

WILLIAM KUNSTLER: DISTURBING THE UNIVERSE



William Kunstler, Emily Kunstler and Sarah Kunstler, 1990 (Photograph by Maddy Miller)

A film by Emily Kunstler and Sarah Kunstler

An 85-minute documentary film. Digital Video. Color & Black & White.

Premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in 2009

Released theatrically by Arthouse Films in November 2009

Released on DVD on April 27, 2010

Broadcast on PBS on June 22, 2010 on the award-winning documentary series P.O.V. as the season's opening night film.

A wonderful, inspiring film. – *Howard Zinn*

Expertly put together and never less than compelling. -*The Hollywood Reporter*

A superior documentary. – *The Los Angeles Times*

Shatteringly good. – *The San Francisco Chronicle*

A fascinating portrait. – *The Washington Post*

A magnificent profile of an irrepressible personality. – *Indiewire*

This is a wonderful film. Emily and Sarah Kunstler have done a remarkable job. The film is great history – *Alec Baldwin*

A sensitive truthful, insightful film. – *Huffington Post*

A brilliant and even-handed portrait. – *Hamptons.com*

A perfect balance of the personal and the public. - *Salt Lake City Weekly*

A wonderful, weird, and very American story. – *The Stranger*

A well-crafted and intimate but not uncritical tribute to both a father and a legend of the Left – *The Independent*

Might just help reawaken viewers to find their own Goliaths and slingshots. - *The Jewish Journal*

The Film's Title

The title of the film comes from T. S. Eliot's poem, *The Love Song of Alfred J. Prufrock*. At the end of his life, many of Kunstler's speeches were entreaties to young people to have the courage take action for change. He frequently spoke about Michelangelo's statue of David as embodying the moment when a person must choose to stand up or to fade into the crowd and lead an unexceptional life. He also recited parts of Eliot's poem, where Prufrock wonders if he "dare disturb the universe."

Awards and Honors to Date

- Winner, *Grand Jury Award for Best Feature* from Patois, The New Orleans Human Rights Film Festival (2009)
- Winners, *Best New Filmmakers Award*, Michael Moore's Traverse City Film Festival (2009)
- Honorable Mention, *The Charles E. Guggenheim Emerging Artist Award*, Full Frame Documentary Festival (2009)
- Runner-up, *The Golden Space Needle Audience Award* for Best Documentary, Seattle International Film Festival (2009)
- *Grand Jury Prize* nominee, Sundance Film Festival (2009)
- Winners, *L'Oreal Women of Worth Vision Award*, Sundance Film Festival (2009)
- *Best in Fest*, Minneapolis-St. Paul International Film Festival (2009)
- Opening Night Film, Berkshire International Film Festival (2009)
- Closing Night Film, Marfa Film Festival (2009)

Distribution Notes

Emily and Sarah Kunstler teamed up with Arthouse Films to distribute *William Kunstler: Disturbing the Universe* theatrically, and with Arthouse and New Video to release the film on DVD. The film is currently available wherever DVDs are sold including Amazon, iTunes and Netflix, where it has enjoyed extremely high customer ratings.

Festival and Theatrical Recap

In *William Kunstler: Disturbing the Universe* has screened at over 50 festivals nationally and internationally and opened theatrically in 26 cities in 2009 and 2010. In New York the film had an unprecedented 8-week run at Cinema Village and was also held over in Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Denver.

Television Broadcast

William Kunstler: Disturbing the Universe opens the 2010 season of the award-winning documentary series POV on PSB on June 22, 2010.

Synopsis

The late civil rights attorney William Kunstler was one of the most famous and controversial lawyers of the 20th century. He represented civil rights and anti-war activists, as well as accused terrorists and murderers. In *William Kunstler: Disturbing the Universe*, filmmakers Emily Kunstler and Sarah Kunstler explore their father's life, from middle-class family man, to movement lawyer, to the most hated lawyer in America.

Project Description

"Sarah and I wanted to fit dad's life into a single unified theory," said Emily. "We wanted all of his clients to be innocent, and all of his cases to be battles for justice and freedom."

