22 on June 13<sup>th</sup>. My name is Dakota Barr.

Alright Mary, first of all I'd like to thank you for agreeing to meet with me today, to do this interview. I'd like to start with some biographical information such as where you were born and where you grew up.

Response: Originally, I'm from Dayton, Ohio. My family's still in Dayton. I grew up there, went to high school, saw a recruiter from Morehead State University on college day at my high school, thought this would be the place for me to go to, not go to a large college like Ohio State, maybe come to a small college. My high school advisor actually recommended it, saying that Morehead State might be a better fit, so I came down here to go to school and it was quite a learning experience to be away from home for the first time.

I: How long have you been here?

R: I came here in 1970, so I consider Morehead to be my home now.

I: Do you care to touch on some of your religious upbringing and ideological background?

R: I think I consider myself to be more agnostic. I want to believe that there is a higher power. My parents basically were Presbyterian but of no faith on a regular basis. I attended Sunday school, really didn't get much out of it. So, I really, my whole family is not really of a religious nature.

I: So, you, are you a current member of a church?

R: No.

I: And what do you do for a living?

R: I'm retired. I was a state worker. I worked for the Commission for Children with Special Healthcare Needs here in Morehead for 27 years, and then after I retired from there I was an organizer for the UAW for state employees.

I: So now I'd like to get to the meat of the interview. So how did you first become involved in the religious liberty or marriage equality movement?

R: I had heard, you know, everyone was gleeful when the Obergefell decision came down. I walked on air that weekend. I thought, finally, something that I never thought would happen in my lifetime was going to occur, that marriage equality for everyone was going to occur. Over 1700 benefits that come with being married was gonna actually be a right for everyone, not just a few. So, I was very happy about that, and then for my friends that had wanted to marry and

weren't able to have their marriage recognized in Kentucky. So, I was very happy about that. And then, on Monday, when our county clerk decided that she wasn't going to issue marriage licenses to anyone in Rowan County, my daughter called me very upset, saying that Kim Davis isn't going to issue marriage licenses. So, she told me that there was gonna be a protest at the courthouse the following day and she had just started a new job. So, I said I'll be there. I'll go. And I went to the courthouse, I met with Josh Egars, and became involved in the protest that very day.

I: So, this was an issue you were passionate about before the Supreme Court decision.

R: Right. I'm a big believer in constitutional law. I believe that it's the basis for everything that we do in this country. I come from a long line of law enforcement. I'm very proud of that. I'm not of the mind that they can do no wrong, but I also know that as a society, we have to obey the law, just for uniformity of life. And when you erode one person's right, you erode everyone's.

I: So, what was your immediate reaction when you heard the Supreme Court's decision?

R: Anger. Anger. I was gleeful when the decision came down. I was in disbelief. I just never thought this would happen in my lifetime. I thought it was such an issue because it had come up before, it was never seriously undertaken by the Supreme Court, and there were so many states that had passed laws that banned marriage between all forms other than one man, one woman. So, it was something I thought would never occur, and then when it did occur, it was that much more joyful, that there was actually common sense being used by the Supreme Court, that we could actually go forward in this instead of just completely obliterating the rights of minorities. You could fill in the blank, you could fill it in with African American, you could fill it in with women's rights, you could fill it in with any minority. So, for gay rights to occur and finally be able to celebrate marriage between people, it was very uplifting. And that's why it made it even harder to accept when our county clerk declined to recognize the law.

I: So, your daughter calls and tells you there are protests. What was your involvement in those protests?

R: Just basically going out and lending a body to the protest and lending my support and become a voice. I think that's very important. You can stay at home and sit behind a keyboard, and social media has its place, but if you're willing to put yourself out there, if you're willing to make a voice and tell people how you feel about it and how you object to it, if you don't, you stay at home, you become silent. People say "oh, well we can, you know, we're just a major force if we do Facebook, there's a lot of, or Twitter". That's all well and good, but it becomes more personal when you put yourself out there and you can put a face to that. And I think if your voice isn't heard, you're just silent. You don't have a place to say what you feel about anything and you can have anger all you want but if it doesn't become materialized then it's a waste of your time.

I: Did you participate in any of the satellite protests such as at the courthouses in Covington?

