Marshall University Graduate College
Graduate Humanities Program

Volume 46, Issue 1, Spring 2023

GRADUATE HUMANITIES

A multidisciplinary program bringing together students and faculty from a variety of backgrounds to collaboratively explore the interdisciplinary intersections of the arts, historical, cultural and literary studies within an open, exploratory, and experimental graduate-level educational environment.

Give the [students] something to do, not something to learn; and the doing is of such a nature as to demand thinking, or the intentional noting of connections; learning naturally results.

John Dewey,
Democracy and Education *(1916)*

Recent GRADUATE

Hannah Secrist '23

MA in Humanities (Literary Studies)

Project Title:
"The Sealed Whale"

Government Performance Auditing *& the Humanities*

Government Performance Auditing is not a topic that comes to mind when discussing the humanities, except for Brooke Hypes, Research Analyst (Performance and Research Division) for the West Virginia Legislature and a graduate student in our program. (Pictured here with her dog, Casper.)

For Brooke, there's a natural, yet overlooked, symbiotic relationship between performance auditing and the branches of oral history and collaborative ethnography in the humanities—a relationship that performance auditors could use to their client's advantage.

Brooke explains her reasoning in the following article comprised of lightly edited extracts from her paper for the Oral History and Ethnography Seminar taught by Dr. Lassiter.

< **As a Government Performance Auditor,** I work with state agencies and boards to see if they are complying with laws and regulations and operating efficiently and effectively. It is important that the evidence I

Marshall University
Graduate College South Charleston
Graduate Humanities Program
Dr. Luke Eric Lassiter, Director
Trish Hatfield '08, Editor
304-746-1923 | marshall.edu/graduatehumanities/

gather is tailored to both the object and purpose of the inquiry. And in government performance auditing, we categorize evidence as testimonial, documentary, or physical. We usually consider testimonial evidence the weakest type of evidence, using it to guide and support our analyses of other types of evidence. Furthermore, testimonial evidence tends to require extensive corroboration; we cannot just take people at their word. In a world where jobs and funding are on the line and where professional skepticism is paramount, this approach to testimonial evidence is understandable, and often desirable.

Irrespective of the purpose of a project, people are forgetful, dishonest, and evasive, intentionally and unintentionally. People reinterpret experiences, see things from different perspectives, and assign different meanings to the same event. In auditing, this is problematic—you are looking for an objective truth colored only by fact and reason. But this is not how people work. The nature and role of objectivity, particularly in research, is fascinating but beyond the scope of this article.

This auditing-specific approach to evidence, particularly testimonial evidence, rests on the specific purpose of a performance audit: identifying deficiencies and noncompliance, addressing the causes, and offering actionable information to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of audited programs. While this process provides valuable insights, it can leave out important humanistic causes and effects.

As a Student of the Humanities, I'm not surprised that oral history approaches testimonial evidence in fundamentally different ways. It is an entirely different enterprise. Testimonial evidence, with all its human limitations, is the bedrock of oral history—written records and sources still provide vital facts, but the interpretations of experience only accessible through firsthand accounts assume a central role. Engaging in dialogue about a person's lived experiences illuminates perspectives that might otherwise be overlooked or misunderstood.

"In *Doing Oral History,* Donald A. Ritchie explains: 'Memory is the core of oral history, from which meaning can be extracted and preserved.'"

"Engaging in dialogue about a person's lived experiences illuminates perspectives that might otherwise be overlooked or misunderstood."

For example, it is well known that hate crimes against people perceived as Muslim increased in the wake of 9/11. Crime data and newspaper articles, among other documentary sources, capture this well. But what did Muslim Americans experience and feel in those days? How did it complicate their daily lives? How did the perceptions of others relate to their own identity? These are questions better answered by a personal account or interview.
Oral history is one way to approach a question; its appropriateness and usefulness depend on what you are studying and why.

In short, this is the heart of the contrast: in auditing, you pursue an objective truth, insomuch as it can exist; in oral history, perspective and subjectivity are embraced and are, in many ways, where the most interesting and important work is done. In his book, *Doing Oral History,* Donald A. Ritchie explains that "Memory is the core of oral history, from which meaning can be extracted and preserved." It is a different type of evidence that yields different information.

Oral history, however, should not be characterized as uncritical or innately incongruent with other methods of historical inquiry—it is a different approach intended to answer a different set of questions.

