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KENYON COLLEGE
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Stories of Knox County

Courtney Decosky
Interviewed by
Maria Brescia-Weiler and Catherine Wessel
On
April 6, 2017

Kenyon College

Oral History Project
Stories of Knox County

Interviewee: Courtney Decosky
Interviewer: Maria Brescia-Weiler and Catherine Wessel
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Maria Brescia-Weiler: This is Maria Brescia Weiler and Catherine Wessel with Stories of Knox County Project interviewing Courtney Decosky with her experiences with life in Knox County. Today is April 6th, 2017 and we are speaking at Ascension Hall. Thank you so much for participating. Can you state your full name and birthdate?

Courtney Decosky: Courtney Decosky, April 14, 1980

MBW: How long have you lived in Knox County?

CD: Umm I have been living back in Knox County for about three and a half years. I had a break. I was born and raised here and I went to college at Ohio University and after I moved out to Los Angeles, I was there for about nine years. So in 1998 I went off to college, but I was born and raised here. I went to high school here.

MBW: How long has your family been here?

CD: Well I guess that is not true, I was not born and raised here. We moved here when I was young, when I was in preschool. My dad bought a business.

Clara Roman-Odio: What kind of a business?

CD: Cars. Car dealership.

CW: Where were you born?

CD: I was born in Medina, Ohio. I think that is why I always think I was born and raised here. Because it's Medina, Ohio!! Ya know... It's all...

M: Yeah, so what were you doing in LA?

CD: I was acting, and working in food and beverage (Laughter). Yeah, I did a lot of acting. Mainly theatre acting but some film acting as well, in some commercials. Some success in the acting studio.

CW: Is that what you studied in college?

CD: Mmhmm, I did yeah.

MBW: And what brought you back?

CD: I had twins (laughter) My husband at the time, we aren't together anymore although we are very good friends, we wanted to have children and we needed help, and it turned out the help worked! We were blessed with twins! But when they were born, they were born eight and a half weeks early and so we spent a lot of in the NICU and had acid reflux. My mom was living with us in LA, she came out and moved in with us for six months and at the end we were like ya know, this isn't gonna work ya know, I can't take two babies to auditions!! In the end, it was for both of us. He was an actor too but he said years ago I like my day job and I don't want to leave for auditions, and for me I love theatre, I have always loved theatre so it was almost a great excuse. When we made the decision to come back his family lives two hours away from here, it was almost a big breath, and a sigh of relief and I don't have to pound the pavement anymore. And we they were born, your priorities do change, immediately. The day one of them came home from the NICU I got a callback for something big. I was for X Men or something, something big, some small reporter role. And I didn't want to do it. And realizing at some point in your career, I'm auditioning for a reporter in this big movie, I don't want to play reporters on a big movie. I want to act in the theater. This is not fun.

MBW: For someone who grew up here, and is now raising children here, what are the benefits? What is it like here?

CD: I understand my parents now. I never thought that would happen. You know when you are young and you're angry and you're like why do I live in Knox County! This place is so boring! I want to live somewhere like New York or LA!! But I don't know if it is because I am pretty rooted here, as far as growing up here, there is a calmness and a maybe it's a false sense of safety. You know your kids can run free. That was part of the reason moving back, looking out my window wherever I lived at the time, Sherman Oaks right next to Van Nuys and there is no beauty there! There is nothing green! Ya know I live right across the street from a park and they go play. I go with them obviously, they are four. There is a nice sense of security in Knox County. Wow I can just talk and talk... but when I was moving back I had been in LA for a while and I had established a lot of regulars where I had worked at. The reaction to me moving back to Knox County was disgust. And I got mad. I was like "Why are they judging me!? How can you judge a community you don't even know!?" I know a lot of it is I'm liberal, I am a democrat. And it was a lot of that, ya know that assumption that Knox County, we did vote for Trump. But you know there was a lot of that. You can't judge a place on how it votes. You have to get in into the people. You have to get into the people. It was very offensive. And surprising! How repulsed good friends of mine were, ya know? Just the judgement and you know It's all around you but you can find the negative everywhere and you know, you can find a lot of beauty in people everywhere.

MBW: Maybe you said this a little with the understanding your parents better, but how has your perspective of the county, because most people we have talked to have only lived here, so how do you think your perspective of Knox County changed?