R: Oh, yes, I attended all the court proceedings in Ashland and Covington. We formed the Rowan County Rights Coalition shortly after the protests. It was out of necessity to get everyone

organized, to not waste anybody's time, that we could get out there. We had people that we needed to show up at the courthouse, so we became organized and we decided that we would represent ourselves by going to the courthouse. So, we made sure that there was always people from the coalition there, whether we were outside protesting or if we were inside the building. So, we got to see the proceedings, we got to see how it worked. We saw firsthand that it can work, it needs to work, but you have to present and you have to be there and let people know that you represent both sides of the issue.

I: Do you think your tactics were effective at the protests?

R: We live in a small town. For the most part it was very peaceful, it was respectful on both sides until people that were brought from outside of the area that were brought in to protest and to add bulk to the protest. Many days, when we were out there at the courthouse, there were very few of us, but there was always a presence. We were always there. Shortly, a couple weeks into the protest, the other side basically gave up, and it wasn't until the court proceedings started that it became a national issue and people from Texas, from North Carolina, South Carolina were brought in by busloads. Even from surrounding counties. So, it drew national attention to our small town, and a lot of people that live here became very angry that such attention was brought. So sometimes you're gonna catch grief over the fact that we protested and didn't give in. And we didn't.

I: Would you have done anything differently in the protests?

R: No. No, because I had been involved in protests before and I have seen firsthand what could happen when it gets out of hand, when you allow emotions to carry you into that place where you can become violent, and that wasn't our purpose. We're not about negativity. We're not about violence. We're here for people's rights and want to stand up for that, and that's the way you do it.

I: What difference do you think was made by your involvement?

R: I think a lot of it is when you've had experience at protesting, when you become what is considered an unwilling leader in a protest, people will listen to you because you have participated in previous protests and you know what works and what doesn't work, and there needed to be a voice of calm and reasoning because a lot of times, even within our own organization, there was anger that we didn't do more as far as being interruptive, that type of thing. But we got our point across, and there was a good deal of respect from the other side as well that we were involved, they were involved, and that we didn't allow it to become violent.

I: So, after the protests you said you formed a group called the Rowan County Rights Coalition out of a sense of necessity. Can you explain why you think that the group was necessary?

R: We needed, we needed to coalesce, as far as I was concerned. We needed to understand what we were for. We needed to gel our ideas and the only way to do that is to become an organization, a grassroots organization with its best intentions, and with that comes a lot of work and a lot of people don't want to put in the work. They want to be involved on a peripheral type

of thing, which is fine. When we started this by Facebook account we had 1500 followers, but for true followers probably a couple hundred. People who were willing to put in the work and wanting to be organized, just like most organizations there's always a core group that will do the work, and this was true with our organization as well. We welcome all input, we welcome people's ideas about how we should proceed, and we take that into account. And that's very important, for an organization to be open to that. The term inclusiveness has become overused for the most part, but that's an important part of an organization such as ours. So we try to be inclusive and we try to listen to everyone, but we also want to get the work done.

I: So, what kind of work is your organization doing?

R: We're trying to build bridges between our organization and the community. We want people to know that we're here, that we're available to them, if they have problems they can come to us. Right now, we're just a fledgling organization that's started. We're trying to find our way. We're trying to find out what purpose we serve in this community. We've been attending the fiscal court meetings and city council meetings trying to gain a foothold with our local politicians. We have a couple people that do bingo at the nursing home, we have another fellow that does readings at the nursing home, we have an open caption every Wednesday night at the movie theater for the deaf and hard of hearing community. We have, we're just involved in a lot of different things. We provided a friendsgiving, which was a way for the community to come together for people that couldn't go home for whatever reason, either they weren't welcomed from there family to participate in any type of holiday, so we wanted to give people a sense of community and of home.

I: Regarding the county clerk, Kim Davis, do you think that she best represented the cause of religious liberty?

R: I think she became the poster child for it. I think there was already a movement for it, but it gave a foothold that had not, she put a name and a face to the religious freedom, what they felt to be a threat to their religious freedom. I think she became that person that represented that. Not necessarily to the best advantage for our community, but she became that. Her council, Liberty Council, took that and ran with it, and she became the embattled county clerk. And very little attention was given to the other side of it by the media because it was so sensationalized. I think the most regretful part of it is that it opened the Pandora's Box, and I think if you look at what has emerged out of this whole fiasco, has been the extreme right taking that and going with it and saying "okay, now we've got people's attention, we're gonna bring to the forefront how we feel about family values," irregardless of who's family they hurt or what social injustice they brought about and the fact that they felt like their freedom was being infringed upon.