That is how it had seemed when Kunstler fought for civil rights with Martin Luther King Jr., and represented the Chicago 8 who faced jail for protesting the Vietnam war. When inmates took over Attica prison, or Native Americans stood up to the federal government at Wounded Knee, they asked Kunstler to be their lawyer. To Emily and Sarah, he was a hero from legend, who stood at the center of everything important that had ever happened. "His clients were fighting to change the world, and he was fighting to keep them out of jail," said Emily.

But the girls weren't around for their father's glory days. Born in the late 1970s when Kunstler was almost 60, the father they knew publicly kissed the cheek of a Mafia client and condoned assassinations he viewed as political. He represented an Islamic fundamentalist charged with murdering a rabbi, a terrorist accused of bombing the World Trade Center, and a teenager charged with participating in a near-fatal gang rape.

By the time Kunstler died in 1995, his teenage daughters thought he had "stopped standing for anything worth fighting for." Once idolized, he had become an embattled, if still dazzling, loner.

"Dad moved himself to tears with his own grand speeches," said Emily. "And the crazy thing was, it actually worked." Defending a drug dealer, he won the first and only acquittal on self-defense of person who shot at and wounded police officers.

Still, there was the legend of the extravagant hero who in 1960 had left his safe, suburban life and traveled south to join the civil rights struggle. There, Kunstler, whose own parents had black servants who ate in the kitchen and used separate toilets, "was reborn into a man I liked better," he said, "one who contributed to society and tried to make a difference."

Within a few years, Kunstler was catapulted into international fame when he defended the Chicago 8, protesters charged with inciting riots outside the 1968 Democratic National Convention. He defied the judge and put the Vietnam War and American racism on trial. But the trial changed Kunstler. He had once believed that the law an instrument of justice. Now he saw a legal system that enabled "those in power to exercise social control" and "at all costs, to perpetuate themselves."

Kunstler witnessed the power and the costs first hand at Attica Prison when he was called in as an observer for the inmates during the 1971 rebellion. The audience sees it, too, through devastating archival images that show what happened when state troopers stormed the prison, covered the yard with tear gas, and opened fire on the prisoners, killing 29 inmates and nine hostages and wounding hundreds. With clear eyes, the film addresses both the viciousness of the state and the charges that Kunstler did more harm than good by hardening the prisoners' resolve and giving them unrealistic expectations of amnesty.

Throughout the film, in historical footage and compelling interviews, Kunstler's critics,

defenders, and clients talk about how one man made a difference. Some still hate him, some credit him with saving their lives and freedom, others acknowledge that he irrevocably and improbably changed their view of race and politics. “That’s when I learned not to like my government not to trust them,” said Jean Fritz, a Republican who had been a juror at the Chicago 8 trial and watched black defendant Bobby Seale chained and gagged. “And that’s hard to say, but that’s how I felt.”

A string of sensational trials and stunning victories fed Kunstler’s belief that because he was skilled, passionate, and right, he could convince anyone. But while that made him a great lawyer, it did not make him an easy father. “I remember pleading with him not to represent a teenager accused of a gang rape,” said Emily about Yusef Salaam, a black 15 year old accused of participating in a savage attack on a female jogger in Central Park.

“I think dad always believed [Yusef Salaam] was innocent, but it was never about innocence for dad. He looked at Yusef and saw a kid who had been convicted by public opinion — and by his own daughters — before the case ever went to trial,” said Emily. The media, captivated by the case, ran headlines calling the accused “monsters.”

We see this “monster” years later, as a gentle and introspective adult who, it turns out, had been innocent all along, and was exonerated by DNA evidence after six and a half years in prison. Kunstler was right: It was racism and a biased legal system that had failed.

And continues to. Indeed it is hard not to reassess his defense of despised “Muslim terrorists” in the light of post-9/11 violations of the rights of Islamic Americans.

“I suspect,” says Kunstler talking to a crowd during the Chicago 8 trial, that more people “have gone to their deaths through a legal system than through all the illegalities in the history of man: 6 million people in Europe during the Third Reich. Legal. Sacco and Vanzetti. Legal. The hundreds of great trials throughout the South where black men were condemned to death. All legal. Jesus. Legal. Socrates. Legal. ...All tyrants learn that it is far better to do this thing through some semblance of legality than to do it without that pretense.”