Ritchie lines out the folly of relying on any one source of evidence and explores the unreliability of witnesses and memory generally. This holds true, however, for all types of evidence; a contemporary written account is not necessarily more reliable than an interview taken years afterward. Both are evidence, and both should be carefully evaluated. But how the evidence is used and what it makes known needs to be considered.

Questions oral historians ask should be shaped by what oral interviews do well, and what can be best (or perhaps only)

understood through personal experiences.

Ritchie emphasizes that a well-prepared interviewer is essential to the process—being well-versed in already-documented facts allows the interviewer to keep the conversation flowing, by prompting with names interviewees might have forgotten, challenging misremembered (or differently remembered) events, or clarifying timelines that may have become jumbled over the years. Some background is necessary to develop interview questions, to know what follow-up questions are needed, and to make good use of interview time. In doing so, the researcher presents herself as knowledgeable, interested, and prepared.

In addition, Ritchie states that being willing to depart from a preprepared list of questions is essential. Enforcing a rigid structure on the interview and not shaping the discussion in response to what interviewees say can lead to missing what the interviewee thinks is important or wishes to express. If it is the interviewee's perspective that is of interest, the researcher should listen to what they say and develop their thoughts alongside their words.

Only by truly listening to interviewees can the researcher understand their perspective and position the interviewee's experience among other sources.

Blending Performance Audition with Oral History is the part of oral history that interests me as a performance auditor—the primacy of listening. I develop an understanding as I work with the interviewee rather than merely extracting information.

Ideally, this working-alongside process is less contentious than the audit interviews I often conduct; in oral history, the balance of power is not so tilted toward the interviewer's favor. The interviewer and interviewee are nearer to equals, albeit with distinctive roles and responsibilities. In the transaction, interviewees commit to honesty and make a gift of their time and experiences. In response, interviewers commit to listening to the interviewee and representing them fairly and accurately in whatever product they produce.

"Oral history still requires difficult discussions and hard truths, but approaching the transaction from a place of empathy, with the goal of understanding someone's experience, leads to a different process, relationship, and product.

Auditing proceeds from a place of skepticism. Oral History proceeds from a place of acceptance.

Oral history still requires difficult discussions and hard truths, but approaching the transaction from a place of empathy, with the goal of understanding someone's experience, leads to a different process, relationship, and product.

Projects involving people can only benefit from more explicit consideration of these differences in mindset and approach. Auditing proceeds from a place of skepticism. Oral History proceeds from a place of acceptance.

For me, being an ethical interviewer requires not only listening and acceptance, but also my honesty in disagreements. This gets to the heart of good interviewing: treating the interviewee with the same respect you would give a friend. This does not mean uncritical acceptance of what they say but providing due respect even in cases of disagreement.

An Ethnographer using Collaborative Ethnography implies a longer-term engagement with individuals and communities than what auditing and interviews afford. Ethnography includes participant-observation, or immersion in a community to collect qualitative data. In addition to interviews, this offers a study of greater scope.

Lived experiences and stories are certainly still interesting, but contextualizing that experience within a larger cultural framework assumes more importance. It is here the potential and strengths of collaborative ethnography become apparent. This is captured from the very beginning of Dr. Lassiter's book, *The Chicago Guide to Collaborative Ethnography.* Shifting from "reading over the shoulders of natives" to "reading alongside natives," results in a different approach to ethnography, and consequently different types of

relationships with different ethical commitments.

The emphasis of dialogue above "authoritative monologue" is a key distinction—understanding is developed rather than imposed.

A conversation about ethics and relationships sits at the center of collaborative ethnography, more so than in the practice of most oral history. This is, perhaps, because oral history is understood and defined, first and foremost, by its product, whereas ethnography, particularly collaborative ethnography, cannot be fully understood without a dialogue about the relationships and ethical commitments of the ethnographer and consultant (i.e., the interviewee).

The methods and approaches of oral history, as Ritchie defines them, seem more rigid. At times, his book reads as if the goal of oral history is extracting information—albeit, with careful consideration of questions and flexibility should an interviewee lead you down an interesting and valuable, but unexpected, path.

Ethnography seems more focused on developing an understanding. In some ways this is a subtle distinction, but the difference between these mindsets can yield diverse approaches and products. This returns to the idea that your methods should be tailored to the questions you are asking. As with anything else, choosing the right tool(s) for the job is a critical step.