CD: I remember when we actually moved back, and I took the time to notice, you would walk down the streets and people would look you in the eye!!! And say, "hello!" That was like the best thing in the world and I realized in LA, part of my drinking story is you're so unconnected. Everybody's in a hurry and nobody is looking each other in the eye and says hi down the street, when they do, it is noticed and the persons probably on drugs, ya know. Unless you're living in Santa Monica, which is closed off, ya know it is like a subset of people. But even then, because I lived there for a while, it is just the warmth here. You do feel like a community is raising your children. You know it's really nice.

MBW: What are the main ways you interact with your community?

CD: Well, I work here at Kenyon in the office the president. I am fortunate enough to be involved in a lot of presidentially sponsored events. So we are working with Soroptimist and United Way, and Food for the Hungry. So there's a lot of things that happen that the president's office sponsors and then I do a lot with theater and music so I'm actually going to start coaching kids on acting and singing and stuff. And I am in a sorority as well, which is another philanthropic group.

CW: How did you get involved with Kenyon? Did you already know you were going to be working here?

CD: I did not. Here's a little snotty part of me (laughter) because I was moving back and I was a stay-at-home mom for two long years with twins so I realized I need to start working part time because I enjoy being out and about. I am sort of introverted by nature and being home all the time is just like, I'm just done, I am cut off. So I had actually started working at my father's dealership, despite all my instincts that said don't do that! But you know, I was an adult now and I love working and then I think I saw a job posted at Kenyon or it may be that happened before I worked at my dad's? And I didn't get it. It is the job I have now, so then I was like "well I will work at the dealership, and it'll be great, and it'll be my career." And then Kenyon called me, Kathy Lake called me and I was like "Oh! So it didn't work out with the other person!" So I called my mom and she said, "Go, go to Kenyon. You're going to be so much happier there!" and I said, "Thank you!" So that's when I started. And my love of Knox County is the same and combined, I love Kenyon College, I mean talk about community and small, and everybody walking down the street, and everybody knows everybody and their dog ya know. It is great. I'm very happy to be back in Knox County and also Gambier.

MBW: What is your sense of the community's general perception?

CD: There's some distance, I know from growing up and I did have friends from all walks of life within the Knox County life and I think there are those that think that the whole Gambier community is very snotty. You know, on the Hill, you know they are on the hill. What I like about the position I'm at because I still feel very tied to Knox County, you know my dad he's a businessman in Knox County so you know I like feeling connected to both and I have a feeling that that is not...not always the case. I actually went to the person I'm with remember him saying when they first moved to Knox County actually it was the other way. He was saying that Kenyon

sort of banned them, shunned them. The professor's unfortunately, he said that they felt they were friends but they always were made to feel a little, not as smart. So he has that thought, right? So he tells me that, so then that is in my mind. So that is probably, you know, that just a separation. And Kenyon is a great school so not everyone has that education in Mount Vernon and surrounding areas.

MBW: Can you talk about the opportunities there are here for artist or actors?