I: Can you elaborate a little more on the Pandora's Box? What do you think has come from this?

R: Well, when you allow an elected official to dictate what her responsibilities are toward her citizens, when you allow three clerks out of 120 to say "I'm not going to do my job," what happens is, and they always talk about the needs of the many over the needs of the few, but in this case they were allowed to use religious freedom and the infringement upon that as being the basis to deny many people their rights and when you do that, where does that stop? Who's

allowed to say “I’m not going to do my job, I’m not going to provide the rights that are given to all citizens by saying it infringes upon my rights.” If you cannot do that job, leave the job. There are people every day in the United States that leave their jobs for one reason or the other. They don’t get along with their coworkers, they’re not making the right salary, they object to the company’s way of managing things, I mean there’s all types of reasons that you lose a job or you leave a job, and in this case, she should’ve been made to leave her job. She wasn’t fulfilling, she basically broke several laws, not only federal but state laws when she altered the marriage licenses, and you have to stand up for that. It should’ve been, she should’ve been arrested, or at least be charged with a misdemeanor which could’ve meant that she could’ve been removed from office, but it wasn’t done. Unfortunately, it was an election year. I’m gonna call it out, it’s what it was. We didn’t have anybody come to our side, we didn’t have presidential candidates come to our side. We didn’t have the governor come out and say “you’re gonna do your job.” The problem comes down to you’ve got elected officials policing elected officials and if they’re not gonna be made to obey the law and follow KRS, there’s gonna have to be citizen groups that say “you’re not doing your job. Let’s do your job.” And if it means policing another elected official, do your job. And I think part of the backlash from all that was that our Democratic candidate did not succeed, the Republican candidate did because he brought that to the forefront. He brought that out in saying that this was protection of people’s religious freedoms. You can’t run away from those issues. They have to be brought out, especially a hot topic that was marriage equality.

I: In your eyes, did the clerk deserve to be imprisoned?

R: She broke the law. Prisons are full of people that have broken the law. It should be no different for her. You can use, if you want to use religious freedom to go in and rob a bank, “oh I’m gonna give part of that to my church.” That’s the Pandora’s Box. That’s where you’re allowing one defense to dictate how you obey the law. If she was a conscientious objector to the war, saying “I’m not going to go kill people” then you’d be taken seriously. But all she had to do was sign a piece of paper? She’s not an officiant, she wasn’t marrying anyone. She was only to do her job to make sure that the information was recorded correctly with Frankfort and go about business, collect her money, and that’s it. And that’s how it should’ve been. And that’s how it is today, only through the court’s interference. Or not interference, but actually following the letter of the law. But again, she was allowed to dictate public policy. It’s wrong.

I: So, upon Kim Davis’ release from jail, as you may know there was a large rally. What are your thoughts on that?

R: Once again, they took it to the heart of the bible belt. They took it to Grayson. It was miraculous that she got out the same day that Mike Huckabee was there and had been paid for all these people to be busloaded in to Grayson. Isn’t that amazing? Matt Bevin was able to clear his schedule to come and speak. Ted Cruz was there. Wow! What if Kim hadn’t made an appearance? How effective would that have been? But she was groomed, she had changed her clothes, she comes out on the stage, they’re playing Eye of the Tiger. None of us went there because we knew it was going to be horrendous and that we feared for the safety of our people, because you have zealots that were whipped into a frenzy and we just, we didn’t want to put our people into that kind of position where we would have to defend ourselves if need be. We were

vastly outnumbered. When you bring in busloads of people into a small town like Grayson, you don't stand a chance. And we didn't want anyone to get hurt. But you have a Republican judge, a federal judge, a district judges who's appointed by a Republican president to his position. He has protestors come out to his house from Kim Davis' side and then all of a sudden she's released from prison when actually, nothing had been accomplished. Her deputy clerks were basically told "you either do your job or you're going to be sitting in jail." Her son refused to do that, but yet he wasn't put in jail. So, I think there were some things there that were satisfactory, that she was put into jail, but there were a lot of things that were not done and are continuing to be left hanging.

I: You've mentioned the reactions of your local officials. Do you care to elaborate a little bit more on your thoughts on specifically the local officials and how they reacted?