Collaborative research is fundamentally different from auditing as I have practiced it. Objectives and understandings are developed alongside the people I interview. Even finding the right language to make a comparison: auditing is something done to the group or person of interest, whereas oral history and ethnography are, ideally, something done *with* the group or person of interest.

Auditing emphasizes confidentiality and independence, which can impede collaboration. Oftentimes we arrive at an understanding and present it to an agency, only to find we have interpreted information entirely differently than they have. Audits can offer a valuable new, less biased perspective of situations and performance, but can lead to conflict.

If an agency agrees with audit findings and recommendations, they are more likely to implement them. Strict independence is not always conducive to agreement, yet it is considered an essential element of auditing. It is this seeming contradiction that interests me—if our goal is understanding and improvement, do collaborative models not have potential?

With this awareness—that methods can and often should be different no matter how entrenched they have become—I am approaching my interview with my friend, Austin Barnett. (See next page.) It requires a shift in my thinking and careful attention to what research with people should be. >

A Practicum in Oral History

In last semester's "Oral History and Ethnography" seminar, Dr. Lassiter asked students to identify an artist, develop a list of questions, and conduct and transcribe an interview. The artist had to approve the transcript and sign a release form permitting the program to use their oral history for the seminar.

At the end of the semester, Dr. Lassiter and I, as Editor of the Graduate Humanities, invited the student interviewers (on a volunteer basis) to continue working collaboratively with their artists to turn their transcripts into publishable oral histories.

I explained to the students that the newsletter was distributed to selected departments and administrators of Marshall University, the department's student listserv, and to interested parties outside the academic setting, e.g., associates of the students, interested friends, coffee shops, etc.

The students agreed to work with me throughout the process. They met again with their artists to discuss how their interview could be presented to the public via print copy and posted on the program's website. This process required 2 - 4 rewrites before we all felt the artist's story was represented within the space constraints of the newsletter.

Dr. Lassiter and I are pleased to publish these oral histories below; more will be published in the fall issue. For the students, this was their first experience with oral history and writing for publication. Typically, our students are working professionals with personal commitments to families, friends, and their community.

We appreciate their willingness, courage and stamina.

—Trish

An interview with Austin Barnett by Brooke Hypes

Where: At Brooke's home

Date: October 28, 2022

Transcription & Write-up: Brooke Hypes

[Lightly edited for publication. Picture supplied by Brooke. Austin wasn't able to share pictures of his acting career because of agreements with his union.]

< Austin Barnett grew up in the rural town of Sandstone, West Virginia. At a young age, he started doing community arts and entertainment in Hinton, West Virginia.

After ten years of community involvement, Austin transitioned to professional roles in live entertainment. He worked in that capacity for fifteen years, primarily focusing on the New York area and professional regional circuit—he has acted, directed, and designed lights, sounds, and sets.

Maintaining connections with rural southern West Virginia helped Barnett develop and foster community arts. His training includes a BFA in Theatre from West Virginia University. He has also trained at the Stella Adler Studio of Acting of New York City, completing his conservatory training there in 2010.

Due to medical reasons and the industrywide shift caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, Barnett has taken a hiatus from the world of live entertainment and transitioned to a research role in state government.

We say it takes a village to raise a child, but it also takes a village to make art. There is a community behind every curtain. And in live entertainment, that community is inescapable.

The Governor's School for the Arts shaped Austin Barnett's early views of the live entertainment community and set the stage for everything that followed.

Brooke Hypes: Is there anything particularly memorable about the Governor's School for the Arts?

Austin Barnett: There are several things that were very memorable. One of the things about community entertainment and live entertainment is usually you're not with people for very long. You meet and do a show, and then you might meet them twelve months down the road, or you may never see them again. It was my first experience of being with a very tight [group]. You had to trust one another a lot.

It was a great experience, a very humbling experience being part of that, being with a lot of people that were great and felt good. I was the guy who had never done anything like that. I was just really lucky that I was part of it. That's one thing that has really stuck with me—the community and trust built between artists.

> Enjoying the arts for both their aesthetic and communicative functions is the domain of *critical awareness*, yet another gift of the humanities….
>
> *Richard Janaro & Thelma Altshuler*
> The Art of Being **Human**

What was the live entertainment scene where you grew up?