CD: I can! I can! The great thing about this area since I've left, when I grew up here I did the community theater, it was only Mount Vernon Players at the time, so I did a lot of that and it was great. But after coming back after 10 years the support and the growth that has happened, I mean MTV Arts is so important to me cause I'm good friends with Bruce Jacklin, but I mean the kids, I was one of those kids! I didn't talk at all until I got on stage and I was focused, I had something to do suddenly but it's just growing. It actually keeps growing, now I'm teaching there, ya know, and there's opportunities if you make them happen. I feel like the community is really behind it. And I think Wright...Ariel is behind it too, which helps. And honestly the theater...I'm going in a thousand different places at once right now. I'll break it down. For me, coming back after pounding the pavement, doing some great stuff doing some great work, then starving then doing some great stuff to come back to community and still be to be able to do really great theatre! And not do it because I need a paycheck, not do it for anything else but art, it's really an incredible place to do that. Knox County is really lucky because the Community Theatre, MTV Arts, there is the other one too I feel bad I'm ignoring them, but they're doing really solid work, and now they're branching off so there's a theater at the Alcove, the Dinner Theater, it's a little more adult. There's the big summer musicals, there's this the junior musicals where you're getting all the kids involved and now they've built this black box and their rehearsal space and now there's gonna be more edgy stuff, ya know. I am like "Wooo! Edgy! Let's do it!" And we will have to go step by step. I'm talking to Bruce Jacklin the other day, and talking about me starting teaching, that I don't know what we charge and how we are doing this and needed to decide and he said "We just can't, we just can't have it be too much." I was like, "Uh, Bruce I'm not going to make money, just like pay for gas!" He said "People in this community can't afford it. We can't raise our ticket prices. We can't make it too much." So I appreciate that. You know, they're not making any money they're struggling to survive but that's the most important thing. That everybody can come enjoy it. And then! That's the theatre side, I mean on the music side I'm in a band, 6 Miles To Nellie, (laughter) Mount Vernon is just so I would have I mean I've always sang but I did not sing this way in LA because there's a thousand people doing it and nobody is paying attention. Nobody wants to go to plays, nobody wants to go to shows. Everyone is too tired and absorbed with their own stuff. But you come to a place like Knox County, "Let's go see live music!!" It's just the town embraces and once you start getting in these circles, like now I am part of an open mic night. It is like people came out of the ground, I don't know where everybody came from. This woman who just moved to Knox County a year ago oh, I should put you in contact with her for your last interview, she would be great she is a professional storyteller. She travels nationally, she is one of like only twelve national storytellers and she goes around and she makes a living doing it but she lives here, you know, she does music and she came out to open mic! You start talking to these other musicians in they are all around Knox County and they are really good! And everybody here or because they ended up here, or lived here and didn't want to go anywhere else. So, everybody is calm. When I see a great singer, and when she sees me it's

“Oh my gosh!! You are so talented! Let’s do a duet” Instead of in LA where it's like “I’ve got to focus on mine, I gotta beat that person,” you know there's just a, everybody embraces each other, it's really nice.

CRO: Wow.

CW: Do you think the atmosphere now, around the arts now is different than when you were growing up here?

CD: It is hard for me to speak because I was young so I didn't have the overall. For me it’s like ya I think it was just this, and then this, but I'm sure if you talk to it like [Sara Gosling Reed](#) (spelling?) who has been a folk singer here my whole life. We used to take school trips to go see her at the memorial theater. I think it's just louder now. I think younger people are living in Knox County and younger people maybe who have been out more. I think gaps are bridging between people so it's not just people existing in their own thing that they do. It's more of a we have a community that does. But then again, it is hard for me to speak to that because I was young I had a different view of it. But it feels much different.

MBW: How do you think the county in general has changed since you were young?

CD: Well when I was in, well I don’t know if it was middle school or high school, but Mount Vernon I believe was voted the homeliest community in Ohio, I think. The homeliest?

CRO: One of the best cities? Yeah.

CD: Yeah. And then I left and from what I understand those years I was gone I mean every time I would talk to my parents or somebody like oh, Mount Vernon is going downhill, going downhill and then Karen Wright happened. I mean, that is kinda what happened. And I know people have a lot of opinions but I hope it stays great for all. I hope there's no pushing for things that don't fit but from my viewpoint it has had a very positive and I think because support put into all different areas of Knox County, I mean of course I am sensitive towards the arts, but there seems to be a lot of support being poured into a lot of different places to build the community and not just one thing.

MBW: Can you talk a little bit about your experiences with addiction?

CD: Yeah, you know I always drank, ya know, pretty badly actually. But when I went to Los Angeles, there was this week, this two week period, that I had my boyfriend, who turned out to be my husband, hadn’t moved out [to LA] yet, and my mom had just left, and there was just this moment in that week when I realized that I could drink every night of my life. And I did. I never stopped. With Los Angeles and a focus on body image, for me it spun out of control with anorexia. So then I started drinking vodka so it was sort of this um, I knew I was out-of-control drinking, and over control eating so remaining this balance and I actually learned is very common, that dual diagnosis. Just the, the loneliness, you know. It was bad. It was really bad. I don’t know how much to get into ya know.

CRO: It is up to you.