R: There's been a lot of criticism of our local officials, and actually I've had apologies made to me by, when I attended the fiscal court, the public officials have actually apologized for saying that they couldn't be involved because they were enjoined into the lawsuit. The problem with that is they weren't enjoined until much later into the proceeding, that wasn't until August, and in June is when basically the protest started, the first of July. Now, Cecil Walkins, our Rowan County attorney actually did file a (pause) what is it? It just left my mind. Official misconduct. He actually did file an official misconduct on August 27<sup>th</sup> saying that, around that date, or 28<sup>th</sup>, saying that she should have done her job and by doing that, she would actually have been in violation of KRS and could've been removed from office as a misdemeanor. I contacted Governor Bashir asking why nothing was done about that. They were saying that basically things were being handled through court. It was already in the federal court system, it was a civil rights case, they felt like it was gonna be dealt with in that aspects and that they didn't have to move on it. But once again, it was an election year. Governor Bashir's son was running for Attorney General. Jack Conway, the current Attorney General, was running for governorship. I think it was one of those topics where they really didn't want to become involved in it because again, it was a family values, moral issue that the felt, that they didn't really want to become involved in. Our local, I think it was the same way with our local officials. They didn't want to become involved in it. They cited the fact that they are religious people, that they believe in the one man, one woman. Our Judge Executive actually testified in court to that, because he was questioned why didn't he provide the marriage certificates, because it was part of his job duties as well, that he could, in the absence of the county clerk, he could've provided the marriage licenses. When people asked about that, actually when they were rejected at the county clerk's office they went to the judge's office. His excuse was that they had no software to provide that license. It's one of those "I don't have to do this because I have the law on my side" which becomes convenient, which becomes "I'll use it to manipulate my job duties." And he felt that she wasn't in absence, that she had deputy clerks there that could actually perform that job so he didn't have to. He didn't feel like she was in absence, and that was the only way that he's felt he should have to issue marriage licenses.

I: Do you think the presence of the fairness ordinance in Morehead should've had an effect on this issue?

R: That wasn't really what the fairness ordinance was about. The fairness ordinance was brought about when fair housing was denied to some MSU students, the LGBTQ community. It became an issue in 2013, was passed unanimously by the city council. It was to address basically when gender identification or sexual orientation was, became an issue and was left out of the old ordinance that they already had on the books, of discrimination. And if you go to the website and look up the fairness ordinance, it's not listed as the fairness ordinance. It is actually listed under discriminatory practices. It became integrated into the old policy they had since 1979 that had not been updated. So they took those policies and integrated it into the old policy. It doesn't have much bite to it. That, in sense, diluted it. It's not been tested in Morehead. It's not been brought to, and actually the only kind of relief that it affords is monetary, that if a business is found to be discriminatory, or a landlord, they can be fined and continue to be fined as long as they disregard the ordinance. But like I said, it's not been tested in Morehead yet and it could become an issue, especially in light of what happened in Orlando.

I: You said you consider Morehead your home, correct? So considering the fact that Morehead and Rowan County is where you would call home, does that have the, does that give you a unique perspective on this view?

R: I think when you come from another place it gives you a different perspective. When you move to a place, you establish a home, a job, a family, you become involved in the community, it becomes your hometown. I still have family in Dayton, I go back up to visit, but I have always been involved in my community, either through coaching, through becoming involved in the youth soccer league, becoming involved with Rowan County Recycling Center. I've always been mindful that I had a job to do within my community as well, not only the fact that being a family person and having a job. I also needed to be involved in my community. If you, it's that old saying "if you're not part of the solution your part of the problem." And until you give a voice to that, until you're willing to put the work in, you're willing to stand up for what you feel is right whether it's, you know, you want to see something brought to your community that's missing. And I think that's where we have become important. We've put that focus that there needs to be a human rights commission here in Morehead, just because the fact that the fairness ordinance usually goes hand in hand in cities that develop it, so we're in the process of that.

I: So what are your thoughts on the reactions of the mass media and several big name political leaders?

R: I think what happens with the mass media is when you see newscasts being done in 30 seconds or less, all the banners at the bottom of the screen scrolling across, it's almost like our attention span is limited to that amount of time. It's hard hitting, it's fast, it's using inflammatory terms that get people involved, the whole process of announcing something in a very forceful manner and then details to be given later to draw those people in, to say "okay, our attention span is this amount of time so we can allow you to mull it over." People are no longer taking the time to research, to do investigation into an issue. They only see what they see in Twitter, 140 characters. On Facebook, it doesn't matter who these people are that are giving these opinions. These people adopt this as their opinion. There are so many news sources now through social media that very few investigations are made into an issue of any depth, because people only want to read just a few lines. That's one of the criticisms, that people are only reading the headline and

hitting like. They're not looking, they're looking at what's being written. It doesn't matter what the content of the story is. They're only seeing the headline and it's, that's what's damaging. People no longer have their own opinions, they adopt the opinions of a meme or a tweet or think that that's clever, or they're just funny, and not thinking about what is behind that. What ideology are you accepting when you do that? And that's the problem that we're having in our country right now. And I think mass media plays into that and they need to accept responsibility for it.