Mostly there was none. I told my kids when I taught, "I'm giving you something I didn't have." And that makes me feel good. Because I've given back. That I've taken something someone has given me, they've taught me this thing, and now I'm teaching you. That's not something you can ever repay someone. You can only give it forward to someone else. But the theater scene—it was virtually nonexistent.

So then you were left with a very insular group of people. When I was a kid, I was lucky that a lot of them supported me transitioning to become a professional. And they supported me going through the Governor's School for the Arts. And then as I progressed onward in my education—they may not have always known what to do or say—but they were always

involved in some way supporting me. "You can do it, this is a good thing for you. Think about where you've come [from], what you've done, how far you've pushed the envelope."

Were there many like-minded people? I know the scene was kind of sparse. Or were you the lone [person]?

As a young man I had gone to the Governor's School for the Arts. And I was absolutely so alone, the first thing I realize, was…it was…we did…[pause]. If you remember the AIMs, the AOL chats—we would all tie up our parent's phone lines to get on and talk to each other. Because I would be craving the arts. Because it was sparse. And I would listen to my friends. One of them did *Grease*. One of them did *MacBeth*. And they were doing those in northern parts of West Virginia. And here I am in the south.

We didn't really have an arts scene. You had to make it if it was going to do something. You had to create it. It's better developed now than it ever was. There were other people, but being like-minded—there was no one quite like me in that I knew I wanted to do live entertainment in a professional way, develop in a professional way. I did not realize this until I came home, after I had gone to undergrad. And I got to experience it all over again.

There are people who are in your community when you look around. And you find people who are finding ways to develop the arts. And it's going to happen. You can't really stamp it out. It's just a really isolating experience when you're young and you don't know what to do. And you have a tight-knit group of people, and then you're kind of thrust back into the void of not being near those people. You really are engaged in a way that is different.

That's not to say there weren't people. Even if they didn't fully understand what I was talking about, or we weren't on the same artistic page together, or we saw the arts as different vehicles, I was still able to have artistic conversations with them in a different way. That probably doesn't make any sense.

It would be along the lines of "Oh, I like this thing," and, "Why did you like that thing?"

"There are people that are in your community when you look around. And you find people who are finding ways to develop the arts. And it's going to happen."

Well, I liked it for this extremely technical, theatrical reason. And they would be like, "Oh, I liked the pretty costume."

And that is not invalid to enjoy your art that way. It does not invalidate your likes at all. It does not invalidate your involvement in the arts. Patrons are a part of the arts all the time. Arts wouldn't exist if patrons weren't part of it, all the time. Now I'm getting my lecture in.

Would you say the community was supportive/not supportive, even if they didn't share your vision?

You know, they came to see it. And that's the most important thing. They showed up. Some of them I know did not pay. That was for kids. But I think they were supportive to the extent that they did not want it shut down. They supported at least in that they saw it and they talked about it.

How did the competitive edge of things affect the sense of community?

That's a really great question. It depends on who teaches you. We had a lecture on this once, honestly. One of my professors at WVU felt very, very strongly that the entire theatrical community—whether it was in Britain, the United States, Japan, wherever—you were all pulling for the same team. So when one person succeeded, everyone succeeded. When one person's dream was completed, it was good.

That was the school of thought that I grew up in, that I started doing my career in. And I was exposed to that. It makes you a better person. It makes you a better person to work with. I think there are advantages. Because if my buddy gets cast in this show and it's a killer and it's good, he gets a good relationship with the casting director or other people that go on to do other projects.

If they're like, "Oh, I'm really looking for a scrawny white kid that can come in and sing baritone." Then they'll be like, "I know Austin! And he can come in and do that. I've got a guy, let me call him and see if he's doing anything." And you can be there. That fosters that community of, "Hey man, I know this person and they can come direct this show. Hey man, I know that he usually designs lights, but he can work as an electrician. Hey man, we're

doing this thing in Pittsburgh this weekend, let's go up there and make some money and then come back here and finish this stuff."

In the professional world, there is a competitive edge, but it's so different once you're [in]…it's just different.

Would you go back [to the arts]? I know that's always a loaded question.

Yeah, there are a lot of if's that need to be answered in that question. [But] yes, if the situation, if all the stars aligned, [and] everything worked out.

So, everybody's favorite question—anything we haven't talked about that you have a burning desire to say?