CD: It was very lonely and isolating and you know I pushed away everyone. And what was so hard about it was I was always the extremely functional about it on the outside. And you know up till 3 a.m. and I was at the gym at 5:30 a.m and I was at work at 7:30 a.m and smiling. And my boss would be like, "You're a rockstar, man!" At that time I had this wonderful job, great job and very supportive people, and in the end *very* support people, so they sort of allowed me to work how it was best for me so I could arrange my life in order to suit my addiction. And I was doing a lot of, I say drinking was the center, but there was a lot of pills and whatever was in front of me and it's still hard to think about it for real why, what could have happened if I wasn't drinking because I had *huge* opportunities ya know. I was fine and I showed up and I did my work but I was up till 3 o'clock the night before, my eyes were bloodshot, I was obsessing over what I wasn't going to eat you know I was obsessing over keeping it all together and being that perfect person. So, I think that there was some lost opportunities but, I remember when my great agent that nobody's like how did you land an agent? You're not even SAG-AFTRA, and like, that one. And then they dropped me a year later, because I wasn't booking, you know and they kindly did it. What if I was a hundred percent there, what if I wasn't always covering up everything, what if I wasn't always lying? It goes over into your art. If you can't look people in the eyes then your acting is going to suffer. But then I, you know, I hit a rock bottom and in that rock bottom I ended up in the hospital and like missed work the next day, and that was tragic for me, like oh my God...And, ya know, I ended up in the hospital because I was ninety two pounds and just every sip of alcohol I would be immediately drunk, I don't think I'd ever sober for two years. I was always just a little drunk, but so focused. And then I called my mom who had just been out the week before visiting, she saw me in a play, and I said "I need help. I'm drowning." And then I wanted to take it back immediately, 'cause I had it a few times and you know we would talk through it, but this time it was serious. I remember talking to her on the phone that night, and I sorta remember the cats were by my head and me crying, because we were living in this tiny little room. I had moved in with somebody to, I thought that if I lived with someone else... and this is after moving away from my boyfriend who later was my husband. And just everyone was like get out of my way, I am focused, I know what I'm doing, I am focused. So I moved in with a roommate because I thought if I had a roommate I will be accountable. No. And my mom, I got off the phone with here, I don't really remember but she was on the plane the next morning. And she saved my life. But then I went to work the next day or something and I came in and while I partied with some of my co-workers there, they were also very loving and kind people, and I went and I remember to this day I still send her emails like, oh Brooke. But um, I walked in and it was the pastry chef and she looked at me and I had my usual anxiety like holding it together you know she could tell when I was really having a... was like, "Are you finished? Are you tired?" And I said, "Yes," and she said, "Do you want to go to HR?" And I said, "Yep I do." And she walked me up to HR. They told me my options and I could go on leave. My um...(gets choked up) Sorry... it is still an emotional story. My, um, executive director of food beverage was like a father to me, and he just let me go for my month or month and a half and said come back whenever you're ready, and I went in for a week and it was absolute hell cuz we didn't know what to do. They wouldn't allow me any detox because I was a threat which is so crazy because I felt so fat. And I was like, "I am not that little! I am not that little!" But they couldn't take me because it was so like a legality if I died. It doesn't feel real but, um, my mom and I really struggled for a week and I was like why did I do this, I just want things to go back to

normal and then all the sudden she said in the treatment centers, after I gained weight were just thirty thousand dollars. And my dad was like, "You're going to get out, and you're going to be in debt forever," which is a whole nother problem with everything. Because yeah, I would've been. My mom said what about staying with her sister, your Aunt Mary Pierce in Richmond for a while, and my aunt and her husband were sober, and it was like the clouds parted and you could see the kingdom of Heaven. I mean you could just see from that moment like, that's the answer that's the answer and we drove to Richmond and I spent summers as a child in Richmond. It's very, it's always been a dear place to me. I'm going back there for a month and a half as an outpatient program, it was just love all the time, ya know. I'm with my aunt who now has (long pause) stage four lung cancer (begins to cry) Sorry... it's crazy because I thought how am I ever going to be happy again without my vices, but it really was probably the happiest month and a half of my life. Richmond now, it was always dear, now I'm like "Ohhh Richmond!!" But um I know I finally you know I did my stuff. I came back to Los Angeles and got a studio apartment and sort of removed myself. I had some really bad friends too, and basically never talked to them again, and that was okay. And I went back to my work and my boss eventually got laid off and that soon after I was like, I think I need to just focus on acting and be a server somewhere instead of being this involved. But, it was a hard time, it was a great time. My boyfriend and I actually got back together. We have great kids, ya know everything's meant to be, he's a great guy, I think the drinking had a lot to do with our whole relationship sort of not knowing yourself, so just doing, ya know what you've always done.