And there is the heart of the film: Kunstler inspires by choosing justice over law and order, by defending pariahs because pariahs are most in need of defense, and by doing it all while grandstanding for the media.

In the end, viewers, along with his daughters, reconcile Kunstler’s uncomfortably complex parts into an all too human, all too familiar, whole. The film makes relevant to today the issues that were important to Kunstler: racism, freedom of speech and action, prisoners’ rights, anti-war activism, and the encroachment of government power. With candor and affection, *Disturbing the Universe* illuminates the key civil rights battles of the 20th century through the life of one man who was a part of the fight for justice.

Director's Statement

By Sarah Kunstler

William Kunstler: Disturbing The Universe grew out of conversations that Emily and I began having about our father and his impact on our lives. It was 2005, ten years after his death, and Hurricane Katrina had just shredded the veneer that covered racism in America.

When we were growing up our parents imbued us with a strong sense of personal responsibility. We wanted to fight injustice; we just didn't know what path to take. I think both Emily and I were afraid of trying to live up to our father's accomplishments.

It was in a small, dusty Texas town that we found our path. In 1999, an unlawful drug sting imprisoned more than 20 percent of Tulia's African American population. The injustice of the incarcerations shocked us, and the fury and eloquence of family members left behind moved us beyond sympathy to action.

While our father lived in front of news cameras, we found our place behind the lens. Our film, *Tulia, Texas: Scenes from the Drug War* helped exonerate 46 people.

One day when we were driving around Tulia, hunting leads and interviews, Emily turned to me. "I think I could be happy doing this for the rest of my life," she said, giving voice to something we had both been thinking. It was years later that we realized our father had made a similar journey to the South and left a trail of breadcrumbs we had unconsciously followed. That journey had changed his life as well.

When we decided to make a film about our father, we worried that the people we interviewed would see us only as Kunstler's daughters. But rather than being an impediment, this inevitable framework became a strength. While we loved our father's extravagant greatness, we also suffered his frailty. And we knew that many other children, especially those who loss a parent while still young, take a similar adult journey toward reconciling the parent with the person.

Today, with the election of America's first African American president, it is tempting to relegate the civil rights movement to a bygone chapter in a history book, and to celebrate our victories without acknowledging how much work remains to be done. More than 50 years have passed since the Supreme Court ruled that separate schools for white and black children are inherently unequal. Yet racism and bigotry cast ugly shadows on our schools, streets, and courtrooms. Emily and I wanted to bring our father's story, and the battles he was a part of, out of the past, and to remind audiences that freedom is a constant struggle, and that the people who fight for it are heroes, not because they are without flaws, but because when they see injustice they find the courage to act.

William Kunstler: Disturbing The Universe is a film about and for people of courage. We hope that it communicates that the world we inherit is better because someone struggled for justice, and that those changes will survive only if we continue to fight.

Principal Characters

Dennis Banks – is a founder of the American Indian Movement. A Native American leader, teacher, lecturer, activist and author, Mr. Banks is an Anishinaabe born on Leech Lake Indian Reservation in northern Minnesota. His Ojibwe name is Nowa Cumig “In the Center of the Ground.” He was one of William Kunstler’s clients, along with Russell Means, in the Wounded Knee Leadership Trial.

“Holy crap, Bill Kunstler’s at the gate.”

Clyde Bellecourt – is a Native American civil rights organizer and a founder of the American Indian Movement. He was born on the White Earth Indian Reservation in northern Minnesota. His Ojibwe name, Nee-gon-we-way-we-dun, means “Thunder Before the Storm.”

“[Bill told me] it’s not the Indian people who are on trial, it’s the government that’s on trial. They’re the ones that we’re after, they’re the ones who are going to be found guilty, and he prophesized that.”

Father Daniel Berrigan- is a poet, peace activist, and Roman Catholic priest. He and his brother Philip made the FBI Ten Most Wanted Fugitives list for committing acts of vandalism, including destroying government property. Kunstler defended the Berrigans for burning draft files in Catonsville, Maryland, as part of the Catonsville 9.