I don't think I have a burning desire. I had a good time and I enjoyed talking about the arts. That was such a big part of my life for so long, looking back on it is fun and sad at the same time. Especially when I talk to other people that have left the arts. It is fun and sad for them, too. It's always nice to stroll down memory lane for a little while. >

Elijah Ashbury interviews Makeup Artist, Alexia Lilly

Where: At the interviewee's home
Date: October 25, 2022
Transcription & Write-up: Elijah Asbury
[Lightly edited for publication.
Pictures provided by Elijah.]

< Alexia Dawn Lilly was born on January 12, 1996 at Raleigh General Hospital in Raleigh County, West Virginia and moved to South Charleston to live with her mother and grandmother before her first birthday in October, 1996.

In her fall semester of college at Marshall University Lilly decided to put her passion for makeup artistry on the internet, She runs a makeup blog on WordPress, (Alexia Lilly Beauty), posts makeup videos, reviews, and tutorials on her YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook, and works with makeup brands for sponsorships and other projects.

The art of makeup is more than meets the eye, as I learned through my conversations with Alexia Lilly. I began having realizations about just how much makeup is used in everyday life.

Eli Asbury: Alexia, can you tell me what made you get into makeup?

Alexia Lilly: I think the first time I did makeup on another person for an event was at Marshall for the Tower of Terror in Twin Towers East for Halloween. I volunteered to do Special Effects or SFX clown makeup. That was really fun and it ignited my love for makeup and helped affirm that I was capable of doing it.

I started my beauty blog back in 2017 and it was probably around that time that I did the SFX makeup for Halloween.

About 2018 was when I really started getting my makeup kit together and really exploring the idea of using it as a career path – to hopefully make money. I didn't always have the accessibility to get all the new, expensive things at Sephora or Ulta (popular beauty and makeup stores) so I would just get drug store makeup. That was perfectly fine. I loved how I did my makeup then. When I finally had saved up some money I went to Sephora and got the things I had always wanted.

Can you tell me a little bit of why you consider makeup to be an art form?

It all varies but I'd say it just brings me joy. I think it brings a lot of people joy. It's an art form you can express yourself through.

I think that's really beautiful, but do you think those outside of the makeup community view makeup as an art form?

Probably not unless they need us for something. Even if you're not in the beauty community, anyone in a similar industry sees the value there.

The fashion industry—films and music videos, and even YouTube content creation companies—have makeup artists on their set. I guess the general consensus is, if you're not in the industry or a similar industry or you need us then maybe people don't think about it.

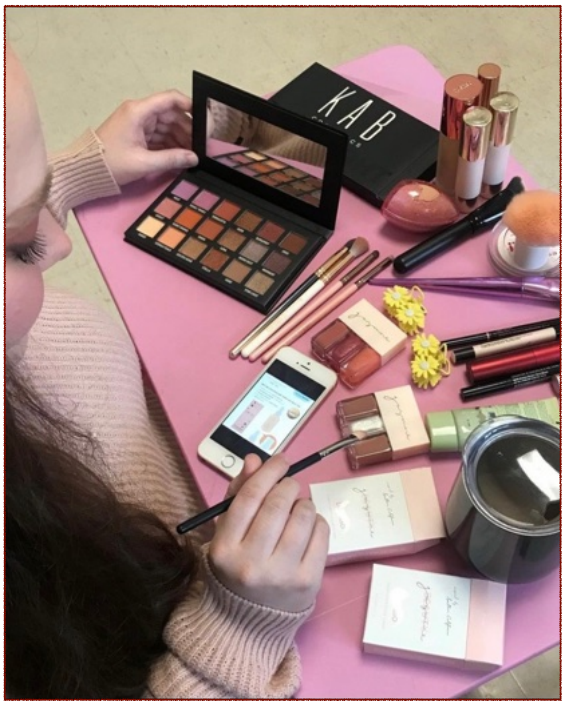
> "[Makeup] just brings me joy. I think it brings a lot of people joy. It's an art form you can express yourself through."

I do not often think of makeup as an art form but I am learning to. In fact, I'm learning a lot about makeup through this interview. For instance, makeup is one word – not two as I had previously assumed – and there are two different types of pallet (palette). The former being a platform on which goods are transported and the latter being a collection of makeup supplies within a single package. It has been interesting gaining a better insight into the beauty community as someone formerly uninterested in makeup. Tell me, do you do makeup for other people?