I: Do you think that this issue deserved the attention it received in the media?

R: It was so hard for us to understand it, the attention in received, because we are isolated. We are in a small rural area. We just thought all we had to do was tell her she needed to do her job and she would do it. And when that didn't happen, when Liberty Council stepped in, made many false claims, talking about how the agenda of the gays and that type of thing and made it very inflammatory, and instead of taking the issue for what it was, an infringement of people's rights and following the law. Then it became, and it was, it was a blossoming of the religious right saying that it's a war. The whole thing about Christmas, not being able to say Merry Christmas or using Happy Holidays or the Starbucks cup and things that are so absurd that in becomes unreal to people. They don't think about the people that are being killed and beaten and still being murdered for being who they are. People, all they think about it "well this poor woman is being picked on." It has nothing to do with the fact that many people are being killed for who they love. Being beaten to death. People, transgender teens walking in front of trucks. 40% of trans teens try to commit suicide. None of that's brought out, none of that is brought out by the media. People need to realize that there are humans behind those stories, and that those, there are people that are suffering, and it's just not a county clerk that has had to endure media attention or a group that's had to endure media attention. Let's bring it out, let's bring it out to the forefront. Let's see it for what it is. And that's our part of it. And whether or not the media does anything with it is another thing. And that was one of the things I brought up to the media when it became such a circus was would you want your child to walk up that sidewalk while being told that they're condemned to hell? That, you know, all they have to do is straighten up their lives and live like they should? That they'll be accepted into God's kingdom. We have many Christians within our group, many people of the LGBTQ community are Christian. It shouldn't be used as a weapon against them. And, and until people realize that, until mass media starts becoming human again and doing the human angle, we're gonna be stuck with this. And it's sad.

I: Sorry. So, you think that the religious nature of this community made this issue a lot bigger than it would've been?

R: I don't think it was so much that. I mean we didn't have that many people from the religious community, at least, I didn't think there was. At first there was an initial group of people that were coming out that used the Bible and used Bible verses, that type of thing, saying that this was the right, that was the law of the land, that that should be held to be the law of the land, that you go by what's written in the Bible, you don't go by what's written in the constitution. So there was always, you know, protests about that, and that we should obey God. But for the most part it was civil until outside groups started coming in, and they were using their own agendas, saying that it was the gays' agenda to force in down their throats and this type of thing. It was

very irrational. I think that's why it's really hard to understand how people can be so hateful and so ignorant of basic human rights that they can only see their perspective of it. And it's not true for all Christians. When I was growing up, a Christian wasn't that type of person. A Christian was always, you know they worked on social issues, they fed the hungry, they clothed the poor, they supported groups that would go into countries or even our own country and supported the rights of people. They walked hand in hand. They didn't use it as a shield and saying that it's "our way or no way." There wasn't that, you can't raise a sword and that's what they did, and it became horrible to watch and very unaccepting. I'm admittedly not a religious person and I can't go toe to toe with people that spout Bible verses to support their part in this. All I can see is that you have to obey the law and if you can interpret God's law into that, that's fine. But it shouldn't be a way to hate people, a way to discriminate against people, to support your bigotry.

I: Why do you think that Christians have changed their stance on this issue so abruptly?

R: I don't even think it's all Christians. There's all faiths that have, Catholic Church, you know, has their own policy in regard to homosexuality, the Mormon church, I think the broad use of the term Christian makes it hard to identify that, because they're very, there are a lot of churches that are very accepting. The Unitarian church, the Apostolic church that Kim belongs to, of course, is adamantly opposed to it. They condemn their people to hell, this type of thing. They basically have given up on the living, and your reward is gonna be when you die. You can't, you can't live your life that way. Extremist religions that glorify their people in death, we don't want that. We wanna glorify their lives. We want people to live and love who they love and we don't need to be in people's bedrooms. Unless they're doing something damaging to someone, why are we involved in that? Give these people the same, nowhere in the constitution does it say it has to be one man, one woman to be married. It's not even mentioned in the constitution, and yet people are saying "but that's not the law, the law is God's law." Well if you go into the Bible, there's all kinds of passages that address that. And the fact that divorce, adultery, it's fairly convenient to use the law to your advantage, whether it's God's law or it's the constitution. It's easy to do, but you have to think about what's good for everyone, not just a few. My idea is that you can't use it to your advantage and then expect everyone to go along with it. It's just not gonna happen.