“So the night before, we had a kind of liturgical service, we concocted napalm, . . . and we prayed that this might be an instrument of peace-making, as it was the instrument certainly of us taking our lives in our hands.”

“[Bill understood] that the law of the land is not one with justice and can very easily be its mortal opponent. The only absolute is justice, not the law.”

Elizabeth Fink - is a civil rights and criminal defense attorney and a friend of Kunstler. For 26 years, she was lead counsel on a class action civil rights lawsuit brought by the Attica prisoners and finally settled in 2000.

At Attica, “[Bill] made a big mistake. He didn’t go to them and say ‘Listen, there are 500, 600 law enforcement out there. They’re all being lied to. They all have this unbelievable amount of weapons. And if you don’t agree, they’re going to blow you away.’ No one told them that.”

Jean Fritz – was one of four jurors on the Chicago Conspiracy Trial who held out for acquittal on all charges. The jury eventually reached a compromise verdict, acquitting all defendants of con-spiracy, and convicting five of crossing state lines to incite a riot. At the time of the trial, Fritz, a Republican, was 51 years old and ran an auto supply store with her husband.

About Bobby Seale: “It was absolutely sickening. You just felt that the world was coming to an end that you were actually seeing this in the United States of America. Somebody tied up like he was.”

Karin Kunstler Goldman – is the eldest of Kunstler’s four daughters. She participated in Mississippi Freedom Summer in 1964 and was a Peace Corps volunteer in Senegal from 1966 to 1968. She received a law degree from Rutgers University in 1973. Since 1982, she has been an assistant attorney general in the Charities Fraud Division of the New York State Attorney General’s office.

Before he went South, “Bill and Michael, his brother, had a fairly ordinary general practice. They did some matrimonial law, they did contracts law, they did house closings, whatever they could do to put bread and butter on the table.”

Gregory “Joey” Johnson– is an activist. During the 1984 Republican National Convention in Dallas, Texas, he demonstrated against the policies of the Reagan administration, was arrested for burning an American flag, and charged with destroying a venerated object. Kunstler represented him before the United States Supreme Court, which ruled that flag burning was protected speech under the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. (Texas v. Johnson, 491 U.S. 397 (1989).

“When we came down, out of the Supreme Court, we all had our fists in the air including Bill. He had that kind of defiance.”

Emily Kunstler– is the daughter of William Kunstler and a director and producer of *William Kunstler: Disturbing the Universe*. She is also the film’s editor and narrator. She is 30 years old.

“We may never agree with everything our father did, but dad’s story taught us that the best thing a person can do is stand up to injustice, even when no one agrees with you, even if you have to risk everything to do it.”

Sarah Kunstler– is the daughter of William Kunstler and a director and producer of *William Kunstler: Disturbing the Universe*. She is also the film’s writer. She is 32 years old.

“Emily and I wanted to bring our father’s story, and the battles he was a part of, out of the past, and to remind audiences that freedom is a constant struggle, and that the people who fight for it are heroes, not because they are without flaws, but because they see injustice and find the courage to act.”

William Kunstler –(July 7, 1919 - September 4, 1995) was a radical lawyer and civil rights activist. He represented Martin Luther King Jr. and other civil rights activists in the South during the early 1960s, but gained national renown for defending the Chicago Seven (originally Chicago Eight) against charges of conspiring to incite riots in Chicago during the 1968 Democratic National Convention. He represented Black Power activists, inmates in the 1971 Attica rebellion, Native American activists charged after the 1973 standoff at Wounded Knee, Puerto Rican Nationalists, and others. In the 1980s and ’90s, after he represented accused rapists, terrorists, murderers, and members of organized crime, he was dubbed “the most hated lawyer in America.” He is the father of Emily Kunstler and Sarah Kunstler.

“Every person’s life has a moment when you are thinking of doing something that will jeopardize yourself. ... I hope many of you will dare when the time comes.”

