

Interview with Andrea Cytek
Interviewer: Unknown
n.d.

Q: What is your name?

A: Andrea Cytek

Q: Where are you from?

A: Atchison, KS

Q: Why did you decide to come to KU?

A: Um, well, I liked KU. I had done a lot of research on what colleges I wanted to go to, and I guess my original idea was to get out of Kansas. So, I applied to and got into some colleges in Chicago, but I wasn't able to afford them. When I first got to KU, I was frustrated because I wanted to go somewhere out of Kansas. But I'm finding that there are great things about KU, as well as some negative things.

Q: What is your major?

A: English

Q: What are your plans after your English degree?

A: I was thinking I want to ideally go into environmental law. I change my mind all the time though, that's just the now. I might get my PhD in English, but more school is something is basically it.

Q: What is the name of the place that you are living in currently?

A: Koinonia, it is in the ECM, which is a community organization, which is a home to a lot of community based groups.

Q: How did you get contacted with people that live here?

A: Well, freshman year I went to their lunch regularly, and I really like the sense of community here. I went on an alternative spring break to New Mexico, which was wonderful and life changing. I wanted to be more involved here at the ECM, and what is a more wonderful way than living here! So I asked around, and I applied

Q: What is the process that you have to go through to live in this community?

A: You have to fill out an application, and agree to rules. You have an interview with some current members and they approve you.

Q: Were there openings when you applied? Or just one room?

A: I don't remember... I think there were 4 openings out of 7

Q: What year are you?

A: Sophomore.

Q: If you could have picked somewhere else to live on campus, where would it be?

A: I was living in Hashinger, and it was a good experience, but I was definitely ready to get out of the dorms. I didn't want to live on my own, and I wanted to meet new people.

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Q: Would you say the people who live in your community are your best friends? Or do you have contacts outside of the community.

A: I have lots of contacts outside of the community... but we are very close here. It is such a great place because it is so supportive. We have weekly discussion that can be fun and challenging, but they connect us. It is also really important that we do not become a self-contained community. We are required to do 40 hours of community work each semester. We realize the importance of being the part of a larger community. So we get involved in things around Lawrence and campus. I think it is important to have lots of contacts and lots of friends.

Q: Are a lot of people who live in the community graduate students, or undergrads?

A: Mostly undergrads... but we also have some non-students. We don't exclude anyone.

Q: What other majors are in your community?

A: Film and Japanese major, pre-nursing, Latin American studies major, and one of our residents goes to a degree in work with skin and aesthetic kind of things. One just came here from a folk school in West Virginia, he's just working right now.

Q: Do you have any interesting memories from your time here?

A: We have had some interesting parties. We try to have birthday parties, which usually get crazy. Sometimes, after hours, we, when it's nice out, go up to the roof and dance. We all like dancing generally. I like dancing, ha-ha.

Q: What have you learned from being here, what are some passions you have gained from this community?

A: I think that the community has helped me cultivate and learn about my own passions. I think because we are so supportive it helps you learn more about yourself. Something that I am in the process of learning more about is communication. We try to be open about everything, including frustrations and brokenness and failure, because I think that finding unity in disagreement is a huge part of intentional community. Because it is more like not I guess excluding people but trying to understand each other? So we do a lot of discussion. We talk a lot about knowing the difference between discussion and debate. We do a lot of discussion/debate, but it is something we try to move away from, because it is excluding and competitive and it is something we don't necessarily engage in here.

Q: What is the difference between the two?

A: Discussion would be more collaborative, and debate more oppositional. So if you are discussing with someone, you are sharing ideas with the goal of understanding. So you are genuinely listening. When you are debating, you are listening, but looking in flaws in their reasoning to fuel your own ideas. In debating you are very competitive, and I like not having that here.

Q: Would you say this is a faith community?

A: I guess we could be described as a faith community, but not Christian faith specifically. We are open to all faith traditions (or non faith traditions). So, the mixture of people here at the moment is very

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diverse. And I think that is very important. I think the ECM isn't necessarily a Christian organization (even though the name would make you think as such) they encourage spirituality, but it is a community organization.