I: What are your thoughts on the outcomes of either the religious liberty or marriage equality movement?

R: I think everyone thought it would give a better understanding of the LGBTQ community. That people would be more accepting when the skies didn't open up, when it didn't rain frogs, when, you know all the things that they think are part of the apocalypse. When that didn't happen, when life went on, I think a lot of people were like "oh, okay, fine, that's fine." They didn't care. It didn't impact them. It's only the people that have some type of belief that this is wrong. And I understand that. You can believe that it's wrong. You just can't use it to hate and to deny people's rights. If you want to do something about it, get organized. Actually, there's a lot of legislation that's been attempted to be passed in violation of the constitution and the federal law that's being struck down. But once again, that brings that hate to the forefront, it brings out the whole zealots that do nothing but talk about everyone's agendas and it being forced down people's throats. And it's not. That was done just like any other thing. I object to Citizens United, but you have to work within the system to get that struck down. If they, you know, Roe

v. Wade. The Brown decision for Loving v. Virginia. Those are all standing Supreme Court decisions that people find wrong or right. And if you believe that strongly, then work to change it. But, you also have to work to uphold your rights, for right or wrong. And that's what we need to do. And that's what we're trying to do. We're not trying to keep anyone from practicing their religion. That's not in anybody's thought. The thought is that you can't restrict other people from living their lives by using your religion.

I: Would you consider your efforts to be a victory?

R: I think it's a victory in the fact that it showed that there were people that care. Whether or not it's gonna pan out in the justice system, it could take years. Our justice system is so slow, and that was what was surprising, that it moved along so fast during the summer, that it actually did happen quite quickly. But again, it was an election year, it was being pushed through, that type of thing. I think we won I the fact that it brought attention to how things can go wrong very quickly and we made an effort. We actually said "this is wrong, we're gonna uphold our rights." There are people that care about this issue, and that we're here. And that, I think, that was where we won. Many people on the county clerk's side think the she won.

I think a lot of it was there was some law bending done when Matt Bevin, on the second day of office, comes in and changes KRS saying that the county clerks no longer have to sign the marriage licenses. He could've very well have been taken to court that very day. He violated his use of executive order. It was in violation of KRS, and that has to be done through legislature. He couldn't come in and just sign it into law. And when that was allowed to happen, it basically opened the door to a lot of other issues that "okay, I got away with this, I can go ahead and do all these executive orders, who's gonna do anything about it?" Finally, when it took cuts to education and an uproar from the general public, they have taken and filed suit.

Overreach of government? The overreach of government is putting a police officer in a child's bathroom and demanding to see that they are, proof of what gender they are. A schoolboard in North Carolina wanting to issue pepper spray to their students so that if a transgender child comes into the wrong bathroom they can be pepper sprayed by another child. How, where is reason? How can an educator condone that? How can any parent want their child pepper sprayed by another student because they feel like they're using the wrong bathroom? It's so absurd, and that's where all this about political correctness and what we can do as a nation and "Make America Great Again." We are great. We don't need to be made again, we don't need to be thrown back to the 50s. People need to realize that there's a lot more to us than morals, and I think that's where we're having a problem. We're trying to be dictated to, to what our family values are and that's not true anymore. We're too diverse. We're too big. We can't do that anymore. So, I don't know. I don't know what the answer is. But you have to stand up for what you feel is right, and if you don't, you lost. All you can do is complain, troll on Facebook, tweet til the day's end. But unless you're willing to put the effort in, then I don't think that you have a voice, and that's what's important.

I: Do you think there could still be movement within the justice system with this issue?