Margaret Ratner Kunstler— is a civil rights attorney, Emily and Sarah’s mother, and William Kunstler’s widow. She met her husband in 1968 during the Columbia University Student Protests, where she coordinated the defense of those arrested through the Mass Defense Office of the National Lawyers Guild. She later worked at the New York City-based Center for Constitutional Rights as an attorney and educational director. She is now president of the William Moses Kunstler Fund for Racial Justice, a foundation established in 1995 in the memory of her late husband to combat racism in the criminal justice system.

“I didn’t want him to represent Nosair [accused of killing Rabbi Meier Kahane]. I thought it put you two in danger. Obviously he didn’t listen to me.”

William Means- (Oglala Lakota) a Vietnam combat and Wounded Knee (1973) veteran, is a founder of the International Indian Treaty Council and co-founder of the U.N. Working Group on Indigenous Populations. He is an expert on U.S. and Indian Treaty relations. Russell Means is his brother.

About the military response at Wounded Knee: “I thought, man, I survived Vietnam and now I’m going to get killed on my own land, my own reservation.”

Michael Ratner — is a civil rights attorney and was a friend of Kunstler. President of the Center for Constitutional Rights, he is intensely involved in challenging constitutional violations in the wake of 9/11. He has litigated numerous cases in the United States against major international human rights abusers, and has brought challenges to U.S. war making in El Salvador, Nicaragua, Grenada, Iraq, and Yugoslavia.

“[Bill] stood for radical politics and now he was representing [Nosair], someone whose values were, as far as we knew, anathema to most of us. The guy had powder burns, supposedly, on his hands, and Bill got that guy acquitted, so he was obviously a pretty incredible lawyer. But people were pretty angry about what happened with Nosair”

Paul Redd— is a civil rights activist and was Kunstler’s first civil rights client. In the late 1950s, when he headed the local NAACP in Westchester, Redd alleged discrimination after he was unable to rent an apartment. Kunstler, who lived in the same neighborhood, helped Redd and his wife, Oriol, win their case—and the apartment they still live in. Redd organized demonstrations against housing discrimination.

“He was a friend of mine. . . . It made no difference to him what color you were. If he felt you were being discriminated against and he could help out, he did.”

Yusef Salaam— was arrested when he was 15, along with four other teenagers and charged with beating and raping a 28-year-old female jogger in New York’s Central Park. He spent six and a half years in prison, and was exonerated in 2002 when the real perpetrator came forward and confessed to the crime. Kunstler did not represent Mr. Salaam at trial, but spent two years appealing his case until he finally lost before New York’s highest court.

“People wanted us to be hanging from the trees by the end of the day.”

Bobby Seale - is an American civil rights activist who co-founded the Black Panther Party along with Dr. Huey P. Newton. Seale was one of the original Chicago Eight defendants charged with conspiracy and inciting to riot, in the wake of the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago. After his lawyer became ill and unavailable for trial, Seale demanded the right to defend himself. To silence Seale's "outbursts," Judge Julius Hoffman ordered him bound and gagged in the courtroom. Hoffman sentenced Seale to four years imprisonment for contempt, and eventually severed him from the case. William Kunstler and Len Weinglass represented what became known as the Chicago Seven.

To the Chicago 8 judge: "You're a racist, a fascist, and a bigot!"

Michael Smith— was a 21-year-old New York State Corrections Officer at Attica Prison during the 1971 riot. Inmates held him hostage for the duration of the four-day siege, which ended with the bloody retaking of the facility, by force. Authorities shot him five times when they opened fire on the siege.

"How many lives did this change forever in ways that future generation will never even realize?"

Madonna Thunderhawk - A Two Kettle Lakota, is a veteran of key modern Native American struggles, from the occupation of Alcatraz to the siege of Wounded Knee. An original member of the American Indian Movement (AIM), she is a long-time community organizer.

"When you're fighting for your land and your identity, you don't know what you can do when your back is against the wall."