CRO: Can I ask how art has helped you in coming out of that period of time, how do you use art to fulfill?

CD: Well, I mean for me it's just, I don't know I bet a lot of people would agree but for me my my tendency towards addiction. I mean I remember the first time I drank I was so shy. I was always so shy. A class clown in my select, small group. I had really, really good friends but I was just really shy and I remember well, two things I remember. I remember the first time I sang, That **Mary Kepol (Spelling?)** I love that woman, gave me a solo and I was in fourth grade and I'm like, "Why did she pick me?" And then I sang! And I sang!! And she saw it, you know. She's got a good ear, she can sing and she gave it to me and I never stopped singing from that moment. And I remember the first time I drank and we were at a bonfire there was boys around and it was ninth grade... and which was a horrible situation for me for this was my awkward stage and I just couldn't. they would always talk to my friends and I never felt pretty and all the sudden, I was on fire. I made out with a boy that night, you know. I was like I've got it. This is it. So, in a way they parallel each other ya know. One is great and you get to share through art and expression with acting and music you know, there's universal things that you watch somebody sing and beautiful piece you know it's not just oh my gosh, they have a great voice, you're taking journey together. So being able to express that way is amazing, and then for me if it has a lot of healing for the drinking because that's where I hid everything before and now I can express in a different way that's safe.

CW: How do you think the experience of being sober in LA is different from here?

CD: Um, it's easier in LA. There's a meeting on every corner in LA. You get agents from going to meetings in LA, I mean I never did you know. Once I pulled out of it there, it was pretty pretty

easy to I mean, there's a thousand things to do. And I am relating this back to when I was younger here I mean you're young and there is no big city around to do anything so I think there's more I mean I know now, people very close to me very close to me are highly addicted to painkillers now. I think it probably is painkillers, opiates. But it's a small town, it is easy to get lost in it here. Now I love the boys being here but I'm scared.

MBW: So I guess with that, and a lot of people we have talked to have expressed concern about opioids and it sounds like from most people this wasn't a huge issue twenty years ago.

CD: I don't think so.

MBW: So do you have any insight as to why it is such a big issue here now?

CD: Well, I have opinions about this. But I think that doctors I mean, I was talking to actually my old alcohol counselor, I was in Richmond and I was talking about these people very close to me. And one of those people is off the painkillers and still drinking and I am like, "Does that work?" And she said, "Is it working for them?" And I said, "Yeah, they seem to actually be okay drinking, but I'm scared." And she said Courtney, "Alcohol is something genetic, it is something in ya," she said, "Painkillers, they are just addictive, they are just addictive." She's like, "Nobody can avoid that, nobody." And I think that I mean doctors are prescribing pain killers my little cousin was prescribed to what was it--the big one, the really strong one. I've lost it! But she was prescribed for a urinary tract infection and then became a heroin addict. My little, you know it's not right say this but you know, Hilliard, Ohio, perfect kid. She has a lot of tendencies like me, that introversion you know but so thank you doctor, because those were really expensive but there heroin wasn't. She's doing great now. She is an inspiration. But um, people close to me you know, once you get on the pills, you know it is really hard to get off. So I think that's the problem I think there's been an over-prescribing of painkillers. And people are filling their highs and if you have to go to heroin, you do. Once they are in that state of mind in their addiction, you can't hate them, you just gotta help them, and hope and hope.

MBW: So how do you think this community can better support people who are struggling with an addiction?

CD: I think with some things are happening are really great, like the recovery housing. The guy I am seeing is actually the executive director at the Freedom Center so I know some of the stuff that is happening. So you know I think there's some stuff and some core people in Ohio and Mount Vernon some people are really pushing that may have a son that is sober and those are good people to have because these people are leaders in the community. So there is a push that way, recovering housing would be a great thing, you know. I know from trying to get somebody into treatment around here (Scoffs) What do you do?! What do you do if they don't have insurance? I mean there it is. I mean you call a place, "Well do they have insurance?" No, so what, you're going to get him a bed at Salvation Army? That's the other problem. With me, when you call places they don't have spots. They have a spot in three weeks. And if you're in that moment, where you are asking for help because in three weeks, I'm gone! No way! They need immediate help, there needs to be a response immediately and getting them somewhere. I think having that recovery house in Mount Vernon is amazing for the community and just figuring out