Q: Would you consider yourself a specific religion?

A: I was raised in a Christian household, but I wouldn't necessarily identify as that. I like the idea of interfaith, even though that isn't necessarily a religion; I like the idea of dialogue and community.

Q: You mentioned that there are various traditions living here. Can you describe some of them?

A: Well there are some people here who do not identify as any religion, others who go to church regularly. We have a current member who is really into Buddhism. I think we are all really open about learning about different faiths.

Q: Do you think this kind of community would work better if it were bigger?

A: I think it is good at the size it is at, but it could work bigger as well. There are a number of intentional communities in America that work very well in large groups. But I love it now, because we can all be so close. Having a smaller group makes us feel closer.

Q: Have they ever had a family or married couples live here?

A: Generally there are single students, however, this past summer we had a mother and daughter living in this room.

Q: How do eating and those types of things work out?

A: We share kitchen space, and we share some food. Most of our food is our own, but we have a community basket. It can be dumpster dived, or saved from different events. Once a week we have dinner together. One person cooks the meal, and we eat, and we have a 2-hour discussion after the meal. This is mandatory every week. It is designed to stress the important about gathering around the hearth. Gathering around food and talking and slowing down for a bit, because in university culture we are so pressed for time, so we try to make time to just sit and talk, and make community. We also have weekly chores. In the main room we are assigned chores. Sweeping the kitchen, watering the plants, etc. We have specific laundry days... generally we try to keep things very organized, but we are also very laid back.

Q: How much would you pay to live here?

A: We each have a different payment based on the room. For example, if you have a room with a bathroom it is 360/month. If you have a shared bathroom its 300ish. The prices range, but fairly inexpensive give it is next to campus, includes Internet, laundry, and electricity and water. All the money goes towards the ECM.

Q: When did the community start?

A: The ECM building was built the 1960's, and it started as a women's co-op if I remember right... hmmm... yeah.

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Q: So, it looks like it started as a religious organization?

A: Yeah, it was originally a Presbyterian church, and switched to an ecumenical Christian ministry.

Q: So, they weren't here then if this was built in the sixties?

A: Okay... so the buildings construction began in 1959... it was important during the Vietnam War in organizing against the war.

Q: Would you know anything else about the history?

A: Yeah, um, lets see, it says that during the 60's-70's ECM was an organization place for people looking for peace and equality. Just last night we had a solidarity fundraiser for the workers in (*don't know how to spell, around 20:41 in the track*) Florida. It is just kind of a movement going on right now to end the slave labor in (*name*) Florida. It is the place that supplies most of the tomatoes for the US. So, a lot of people are eating tomatoes that were picked with slave labor, and they don't know it.

Q: Can I have a pamphlet?

A: Yeah... we have talked about having it edited. There is a lot of talk about Jesus that seems to exclude other religions. It has the information about our duties and whatnot.

Q: If you could change something about this community... the way it is set up, what do you think would be a good idea to change?

A: Hmm... I don't know. I think it is functioning really well. I feel like moving here was one of the best decisions I have made. Coming home has felt so good; you just feel so much love here. It feels perfect. Of course, there are little arguments we get it, but that is part of being a community and growing closer.

Q: How do you generally prepare the meals if you do it once a week?

A: We take turns. Each semester we decide as a group how you want to do the meals. This semester we decided to do it by room, the chef of the evening is the one who chooses the topic for discussion. And, generally, we make vegetarian meals because many of us are vegetarian.

Q: Tell us about your pet?

A: Pepper. The ECM cat, he protects us from mice and is adorable. He is always around here, and you can hear his little bell. He belongs to Sarah.

Q: Did you know anything about the cat coming into the community?

A: I just knew Sarah has lived here for a while and owned the cat.

Q: Thank you, any final things?

A: No

Q: Great, fantastic.