Len Weinglass – is a civil rights attorney and was co-counsel with William Kunstler on the Chicago Conspiracy Trial. For the past four decades, he has been involved in some of our nation's most high-profile civil rights cases. He represented Jane Fonda in her suit against Richard Nixon; Barry Commoner in his battle to enter a presidential primary; African American radical Angela Davis; Bill and Emily Harris, charged with kidnaping Patty Hearst; death row inmate Mumia Abu Jamal; former Weatherman Kathy Boudin; and five Cubans charged in Miami with espionage.

"[Bill was sentenced to] 40 plus months in prison on contempt charges — the longest contempts ever awarded to an American lawyer in history."

Timeline

July 7, 1919— William Moses Kunstler is born.

1941— Kunstler graduates from Yale College and enlists in the Army.

1943 – Kunstler marries Lotte Rosenberger. His first two daughters, Karin and Jane, are born in 1943 and 1949.

1944 -1945— Kunstler's Army unit joins the invasion of Leyte, New Guinea. He receives a Bronze Star and (perhaps) also a Purple Heart, and returns to the U.S. before the end of 1945.

1946 - Kunstler enrolls in Columbia Law School. In 1948, he is admitted to the New York State bar. He and his brother Michael form the law practice Kunstler and Kunstler.

1960– Kunstler represents Paul and Orial Redd, African American founders of the local NAACP chapter who lived in his Westchester community. This housing discrimination lawsuit is Kunstler's first civil rights case.

June 15, 1961– Kunstler receives a telephone call from ACLU Director Rowland Watts asking him to fly to Jackson, Mississippi, to support the Freedom Riders.

1966– Kunstler founds the Center for Constitutional Rights with attorneys Ben Smith, Arthur Kinoy, and Morton Stavis.

October 5-9, 1968– Kunstler represents the Catonsville 9, Catholic activists, including brothers Daniel and Philip Berrigan, who burn draft files to protest the Vietnam war.

Summer 1968– Kunstler meets young radical attorney Margaret Ratner in a New York City courtroom where she is defending protesters arrested during the Columbia University Protests. Kunstler is representing Abbie Hoffman on a marijuana charge.

August 22-29, 1968– Protesters converge on the Democratic National Convention in Chicago. Protest organizers include the YIPPIES (Youth International Party) and the National Mobilization to End the War in Vietnam.

September 24, 1969- February 18, 1970 – Kunstler serves as lead counsel in the trial of the Chicago Eight (Rennie Davis, David Dellinger, John Froines, Tom Hayden, Abbie Hoffman, Jerry Rubin, Bobby Seale and Lee Weiner), and faces off against Judge Julius Hoffman.

February 25, 1970– After a speech by William Kunstler, rioting students at the University of California, Santa Barbara, burn down the local branch of the Bank of America.

September 9, 1971 – September 13, 1971– When inmates at Attica Correctional Facility seize the facility and demand better living conditions, they invite Kunstler to be an observer to negotiations, and then their lawyer. On September 13, the state retakes the prison by force, killing 29 inmates and nine hostages.

Early 1970s– William Kunstler and Margaret Ratner find an apartment in New York's West Village.

February 27, 1973 – May 8, 1973– At Wounded Knee, South Dakota, the American Indian Movement and Pine Ridge Indian Reservation residents occupy the town and demand that the United States abide by longstanding treaties with the Native American people, and launch an investigation into corruption by local government and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. U.S. military and government agents immediately surround the area. After 71 days, the standoff ends peacefully. Hundreds are arrested. Kunstler aids in negotiations.

January 8, 1974 – September 16, 1974– William Kunstler is lead counsel at the trial of Dennis Banks and Russell Means (The Wounded Knee Leadership Trial) in St. Paul, Minnesota. After nine months, the judge dismisses the case because of government misconduct.

October 1976 – William Kunstler and Margaret Ratner marry at the Manhattan courthouse where they met. Margaret is eight months pregnant and their car is parked outside at a 15-minute meter.

November 5, 1976– Sarah Kunstler is born.

June 24, 1978 - Emily Kunstler is born.

1984 –Gregory “Joey” Johnson burns a U.S. flag at the 1984 Republican National Convention in Dallas, Texas, and is convicted of violating a Texas law prohibiting destruction of venerated objects. He is sentenced to one year in prison and fined \$2,000.

