



Make Waves, But Don't Step on the Water: Reflections of Michael Deanhardt

Michael C. Deanhardt, Thel Spencer

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The amazing life story of a man whose passion for morality, equality, and individual human rights put him at odds with much of society in Anderson, SC. This is the story of Michael Deanhardt, and how he evolved to become the voice of dissent in a land of "conservative" values and Bible Belt bias. His journey began in the early 1960's when his outrage over Jim Crow segregation caused him to literally lead the fight for equal rights through protests and outright civil disobedience. When he found that those who most ardently opposed what he saw as fundamental human rights were the leaders and congregations of local churches, he began to doubt, and eventually challenge the morality and value of the church itself. Michael Deanhardt was the voice for the dissent! Forty years of his Letters to the Editor of the Anderson Independent Mail caused a constant stream of rebuttal and public debate. Protest marches, arrests, a first in the nation federal lawsuit, mop scene interaction, and continual monitoring of City and County Council meetings furthered Michael's claim as public enemy number one among the closed minded set. He actively took the lead in a large number of unpopular human rights issues, including textile workers rights to organize to fight brown lung, union rights in general, women's rights in general and abortion rights, and gay rights. Other issues included evolution, stem cell research, and especially separation of church and state. Michael Deanhardt shares his recollections of those turbulent times, of a KKK dynamite attack on his home, of the heavy personal price he paid, and of the inner peace he found through Secular Humanism.

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