I'm always open to it. I would love to! I haven't actually had a paid opportunity to do makeup on another person. Currently I either get gifted or paid partnerships. That means I do makeup or test products on myself and share that content on social media. I've almost done some bridal parties and wedding makeup but it didn't work out.

Do you think it's necessary to do makeup for others to be considered a makeup artist?

There is actually kind of a big divide on that topic in the beauty community. Some beauty content creators and influences on social media call themselves makeup artists but don't do other's makeup. Some people think that you should not really refer to yourself as a makeup artist if you aren't certified. So, it definitely varies person by person. If you've practiced and are open to the idea then you can definitely be a makeup artist!



I'm going to ask you a question that you maybe haven't considered. Can you tell me how your Appalachian identity ties into your identity as a makeup artist?

Working at Sephora and visiting Ulta are the only places I can connect and get to know other people in the region who like and enjoy makeup. So, in my personal life my friends like skin care and take care of themselves but they're not as big of a beauty lover as I am. It feels like there's not as many people around here that are trying to pursue it as a career path. I'm sure there's definitely some bigger, more popular, and successful makeup artists in bigger cities. But, I feel like the industry is pretty small compared to everything else – Appalachia or not.

Can you explain to me what the importance of your work to your community is?

A lot of the time I reference and mention people that I know just virtually or online as my beauty friend on Instagram – and we do talk and message each other and everyone I know on there is very nice and supportive and helpful. So I feel like in my view of it, its beauty creators and makeup artists supporting each other. That kind of cyclical engagement with social media posts and blogs and things like that. We do it for ourselves because we enjoy it. We just try to support each other and it makes me happy.

I won't say any brands specifically because things can be a little political with brands. Sometimes they make decisions that not everybody agrees with and that I don't agree with so I'm not going to tag any certain brands.

I'll not mention any brands, but can you talk a bit more about what you meant when you said the ethics and politics with some makeup companies?

I personally always prefer cruelty free makeup that's not tested on animals. There's a big divide where some beauty creators do not touch any product or any brand that has been tested on animals or the company is in a gray area or haven't properly addressed their animal testing policies. I love cruelty free makeup. Social media has made everything a lot more public. Information is easier to access and find.

One of my last questions – we're starting to wind down here. Do you have any advice for people wanting to break into makeup?

Just go for it! You're going to learn and grow as you get started. I had wanted to start a beauty blog for years and finally one day at college after classes I was like "I'm going to do it, I'm going to register my blog!" And I did it and I'm glad that I did. I think that's the biggest step with a lot of things or at least for me is getting started.

> **"I'm always learning and growing and improving and I hope I never stop. Don't be scared. Of course be careful what you share online, don't share personal information or anything like that. Do what brings you joy!"**

I'm always learning and growing and improving and I hope I never stop. Don't be scared. Of course be careful what you share online, don't share personal information or anything like that. Do what brings you joy!

Well, thank you so much for your time Alexia. I really appreciate insight into the beauty community. Thank you for sharing so much and teaching us to follow our passions, no matter where we live!

Thank you!

While the beauty industry may be small, it is apparent that Alexia's love for it is not. She was gracious enough to share her thoughts and passion with me so now I dutifully share it with you. >

Graduate student and Interviewer Elijah Asbury is an avid reader of queer graphic novels, a lover of all animals, but most importantly, his dog Shadow. He's also a lifelong student. He has a BA and MA in Psychology and is pursuing his second Master's Degree in Humanities.

Interview with K.D. Jones by Rachael Fortune

Where: Kanawha County Public Library
Date: October 25, 2022
Transcription & Write-up: Rachael Fortune
(Edited for publication. Pictures provided by Rachael.)

< Kenneth David (K.D.) Jones is well known throughout Charleston in the food scene and he's a Campbell's Creek native who has been cooking as long as he can remember. After obtaining his G.E.D in 2011, K.D. spent 2015-2016 at Carver Career Center in their Culinary Arts program. Since then, he has experimented with food in many different venues, such as Mountain Cantina, Chef K.D.'s Cookout Club, and, most recently, Jonsey's D&D. He currently works at Charleston Bread Company and has been with them since 2019.

Rachael Fortune: When did cooking go from something that you passively observed to something you wanted to participate in?