November 19, 1986 –Larry Davis, a 23-year-old drug dealer, shoots six police officers when dozens of officers raid his sister’s Bronx apartment. He eludes capture for 17 days despite a massive city-wide manhunt.

November 20, 1988 – With Kunstler as his lawyer, Larry Davis is found not guilty of the attempted murder of six police officers.

March 21, 1989– Kunstler defends Johnson’s flag-burning case before the U. S. Supreme Court arguing that his action was protected speech under the First Amendment to the Constitution. On June 21, 1989, the Court issues its decision, invalidating prohibitions in force in 48 of the 50 states, against desecrating the American flag. Texas v. Johnson, 491 U.S. 397 (1989).

April 19, 1989 – A female jogger is found raped and beaten in Central Park

May 1989 –Kunstler represents Tyrone the Cat for “crimes against humanity” in a televised mock trial on Fox TV’s “The Reporters.”

August 18, 1990- Yusef Salaam, 15, is convicted of raping and beating the Central Park Jogger. Kunstler is not Salaam’s lawyer at trial, but spends two years appealing the conviction. Kunstler is brought up on disciplinary charges by the New York State Bar after calling the trial judge a “disgrace to the bench.”

November 5, 1990– Rabbi Meier Kahane is murdered after giving a speech at New York’s Marriot Hotel.

December 22, 1991– A jury acquits Kunstler’s client, El Sayiid Nosair, of murdering Rabbi Meier Kahane.

1992 – Kunstler represents John Gotti and defends his constitutional right to counsel when his long-time attorneys are disqualified because they are “house counsel” for the Gambino organization.

February 26, 1993– A car bomb is detonated below Tower One of the World Trade Center in New York City. Kunstler represents several of the suspects (Ibrahim A. El-Gabrownny, Siddig Ibrahim Siddig, and Sheik Abdel Rahman), but is eventually disqualified by district court Judge Michael B. Mukasey from representing them (August 25, 1995).

September 5, 1994– William Kunstler dies in New York City.

Director and Crew Biographies

Emily Kunstler and Sarah Kunstler (producers/directors) run Off Center Media (www.off-center.com), a production company that produces documentaries exposing injustice in the criminal justice system. The sisters founded Off Center Media in 2000, and have produced, directed, and edited a number of short documentaries, including *Tulia, Texas: Scenes from the Drug War* (2002), which won Best Documentary Short at the Woodstock Film Festival, and was instrumental in winning exoneration for 46 wrongfully convicted people; and *Getting Through to the President* (2004), which has aired on the Sundance Channel, Current TV, and Channel Thirteen/WNET.

Other notable Off Center Media projects include *A Pattern of Exclusion: The Trial of Thomas Miller-El* (2002), a documentary about racism at the trial of Miller-El, who had been on death row in Texas since 1985; *The Norfolk Four: A Miscarriage of Justice* (2006), about four young men in Norfolk, Virginia, who falsely confessed to a rape-murder that they did not commit; and *Executing the Insane: The Case of Scott Panetti* (2007). These films have contributed to campaigns to stay executions, convince decision makers to reopen cases, and exonerate the wrongfully convicted. *William Kunstler: Disturbing the Universe* is the sisters' first documentary feature. The sisters won the *Lo'real Women of Worth Award* at the 2009 Sundance Film Festival and the *Best New Documentary Filmmakers Award* at Michael Moore's Traverse City Film Festival.

Emily Kunstler graduated in 2000 from NYU's Tisch School of the Arts with a BFA and honors in Film and Video. She was a video producer for *Democracy Now!*, an independent national television and radio news program, and a studio art fellow with the Independent Study Program of the Whitney Museum of American Art in 2004. Emily is also a co-founder of the Kent State Truth Tribunal, founded in 2010 to bring out and record the truth of what happened at Kent on May 4, 1970.

Sarah Kunstler graduated from Yale University with a BA in Photography in 1998 and from Columbia Law School with a JD in 2004. She is currently a criminal defense attorney practicing in the Southern District of New York.

