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Interview with Conor Scruton (FA 1293)

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Interviewer: Chloe Brown
Interviewee: Conor Scruton
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Topic: Women's March

Conor Scruton Interview

CB: Alright. This is Chloe Brown interviewing Conor Scruton. It is…

CS: April 13th.

CB: April 13th! And so before we get started I just want to make sure that you consent to me entering the interview into the archives.

CS: I do. Yes.

CB: Cool and using it for my project.

CS: Yes, of course.

CB: Okay. So can you tell me some background information about yourself?

CS: Just like where I'm from or…?

CB: Yeah.

CS: Okay. I was born in McKenzie, Tennessee. So my parents are from the northern Midwest. My mom grew up in a really rural, sort of farmer family in northern Illinois, and I grew up really hyper-Catholic family. But, you know, Air Force family so we moved around a lot in_____ Illinois. And so they were both, they are both English professors at a really small, private Cumberland Presbyterian University called Bethel University. So, yeah, I grew up with, yes, really liberal parents that were kind of transplants to the south. But, yeah, I spent my entire life in McKenzie until college, and since then have only lived in Tennessee and Kentucky. I went to college at Austin Peay in Clarksville, Tennessee, and then I moved from there up to here where I'm now a—I'm almost finished with my masters in literature at Western Kentucky University. So that's the quick trajectory.

CB: Okay. So why did you decide to participate in the Women's March?

CS: I—ya know, I was thinking about this and I'm not sure beyond some of the reasons I'm sure you heard from other people. Like Allison the other day was saying a lot of the same things that I felt. The main one being that I—I don't know. I had a lot of feelings and a lot of very specific concerns for the trajectory of the country. You know, just the political trajectory in general. And yeah, like a lot of people I also felt kind of unsure what to do about it. You know, being a teacher kind of presents some interesting opportunities because you get to decide how information is spread to albeit a small group of people, but I had some unique opportunites there. And we

talked about politics and the election a little bit in my class in the fall. But, you know, in a lot of ways there's something that feels a little inactive about kind of opening up conversations among students. I think it's important, but, you know, it doesn't feel like you're going out and making your voice heard, exactly. Even though in a lot of ways, I think that's where a lot of my power lies in sort of a political and ideological sense. So, yeah, I think at the most basic level I decided to participate in the Women's March. Yeah, because I, you know, haven't marched or protested before and I felt like, you know, even though it was built as The Women's March and it was obviously a conceived and organized and executed by women, you know, despite some of the criticisms in a lot of ways, the ethos of the march was pretty intersectional in the sense that it was—It was a very real sense an overall protest of the sort of wave of hate rhetoric that had sort of propelled Trump to the presidency. And so I think part—in addition to, again like Allison said, this sort of idea of it was such a big thing that I felt I had to be there, but I came later, initially when I—that came as I kind of realized exactly how big the global protests were going to be. Initially I would say definitely this—just that I really felt the need to contribute my voice to—or just add my voice to everyone else's and making it very clear that, yeah, the hate associated—or the sort of—I hate putting it in such kind of nebulous terms but, yeah, the rise of hate didn't represent, you know, real human values or, for that matter, real American values. And so, yeah, that's a very long way of putting what I call the most basic reasoning.

CB: So you marched in Nashville.

CS: Yeah.

CB: How do you think that was different from the D.C. march?

CS: I mean from what I've heard about the D.C. march, it was, you know, a really positive and empowering atmosphere, but also always confusing. I heard there were multiple trajectories or multiple routes that people were marching in. It got a little bit confusing. And so that was something that was nice about the Nashville march. There was exactly one route that we were planning to walk and we walk exactly that route. A lot more people showed up than were expected I think. You know, the Facebook event had at least 6,000 people on it the morning of, and I was actually talking to Lena on the way down and she was like, "If half those people show up, it'll be great." Because we're thinking, of course, when people say yes to a Facebook event, or for any event really, it's usually going to be less than actually sign up.

CB: Yeah.

CS: But I think the final numbers were 15,000.

CB: Oh, wow.