some way, universal healthcare, I don't know but you know. This is a problem it's killing people it is destroying families. I was a part of the Knox addiction conference last year and we talked about stigmas. I think of my own family there, there was a stigma three years ago I like, I hate drug addicts, I hate drug addicts. And that over the last three years has transferred into how do I help? How do I help, this person is not a bad drug addict, this is a person that is really addicted to drugs and nobody, nobody! wants to be addicted to drugs! It's like being in prison. You know people don't want to have to live to take a pill, people want to live their lives! People want to be good fathers and nobody wants to be dependent. So I think I'm getting rid of that stigma of the drug addict. You know I feel bad too cause it's it's sort of in all of us. And the way we walk down the street you see somebody in Mount Vernon kinda tweaking out a bit and I do have it goes into after I have my logistic thought process, as like you were no different. You were no different at all. Actually that was one of the things that got me thinking about stopping drinking years ago. I was hanging out with homeless people on the street. I was always drawn to walking away from my friends and hanging out with people and I realized like I am like one drink away from just giving up completely and, isn't that crazy that little Courtney DeCosky from Mount Vernon, Ohio. That's got it all together, that could be me. Maybe I'd like that, maybe I'd like to disappear.

CW: Do you think a lot of community members here have that stigma, or is there a lot of support?

CD: I think it's a mix I think there are there is a level of awareness being raised, I mean The Freedom Center and everything that happened at recovery housing has been on the front page a lot which is great. I think it's unavoidable because everyone knows somebody: your son, your daughter, yourself you know everyone knows somebody so I think that there is a level of awareness being raised in or getting rid of stigmas and some people have had their children overdose and those people instead of staying quiet have formed groups that are speaking about it and I think that's all amazing and very important.

MBW: So maybe that is it, but what is the biggest problem that needs to be addressed?

CD: As I'm thinking about it in the moment it's like okay, so we have all these ideas with the recovery housing and we have at least good thoughts but then how are we including the people? How can we outreach more, how can everybody outreach more? Instead of we need to help. Sort of a blindfold to those that we want to help.

CRO: So it is drugs then, the big challenge?

CD: I think so. I think it's happening to small towns everywhere. I listen to NPR and *This American Life* and it's just taking out towns and we need to get ahead of it before it ya know. In Mount Vernon, great things are happening.

CRO: How old are your twins?

CD: Four

CRO: They are four. So you have a whole future with these two precious boys, and I have two girls but they are grown, how do you see the future?

CD: Well I guess you know I'm of two minds about it when I get really involved in what's happening in the community in the arts I'm like, "Aw man, there's going to be all of these things they can do here." I hope that it continues to go that way. I mean I want them to enjoy their time and growing up and I want them to be their own people and you know it's, how do I control them enough but let them go enough to be their own people? I mean from the second they were in my belly like, "Oh my god, one of them is going to be an addict," ya know. And then and now one of them is... one of them like, I feel terrible. How can I let go and let God. So I hope in my vision, my positive vision for the community is by the time they're active and doing these things there's just going to be a lot of stuff for them to do here, a lot of support from people I mean I know that there's been talk about opening a music studio for young kids, a recording studio, I mean these are the thoughts that are happening and it is not just one person's thought, it's many coming together. So I think maybe that's how people are combating it, by offering those opportunities and that is what we need to do. My mom said, "I know you're worried about Harry," and what do I do? Do I tell him to never to drink? Do I tell him never to do anything? But then what if he lashes out? And well, I guess it all comes back to art, doesn't it. She said, the best thing you can do is make him, he's introverted, ya know, make him whatever he's good at and enjoys doing, you cling on to that and you build him, and you build his confidence there. Don't make it up, if he is not good at athletics, do not make it up, but he does really love music. Just really really supporting what he loves. And at the end of the day when everybody is going out or whatever, he wants to do his thing.

MBW: What are the main values you try to instill in your children?