R: I think so. I think it's, actually, you know what, it continues. It continues. It keeps mutating into different things. The Liberty Council has offered up many objections and rulings that have to be ruled on. They keep putting it before the court. It's actually going back up to the 6<sup>th</sup> district

in July, they're having oral arguments again on the case. The state has successfully removed themselves from the suit, so has the county, so basically, it's Kim Davis against the plaintiffs. They've been able to consolidate it into one case and oral arguments will be made in July, 6<sup>th</sup> district. She's not been successful in any of her appeals. It's always been struck down. 6<sup>th</sup> district has been adamant that they won't end around the lower rulings of the lower court, of the district court. I think it's very political in what's being done. It's almost like we don't wanna bring that issue up. We don't want it, as long as we continue it in the court system it becomes lost, just like everything else that gets bogged down in the court system. It's not been dealt with and I think it's gonna continue, which is unfair to the plaintiffs in this case. It's even unfair to Kim Davis but she continues to do it and she's being told that she's upholding religious freedom by doing this. It's gonna continue for quite a while, I'm afraid, until it becomes a non-issue, and I don't think it'll ever become a non-issue.

I: How has this experience changed you?

R: It's changed me on a personal level to become involved again. When you get older and you know, you're focused on your family, you're focused on wanting to relax and you no longer have to go to your job every day, so you become almost complacent. This brought out the fire again. I wanted to be involved again. I also find out there were like-minded people here in Morehead, and until you've got something to rally around, it's hard to find those people in a small community. You don't know how anyone feels. You can become involved in a church and you can become involved in a political party, you can do all that. That's what brought me to the protest, was that I had experienced it, I knew that it could be effective, and that I wanted to be given a voice. To continue in it, it was because our organization formed, it became a way to speak to people and to remind people that there are people that care in our community.

I: Do you believe the debate over religious liberty and marriage equality is over?

R: No, not by a long shot. It's not until, I don't think it'll ever end. I think there's always gonna be a conflict between religious beliefs and fundamental rights of people, because there's always gonna be those minorities that are always going to be fighting for their rights. It's the way our judicial system, it's the way or legislative system is set up, that until we're representative of all minorities, we're gonna continue this. And it's from time beginning. This isn't anything new. People see it as "oh yeah well all of this has started up just recently." No, every war in this world has, almost has, is either through religious belief or possession of land. So, when it's so deeply ingrained in people, and they feel like it's being stripped away from them, they're gonna fight, and it's been that way from time began. That people have fought over these types of issues. It's not gonna go away. It's whether or not we handle it in a way that you accept all beliefs and be human to one another and accept people as human beings, or just objectify people. I don't wanna objectify Christians. I don't wanna objectify people that have fiscal responsibility for the way government's run. But I also feel like you cannot cover it up by using religion, by saying that family values. Everyone has family values. Everyone has morals. You just can't dictate to people what those are, and they shouldn't dictate to people. You have to live within the confines of a society, whether you use that to live outside of it where that's through religion or whether it's through crime, whether it's taking a gun and killing people. We have to come to grips with this. And I'm, you know, this whole thing with Orlando and people saying you can't restrict people's

rights. You have to use some common sense in this. And that's where we're losing out in it, saying "oh well being politically correct, people are coming to get our guns," this kinda thing. I'm a gun owner. I have a concealed weapons permit. Do I think I'm gonna go out and blow anybody away who doesn't agree to my ideas of how people should live their lives? Absurd. But there are people out there that are so frightened. They're thinking they're losing their privilege. But they're willing to concede loss of life. Just don't do that. Be human, be concerned. Use your religious values. That wasn't preached. At least not by any of the people that I ever had any involvement in when I was involved in religion. I don't want it to be a religious issue. I really don't. It should be a human rights, you know, this is a civil rights case. Whether or not you want to believe it's an infringement on religious freedom that's another thing. But it's being played out in civil court. It's a civil rights case through district court. You only take it there if it's a civil rights case. People have lost sight of that. It's not over. It never will be.

I: Are there any comments or questions you'd like to add?

R: I, my part in this I want to believe, can have a lasting effect on how our community accepts everyone, whether it's through healing, whether it's community involvement, whether it's standing up for other people's rights, whether it's acting for minorities, whether it's acting for the general public. I want to be a part of that in some small way. I think everybody wants their legacy to be that, they want to be remembered. I think the growing list of monsters that commit these horrendous crimes against people do it because they want to be remembered in history. I want to be remembered by the people that I have had effect on and I'll continue to work in that capacity. Again, I just, I think that you have to do this with passion and feel it, and compassion. I want to continue that work. That's it.

I: Well thank you again.

R: I didn't mean to cry! (laughs)