Jesse Moss (producer) is the founder of Mile End Films (www.mileendfilms.com), a New York-based production company. His award-winning documentaries include *Full Battle Rattle*, about the U.S. Army's Iraq war simulation in California's Mojave Desert. The film premiered at the 2008 Berlin International Film Festival, won the Special Jury Prize at the SXSW Film Festival, and opened theatrically at New York's Film Forum. His other films include *Speedo: A Demolition Derby Love Story* (PBS/POV), and *Con Man* (HBO/Cinemax). Before establishing his own production company, Moss worked as a producer for Academy Award-winner Barbara Kopple and as a speechwriter on Capitol Hill. In 2003, *Filmmaker Magazine* named him one of 25 New Faces of Independent Film.

Susan Korda (producer) has worked as a writer, director, and editor on documentary and narrative films, including *The Sweetest Sound* (2002), *Trembling Before G-d* (2001), *One of Us* (1999), *Vienna is Different* (1989), and the Academy Award-nominated *For All Mankind* (1989). Born in New York and raised there and in Vienna, Austria, she studied at the City College of New York/Picker Film Institute from 1979 to 1984. She made her first film, *Filial Dreams*, in 1983. Since then she has been working as a director and editor and teaching at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts and at the International Filmschule, Cologne.

Vanessa Hope (executive producer) collaborated as a producer with award-winning Chinese director Wang Quanan on *Jingzhe*, a film that debuted at the Berlin Film Festival's Panorama in 2004. She then joined Antidote Films in New York as head of development, and later collaborated with Original Media when it produced the Oscar-nominated films, *The Squid and the Whale* and *Half Nelson*. In 2006, she produced *Film Stills of the Mind*, a photography series about contemporary Chinese artists. In 2007, she produced a short film in China, *Tombee De Nuit Sur Shanghai*, by the Cesar-nominated, avant-garde filmmaker Chantal Akerman. In February 2009, Hope began production on the narrative feature film directorial debut of Zeina Durra, *The Imperialists are Still Alive!*

Brett Wiley (director of photography) has been a documentary cameraman since 1992. He was director of photography on four special editions of Bill Moyers Journal, two of which were nominated for Emmy Awards. Wiley was the cinematographer for three documentaries accepted to the Sundance Film Festival: *Sound and Fury*, which was nominated for an Academy Award, *Let the Church Say Amen*, and *Why We Fight*, which won the Sundance Jury Award for Best Documentary.

Martina Radwan (second director of photography) began her film career in her native Germany. *Ferry Tales*, a documentary she shot in collaboration with Katja Esson, was nominated for the 2004 Academy Award. Her current documentary projects include *Through a Lens Darkly* by award-winning director Thomas Allan Harris, and *Poetry of Resilience* and *Skywalker*, both by Academy-nominee Katja Esson.

Shahzad Ismaily (composer) is a composer and performer living in New York City. He was recently artist-in-residence at Headlands Center for the Arts, the Sundance Institute (film composer's lab) and UC Berkeley. He composed the score for the film *Frozen River*, winner of the Sundance Grand Jury Prize. He performs and records regularly with Marc Ribot, Jolie Holland, Laurie Anderson, Will Oldham, John Zorn, Raz Mesinai, and Yoko Ono.

Main Credits

An Off Center Media Production
In association with Chicken & Egg Pictures

Produced and Directed By

Emily Kunstler and Sarah Kunstler

Editor

Emily Kunstler

Producer

Jesse Moss

Writer

Sarah Kunstler

Producer

Susan Korda

Associate Producers

Tracy Bunting
Andrew Lutsky

Executive Producer

Vanessa Hope

Consulting Producers

Margaret Ratner Kunstler
Matt Ruskin
Socheata Poeuv
Charles Vogl

Director of Photography

Brett Wiley

Second Director of Photography

Martina Radwan

Consulting Producer for

Chicken & Egg

Judith Helfand

Music

Shahzad Ismaily

Executive Producer for ITVS

Sally Jo Fifer

Animation

Emily Hubley
Jeremiah Dickey

William Kunstler: Disturbing the Universe is a co-production of Disturbing the Universe LLC and the Independent Television Service (ITVS), with funding provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB).

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