CS: So, you know, more than double by at least that metric by looking at Facebook were expected to show up. But even so, it was a very direct and fairly orderly—you know, the proceedings were fairly orderly. There was the rally in once place and we marched—I will say another thing. I was listening to the radio and there was somebody talking about, you know, it was actually kind of a panel discussion comparing Indivisible and what people call, or more

generally, The Resistance and the Tea Party Movement. But again, like 2009-ish. And somebody said, "Well,"-- somebody pointed out that, I think it was, eighty percent of the people who participated in the Women's March in D.C. came from blue states or blue areas which I totally believe, but, you know, I also think that's part of the power of the global protest beyond just the, you know, actual march in Washington, is that, you know, even they'll say Nashville the Davidson County area is, of course, you know, bluer than the rest of the state or a lot of other areas of the state. Even so, I think it means a lot that it wasn't just an average turnout for—it wasn't just an average turnout for this protest in a very red state and a very red area. It was two and half times what potentially we might have expected so I think—and I'm not saying that makes me feel better about going to Nashville, necessarily. But I think as it turns out, I'm really glad that Nashville and a lot of other, you know, really conservative areas. There were similar turnout and I think it's really important in terms of understanding what the Women's March stood for. It wasn't just, you know, people from really liberal areas travelling to Washington to make their voices heard there, you know. It was, no, this is a march that represented a movement that exists across the country and across the world. It's not just a select group of people. It's much more—it permeates all of America much more than that.

CB: Yeah. So what do you think the message of the march was? And was it communicated effectively?

CS: I think, I think most literally it was just kind of an anti-Trump march, but kind of like what I was saying before when I was trying to get around how vague the, you know, a term like hate rhetoric can be. I think even more generally it was against the, not just Trump, but the kind of, you know, the kind of belief systems that Trump represents, and, also, that he catered to with a lot of the voting populace, you know, I think, again-- yeah, I think it was—yeah, I think it was generally the message of the Women's March was kind of reaffirming humanistic values rather than values, say, that prioritize business and kind of cultural selfishness over kind of reaching out to people who are different from us and helping individuals who are less fortunate than us. So I think that the march was directed straight out of the Trump administration. But I think, in that sense, the message was also more generally for America and for the America that, say, voted for Trump or maybe had previously been somewhat apathetic to the politics or indifferent to the entire election cycle.

CB: So had you, before the march, had you been very involved with politics? Or was this your first foray into politics?

CS: I would say I wasn't very involved in politics. I was very interested and had lots of—so just in terms of my personality and the people I'm friends with, I definitely get fulfillment in my relationships with people if I can have real intelligent conversations with them, whether that's about philosophy or art or politics or whatever. And so for as long as I can remember, I've been very interested in politics and, you know, I've always had strong feelings and wanted to work them out with people and have those discussions. In terms of being actively involved in politics, no, I wasn't especially. Beyond having discussions with people and beyond teaching and trying to, you know, trying to poke holes maybe in students' prejudices on both sides as best as I could. And like I said, I think there is certainly a power in that that I don't wanna undercut but in terms of, say, you know, making local phone calls for a certain candidate or going out in the streets

marching or protesting, yeah, no. That's not the kind of thing I had done before the Women's March.

CB: Do you think that you would be interested in doing that the next election?

CS: Absolutely, and I remember, actually immediately after the election, one of the first things that occurred to me was that—and, you know, for a lot of reasons, I—even though, I pretty consistently lean liberal and lean democrat in terms of how I feel about candidates and the issues and where they fall on the issues, you know, just kind of on principle and generally don't like to associate myself with one party or the other, and, you know, partially because of that too. I never really been involved with anyone's campaign, but it did occur to me, you know, I think being able to make phone calls for candidates that I support or candidates that I think will do a good job for the country. Yeah, that was one of my first thoughts after the election. That's actually something that I would be interested in doing. And even though I come from-- my parents come from the north, I have something closer to Yankee accent than a Tennessee accent. I think, honestly, I've grown up in this area in sort of the kind of blood red heartland of America. I think being a little bit intercultural in that way actually puts me in a good place to try and talk with people, who might be really, really entrenched in their Trump support or their support of Trump's values and actually open up dialogue with them and maybe discuss how other candidates can actually help them as well as, you know, people in my situation, who share my values.

CB: So can you walk me through the day you had attending the march and also the night before?