KDJ: My grandma took care of me when I was young, so I was always in the kitchen with her. But, something in more in a formal approach, like me cooking dinner, probably twelve, thirteen years old when I was old enough to get a pan going hot in the kitchen and actually cook and everything. I mean really though my whole life, I've been in the kitchen in one way or another since I was really really young.

Did you help your mom cook or just grandma?

Mostly grandma, my dad was the cook between mom and dad. Mom worked for the Division of Culture and History, and dad worked late at night as a carpet layer and so he would always be home during the day with me so he would be cooking in the kitchen. If they both worked then I'd be with Mamaw.

Do you recall the first recipe you ever cooked?

Well, as far as me cooking a recipe, I would say the first thing I really tried on my own probably, probably, pulled pork. Like some kind of barbecue pork or something like that. I remember there was this one time I was having a birthday party and I told my mom I wanted to cook the food for my birthday party. I was probably fifteen or sixteen, too old for a kids party but all my friends were coming over and everything, so yeah, I remember cooking pulled pork from a recipe.

And then with my grandma, the first thing she really gave me faith in and let me do on my own was for Christmas, it was cookies. As Something easy to stir and shape and lay down (laughs). Yeah, probably those two, no bake cookies and a lot of pulled pork. My dad cooked a lot of pork roast and stuff like that too.

How did that go over at the birthday party?

Everyone loved it, and looking back, it was probably pretty bad, but at the time all my friends liked it. I cooked it long enough and there was enough sugary sauce that nobody was complaining that's for sure.

When was the first time you learned that cooking could be a career, or that you realized that's what you wanted to do?

I would say as far as my exposure to chefs, I would say all the way up until I started culinary school it would be completely media. I always loved that image of the big chef that ran the kitchen and cooked the best food. When I realized I could do it was probably eighteen or nineteen, when I started culinary school at Carver.

We've talked before about how people say if you haven't done this or that, you're not actually a chef. When did this first happen to you that you realized that was a thing because kids don't grow up with that idea.

I feel like my perspective is always one that sides with the more disenfranchised, the lower end of the spectrum in terms of finances or social status. I had a couple smaller jobs before that cooking, but Bridge Road Bistro was probably my first job that I really took ownership of and cared about.

Have you ever lost a job around here due to someone not thinking you had enough (schooling)?

Something that I take a lot of pride in is, I have left every job that I have ever parted ways with in my career. I think that I have a pretty good understanding of whenever I am done at a job, and I can kind of feel whenever a job is done with me, so to speak.

What does chef mean to you?

Cooking is an art, and a chef is an artist before a job. Ultimately, what it comes down to is cooking with intention: whether that is serving the absolute best school lunch you can serve, or if that is cutting your fruit perfect for your

fruit bowls at an edible arrangements place. It comes down to having a relationship with the food that you feed people.

Can we talk about the timeline of your different projects?

The first one would've been Mountain Cantina which was right at the end of culinary school which would've been 2016. That was with Chef Eduardo Silva. Ed and I really became best friends throughout culinary school. We really just loved the idea of coming up with this concept, coming up with this idea, this menu and just borrowing a location for a day.

We would set up right across from the Blue Parrot. Ed and I would make enough money to pay our bills. Then, we kind of let things taper off. I was really interested in getting more involved with the community online and connecting with people more about my work.

That's when I started posting under Chef KD Jones. It's been a more conscious effort whenever I am working with something or learning about something to take that picture of it and post it so that way somebody could ask me about it.

I started doing the Cookout Club because everybody was really interested in my food, everybody wanted to try my food and I was like, okay, well here's what I am going to do. I am just going to cook this menu and you can come eat dinner at my house.

But after the cookout club,—COVID picked back up and it was cold and I wasn't able to have cookouts,—I decided that I had been working and working in my free time my entire career since I was about eighteen years old. I've heard my entire life of chefs having heart attacks at forty-five, you know, burning out and acting like they're eighty when they're sixty, so I said, "I think I am just going to take this summer for myself."

From January up until about August or so, I just kind of enjoyed myself. I went to baseball games, traveled as much as I could, went

"Cooking is an art, and a chef is an artist before a job. Ultimately, what it comes down to is cooking with intention: whether that is serving the absolute best school lunch you can serve, or if that is cutting your fruit perfect for your fruit bowls at an edible arrangements place."

to events that I had never been able to go to because I was always cooking during that time. We spent a lot of time in Pittsburgh and there's this diner up there, Pamela's Diner, that we went to a lot that I just absolutely loved.

