

CONSULTANT: Simone Hughes (pseudonym)
AGE: 53
RESIDENCE: Carrboro, NC
OCCUPATION:
INTERVIEW DATE: August 6, 2016, approx. 10:30 am
LOCATION: Carrboro Farmers Market, Carrboro, NC

"Simone" [not her real name] was intrigued by the topic but initially reticent. I explained the project and how the audio would be used in a website and possibly donated to the Southern Folklife Center archive. She agreed to an interview, but wanted to use a fake name. While this seemed unusual, I figured that consultants have the right to be anonymous if they choose, and I had a hunch that Simone would share a unique story. She was very pleasant and opened up as the interview progressed. We began with the standard audio introduction (name, age, residence).

So like I said, this is a story about people's memories from the turn of the millennium. Or technically, turn of the century, because if you recall, the millennium didn't start until 2001 *[editor's note: if it wasn't the turn of the millennium, then of course it wasn't the end of the century either. I kept making this mistake in conversation].*

I hate to be pedantic, but we're not splitting hairs here. Take me back, go back in your mind and think about it, and what do you remember about -- personally, let's start with that -- personally, what do you remember about New Year's Eve 1999?

So New Year's Eve was my last night in my apartment of 10 years, after a major breakup and heartbreak. There was all the hysteria about would we even wake up in the morning, what's going to happen. And I kind of didn't care. I was leaving the apartment of moving to West Africa. So it was kind of a big night. And I just remember being really sad, and really alone. And then things turned out good.

I'm sorry to hear that. So you were...

But it all got good.

So you were...

We all woke up, there wasn't chaos.

You can be honest, were you worried that something might actually happen?

A little bit. Um, not worried, but curious.

Did you make any preparations?

No, no.

Okay. I don't want to open any old wounds, but you said you had just gone through a breakup, so it was a tough time for you.

Yeah. And the moving, and you know, leaving virtual security and going off to live in Africa was...

What was taking you out to Africa?

Um, I had been there before, and just wanted to go back because I remember smiling a lot there, and they have great music.

How long did you spend there?

Six years.

Wow. And what part exactly?

West Africa.

Simone smiles as if to indicate that she doesn't want to be any more specific.

Okay. Let's keep it that...okay, fine. So do you remember watching the celebrations on TV and as midnight approached?

No. No because I was moving, like literally, everything was packed. There was probably sleeping on the floor. Nothing in my apartment.

Interesting, and this was in Carrboro? No?

Um, another state.

I like your style.

Simone laughs.

This isn't going to be on the radio, by the way. This is just for my thesis research. I don't foresee it being on the radio. So let me ask you --

That bad [laughs].

[laughs] **It's going well, though. So let me just ask you. How do you feel like your daily life has changed, or has it changed, and why, from 1999 to now?**

Simone reaches into her purse and pulls out her cell phone.

Oh my god, this damn thing, you know? The holding the phone, *constantly* check the phone --

And for the record, Simone has taken out her cell phone.

[in a high-pitched, nagging voice] "I called you, where were you? Nyah-nyah-nyah..."

Always connected.

Always connected.

So it sounds like you're nostalgic for the days before you were that...it was that way.

Oh, yeah. I'm the person trying to, you know, still sending postcards and letters.

You feel like communication between people has changed?

Yeah.

How so?

Communication is cheap now.

Cheap.

Yeah.

Now, do you use that term more in...strictly in an economic sense? Or do you mean cheap in terms of the value of it, the personal, the communication?

The value of it.

Okay.

Yeah. It's quick, it's less thought.

Less thought?

Yeah.

Okay. Interesting. Some people might say that because most of the communication now is text and written, that it gives you a chance to think about what you say before you say it. But...

Yeah, but you're thinking about covering your tracks. You're not really thinking about reaching the other person.

And there's anonymity now that there wasn't before.

Yeah. Yeah.

So there is a sense of nostalgia for like, 1999, when you think back on it.

Not 1999. [laughs]

Well, obviously, not personally, for that reason.

How about 1998?

'98, okay. Okay, yeah.

And 2000.

Right.

2000 was good. [laughs]

Oh yeah? Good.

Yeah, yeah.

Okay, I'm glad things went well in Africa. Interesting. So are you on Facebook and all that?

Um hum.

Okay. Let me ask you a question –

-- but I'm like, considering putting parental controls on it because it's just taking too much of my time.

Now *parental* controls...

[laughs] Well, I need to find a parent somewhere and...

[laughs] **Somebody to control you!**

Exactly. [laughs]

Interesting.

“Okay, *you* keep the password...” [laughs]

Let me ask you this. At the Durham Farmers Market last weekend, I was doing these interviews, and I asked somebody, and it turned into an interesting conversation. I presume you have more than a few Facebook friends on your profile. Do you have any current or former neighbors in the list?

[pause] Probably not.

And why?

I don't know. I'm new-ish here.

Okay.

That's probably the reason.

But no former neighbors?

Um...[pause] No.

Yeah, that's been interesting. I mean, some people will have 500 friends, and they have no current or former neighbors in their list. Trying to figure out why that's the case.

That is interesting.

What do you think is going to be the topic on everyone's lips in 2100?

Um...we'll be talking about heaven. [laughs]

As in we –

We won't be here. [laughs]

Okay. Kind of pessimistic, but honest.

2100? You gonna be here?

Oh, you mean *personally*, us. No, I meant what will people, culture, be talking about in 2100, not you and I. Although if that's the case, we should definitely record it.

Um, gosh. I don't really think about that.

Yeah?

Yeah. Nothing is really coming to mind --

-- Unless somebody with a microphone in their hand comes up to you.

[laughs]

Well, like I said, this is sort of a time capsule, that's why I'm asking. Because you never know...

You know, maybe like, "What the hell were they thinking? Why did they destroy the planet?" And some bad words.

Did you notice a big difference when you got to West Africa – I'm presuming that you did, but I don't want to jump to conclusions – in terms of the technology here, and then you went there, and just the life and the culture at that time period?

Um...

And did it change while you were there, in that six years?

[pause] So I would say that...so everything was cyber-cafes. And they became more ubiquitous and cheaper. Yeah. That's the main thing that comes to mind.

Cyber-cafes, yeah. Do you remember – I remember having those *here*. And they still do in some rural areas; it's the only access. Or the public library.

Right.

Yeah. Well, it's interesting that you whipped out the cell phone immediately when we were talking about how things have changed.

Yeah. Most people would, I think.

Yeah. I mean, you can't even have like a Saturday morning at the Farmers Market to yourself. Most jobs now, because the office is in your pocket, you know?

Right. I'm probably going to have to answer some emails after this interview.

[laughs]

I thanked Simone for her time and ended the interview.