CS: Yeah, the night before. The night before was so fun. And I mean, yeah, it kind of felt like the world was burning down in a very real way. I couldn't watch the inauguration. I just really couldn't, and that's something that I never really had to do before but I definitely do now. Like I know when to turn off the news. I know when to stay off Twitter a little bit, and that was certainly a day I had to turn off the news. I, you know, I really couldn't deal with this. But that night, yeah, we all went over to Lena's and she had a playlist of old protests songs from the sixties and seventies and a bunch of Pete Seeger and Woodie Guthrie and so, yeah, actually, even just when you walked into her apartment, the atmosphere was really electric in that way. But we were all, we had all talked before about change and what we could do to affect change in America, but here we were doing something real physical actions. It wasn't even the act of marching but you're just taking brushes and physically marking them on posters. Which there's something so tactile about it that, you know, it made it feel really satisfying in some ways even more satisfying than actually marching. I don't think it was but in some ways. You know, there was just something really empowering about being in this little apartment with a bunch of people that we knew and loved. We all knew we with each other, together for that march and for our cause. And so, yeah, it was such a positive atmosphere because nobody was trying to hide the political or social reality of America at that point. You know, we weren't trying to run from it anymore but we were recognizing it and there was such kind of shared strength in that group, that night, that maybe that's why I started to say the atmosphere was even more, in some ways, even more empowering than the next day. Kind of like I said though, the march in Nashville really sort of transcended our expectations in a lot of ways so we all got in—we drove down in two cars because Allison had a class she had to stay for in Nashville, I remember. But we drove

down in two cars and parked and then we all hopped in one and rode a little bit closer to—I can't remember. I think it's called Cumberland Park or something like that. But it's, yeah, where the rally was and where the march was starting. And so we showed up. You had to make sure we could get parking and get over everything. We showed up, you know, maybe an hour, hour and a half early. And at the time, we showed up and there weren't that many people—we were—there were was a significant number so we were kind of milling about. And very quickly over the, as we got closer to the time—I think the march started at 10, maybe. Yeah, it started to fill up more and more, the thing was in the distance over, you know, because we were just in the park down here. We couldn't totally see how people had filled in, but basically we ended up in the back. We could see this huge crowd starting to form around the foot bridge, the walking bridge we eventually walked across to follow the route through the march. So, yeah, and I actually remember two specifically some of the—there were a lot of really good speakers at the rally but a number of them were basically, in a lot of ways, teaching people how to protest, you know. And I don't know if people specifically said, "This may be your first protest," or something like that, but maybe I'm projecting there, but I think that was a part of the atmosphere. We practiced chants together and things like that. But, anyway, after a while we started walking up and, yeah, we were at the very back. There were a few very anti-protestors that we really kind of hyper-religious. I don't know. They were saying something vaguely about sexual indiscretions. So I'm not sure if it was—I don't know if they were protesting like non-heterosexuality or they were protesting like feminine sexuality or femininity. Not quite sure. But the fact that I couldn't even totally hear them when I was maybe—we were in the very back at the beginning so there were maybe fifty yards away from us and they had a megaphone and I still couldn't hear them because everyone in the crowd was so loud. And so that was the only thing approaching a negative moment that day. So, yeah, we kind of kept walking. And, yeah, pretty much it was an immensely positive atmosphere. And kind of similarly, nobody was trying to pretend that the reality was any different or better than what it was. But still, it was just in a different way, you know, it was a lot of people kind of giving each other positive affirmations and their ability to change the world and, you know, make their voices heard. Yeah, and so there's that. And, yeah, so that was the general feel of the march, in general. Of course, we ran into LeNoir and his wife. Which-- and that's just another good feeling, you know where somebody not like a, you know, thought he was particularly conservative or like he particularly hated me or anything, I think. It is a really nice feeling, I think, to be given that indication that people you work with and the people you've worked for actually are on your side. And that sends, you know, actually marching to support you just as much as you are marching to support them. And I think that's—I mean it happened totally by chance, obviously, but, yeah, I think that's—I think it kind of speaks to a lot of, the reason a lot of people marched anyway. Which was that like my privilege is different than your privilege which is different than that privilege of, you know, however many people who marched too. And I think that's a lot of the reason, a lot of the reason that a lot of people marched was that, you know, is that we're there for each other, you know, everyone. It doesn't matter if one person stands up for someone else if the other person won't then do the same thing. So, yeah, that's kind of—I don't know how else to narrate the actual march itself.

CB: Were you surprised that the march was so positive? I, personally, was expecting it to be a lot more negative than it was.

CS: Yeah. Definitely. Even the fact that there were no arrests recorded and four and a half million people protested. It's the biggest kind of single protest in human history, right? And there were no arrests. I mean there were even arrests at the Day Without A Woman marches in New York. But there was not a single arrest associated with the Women's March. It's like—I don't know. I was definitely surprised but even somewhere like Nashville, slightly smaller scale, protests that make sense. I was, if anything, astounded that in Washington where they had a bunch of paramilitary and tanks floating around that there was no—nobody was goaded into any sort of confrontation. Or the atmosphere never seemed to turn that way. Yeah, I don't know if I have anything to add there, but, yes, I was kind of surprised.