DC: Um, I never really laid out their values but there are, and their dad and I are really in line with the same, most things (laughter) Acceptance, I have a horrible fear that they're going to make fun of a child one day because ya know, I don't think anybody wants their kid to be the mean kid. Acceptance of others and of themselves. Patience. I don't know, I mean everything in there. I think about the main thing, I mean the thing I think about the conversations we have now at dinner, I read this great article about the real questions you should be asking your kids at dinner and now that they are four we get to have conversations at dinner now, it's so fun! But you know, did you see anything kind today, did you see anybody doing anything kind? Or did you see anybody that felt left out today? What could you do to make that person feel better? Yeah, just an acceptance of self and others and an inner confidence that's not at the expense of treating others poorly.

CW: It seems like you envision raising them here, but have you ever thought about moving away?

CD: I will not move away. I moved away once already, I moved away once from my family for 10 years. I am at an age now I want to be near my family, at this point I didn't grow up really close to my grandparents, but they were always involved, and at this point I cannot move the boys away. They are rooted here. I just couldn't do it and I don't want to. And his parents are two hours away and that works. They'll go to my parents more on a regular basis for the weekend,

and then they have great weekends in Athens with his parents, so that works for them. And I want to be a part of this community. I finally feel like I'm grown up. And so now I'm like okay, I have my place! And I don't know, I don't want to leave, I like it, I like being a part of this community.

MBW: You sound very hopeful about it, is your sense that people are generally are equally hopeful about the future of this community?

CD: I think I mean it's, the people that I'm around are. I would guess there're some others that are pretty negative or, they're questioning, they're questioning intentions of people. Granted, they are allowed to do that. I feel very hopeful though. People my age, some people like me who have moved back, or did something else for a while, we're all, we often have a conversation of, "Oh my gosh, look at Ariel Fondation Park and we have this music festival Ohiolina!! This place is getting really cool!!" I think it's actually a pretty important age group to have that positivity because it's the next, you know. But I think in general, we are hopeful.

MBW: Do you think of this community as one united community or do you think that there are smaller communities within it?

CD: I think there are always smaller communities in a community, and that's the danger right? It's like, I'm speaking like, (happy voice) "Oh, we're all"--and I'm sure that there are, you know smaller communities within it. But in the end, I do think that most people wanna be here, that are here. I think there is a sort of a Knox County pride, which I felt when people were dissing my Knox County in Los Angeles. And so there we can be united. And that's why I think when the park first went in, there was some concern of like, well you're, you know, you're building this in people's backyard, it's almost an intrusion. But it's also a uniter. So now, when I take the boys there and we're running around I'm seeing families out that I'm not gonna see in Gambier. And everyone's enjoying it, we're all enjoying it. So, I think the more stuff that happens like that that is uniting for all, and affordable, I mean you go to Ariel [Foundation Park], it doesn't cost a thing. It's great, it's like the best addition to Knox County.

CRO: It's gorgeous.

CD: Oh, it's awesome. And the kids go up the tower and then they run up the hill and then they dance on the stage, and then these summer concert series. I mean, it's such a great thing in Knox County, and the more stuff that happens like that, that's where I get very positive and hopeful.

MBW: Does it seem like people use the park a lot?

CD: In my experience, they do, yes.

MBW: That's awesome. Can you think of any particular stories that really capture what it's like to live here?

CD: Um, I don't know about any stories. You have to drive an hour to get things, you know (laughter) That's the downside of Knox County. That's not really a story, that's just a something

shared by many. My joke of LA is I don't miss LA, but I really miss the food. I really miss the food.

CRO: We all do.

CD: Yes (laughter) Uhuh, I mean the fish, everything. But even that's changing too here, and in summers you have the farmer's market, so I just see these little glimmers of hope everywhere, I just hope it can all sustain.

CRO: With people like you it will. It will.

CD: I hope so. But yeah, I don't know, you know. A story, I don't know.

CRO: Well, you have shared many stories and they have plentiful and wonderful. And we've had you more than forty-five minutes.

CD: Well thank you.

MBW: Are there any like closing thoughts that you feel like we really should know?

CD: I'm sure I'll think of em in ten minutes (Laughter) But no, I mean, I think what you all are, you know, this sounds amazing and I appreciate you asking me 'cause I think it sounds like a great project and I'm excited to see how it all comes together.

MBW: Yeah, well if we do like a performance of it I feel like you would be a great resource.

CD: I am, actually, I'm a very good resource for it and I'd be happy to help you in anyway with that.

MBW: Thank you so much.

CW: Thank you.