And while we're in Pittsburgh, obviously you eat pierogi, and so I fell in love with pierogi and there's nowhere in town that has it. So, I was like, I want to make and sell Pierogi. Charleston needs Pierogi. I came up with the concept of Jonsey's D&D, where D&D just stands for Diner and Delicatessen.

I started running Jonsey's in August. I would say out of all my projects, I have seen the most upward momentum in the shortest amount of time with Jonsey's D&D. I think a lot of it is because of the with effort I put into Chef KD Jones online. Posting a lot more and connecting a lot more with local artists.

So, do you feel that there's a need to expose members of your community to new types of food?

Having a bridge for people is absolutely necessary. The entire time I was running The Bistro food truck at Live on the Levee, at least ten times a night I convinced someone to try something they never had before and most times, they would come back to try it again. Even more so, if that food you're introducing to people is something that is native to this area or classically Appalachian or a family heirloom recipe.

How would you describe your personal style?

I experiment a lot and I go very far out there but what's always important to me is making something that's comfortable and someone can feel safe ordering. So I would say: approachable, 100% from scratch always, and fresh and produce first. I am not exclusively a vegan cook but whenever things are in season, I don't see a necessity to put meat or butter in every dish that I make because part of cooking in Appalachia and part of what makes our cuisine and our soil so important is the quality of vegetables it provides. >

Rachael Fortune will graduate from Marshall with an M.A. in the Humanities, and a certificate in Appalachian Studies in Spring 2023. She plans to begin her doctorate studies after graduation and hopes to get more of her writing out for publication in 2023.

"Inspired daily by those in my life, I owe a world of gratitude to the people who keep me writing."

Graduate College South Charleston
Graduate Humanities Program
100 Angus E. Peyton Drive
South Charleston WV 25303-1600
marshall.edu/humn

Beyond the Classroom: Using Oral History for Organizational Development

In 2018, another group of students participated in an oral history project in much the same way as the students highlighted in this issue of Graduate Humanities.

Instead of seeking out individuals, unbeknownst to each other, about one broad topic, the students in the 2018 seminar interviewed selected upper management and board members of a local non-profit, Step By Step, Inc., about their organization's strengths.

The results were published by the Graduate Humanities Program in book form, *Octopus, Elephants, Beehives: An Appreciative Inquiry into a Thriving Step By Step, Inc.,* and distributed in-house for the purpose of aiding the organization's program planning. (See related articles in the Spring 2019, and 2022 issues of Graduate Humanities.)

To help make these interviews more available for the organization's strategic planning, a summary of each interview was written and approved by the interviewer and the interviewee. This is one of the summaries:

Are You Mom?

< Cassidy Bailey, Site Coordinator/Resource Manager & AmeriCorps VISTA, Step by Step, was interviewed by Tyler Lucas, Student, Marshall University Graduate Humanities Program. The in-person interview occurred on Wednesday, October 24, 2018, 2:00-2:45 p.m. at Step by Step's Central Office in Charleston, West Virginia.

Exceptional Experience: Cassidy shared with her interviewer, Ty Lucas, a memorable time with a little boy who was difficult to handle in the after-school program. Cassidy was determined to be a steady and kind influence in his life as his teacher, even when he acted out. Over the school year, he came to think of her as his mom and she came to realize that even when children misbehave, "… they are literally the ones who are screaming inside for all the help they can get." The interview brings out details that show what made this experience so memorable for Cassidy and how it changed how she works with children now.

Future Leaders & Resiliency: When this experience happened, Cassidy was filled with self-doubt, but Step by Step helped her grow her strengths and work on her weaknesses. Step by Step also allowed Cassidy to bring her own children to work when her normal child care plans went awry. Cassidy promotes resiliency in her Step by Step communities by actively fostering relationships with the adults to let them know she's there for them and their families.

Three Wishes

(1) Better communication from the top down to the volunteers

(2) More hours for the staff or someone dedicated to doing the projects and getting them laid out so the projects could be implemented better

(3) Funding. "Our economy is changing a lot and we either need to figure out how we help it or work around it to help us."

Final Question: How can we update internet and technology at urban and, especially, rural sites to twenty-first century standards? >

Summer & Fall
2023 SCHEDULES
Upcoming Seminars on the Graduate Humanities Program website