CB: Yeah. So can you walk me through how your group came to adopt the Wild Bunch as your moniker?

CS: I can look it up. Isn't that like the name of Butch Cassidy's gang? It's someone's. Because I have an office computer here, let me look it up. Yeah, because it's an actual reference. Maybe it's just the name of a Western. I could have sworn it was about an actual, historical little gang in the West. I guess I'm wrong about that. Yeah, I guess it is fictional. Anyway, yeah, I talked about running into LeNoir and his wife and he, you know, was taking a couple pictures of all of us. So a day or two later when we got back to Bowling Green, he sent emails with a couple of them and he said something like photos of the wild bunch. And we thought that was just the greatest thing so we started calling ourselves that. I don't know who originally suggested that. But, yeah, I think that's a thing we stole from LeNoir when he just kind of offhand made a joke and called us that.

CB: Why is that significant to you?

CS: I don't know. Well, for one thing, you know how in different groups or with different groups certain words just kind of take on meaning they don't have with other people?

CB: Mhm.

CS: Well, like Erin and Lena have this both mood they get into where they're just—well, basically, we call it getting wild. But it's where they start to—they get very whimsical sometimes, especially if they get really tired. Yeah, I wouldn't even say nonsensical. They just, you know, whimsy is the best way to put it. But, yeah, it's a word that we kind of throw around a lot anyway. But then, yeah, we just liked it so much. Again, I really don't remember. If I wanted to, I could probably trace back in a message who originally suggested it but I don't remember how we, you know, decided to keep it. I think it was just kind of—I think it was a little unspoken.

CB: Do you think it was a desire to create a tangible name for the four of you?

CS: I think that's a good point. I think, you know, whether or not, you know—I don't know if I would say, you know, we felt the need to define ourselves in a certain way, but I think we had already begun to, you know—before, during, and after the Women's March, I think we certainly began to think of ourselves as a more cohesive group than some of the other acquaintances and

friends we had. And we even talked about that directly after the march about how there were some other people that had talked about coming, but we all—we felt we were all kind of self-confident and emotionally stable enough that neither one of us-- we could lean on each other when needed help. I guess I'm getting more into the general friendships here, but, yeah, we could sort of look to each other for help when we need it, but we also aren't, you know, codependent in such a way that we always need everyone else to kind of pay attention to us or kind of, yeah, kind of give us more than we give them, if that makes any sense. And I talked about that in terms of just how we are as friends and how we are becoming because we were really solidified by the Women's March in a lot of ways, where, again you know, none of us were complaining. We just all—we all knew that we wanted to be there. We all knew we wanted to support each other, and we all knew we wanted support from the others in the Wild Bunch. And so without necessarily talking about it, we definitely were already forming that kind of group that really kind of mutually supportive group. And so I think because just a couple days later and related to the march, David LeNoir called us the Wild Bunch. I feel like the idea-- because we already kind of created this little cohesive group or that's the direction we were moving. I think it just made a lot of sense to give ourselves a name and make an actual cohesive group, or like a really specific designation, or label.

CB: What do you think it was about the Women's March that led to this solidification of friendship?

CS: I mean, like I said, a lot of it, in our specific situation, I think a lot of it had to do with the people. Because there were some other people we knew that I even remember saying specifically that one of them would have gotten tired and complained after a while and another one probably would have been a little uncomfortable. But none of us felt that way, and, yeah, as I was kind of going through the description of our friendship, I realized that in a lot of ways mirrored my description of the Woman's March, in general. This kind of—this idea of mutual support and not just the idea of mutual support but the, basically the display or the demonstration that, "Hey, you know, when you need help or when someone tries to put you down, I'm going to try and be there for you just like you're going to be there for me." And I feel like, you know, just day to day I feel like that's how we are with each other. And so I hadn't quite thought of it that way before but in a lot of ways, the unspoken ethos of the Wild Bunch's friendship is kind of similar in that way to the sort of, you know—I'm trying to say the words brotherhood or sisterhood without gendering it.

CB: Community?

CS: Thank you! Thank you!

CB: Fellowship?

CS: Thank you! There are so many obvious words for that. Thank you! But, yeah, I think in a lot of ways—I think the sense of community was constructed around the Women's March and that the Women's March was trying to construct are similar sense to, you know, the sense of friendship and community that I feel with everyone else in the Wild Bunch, if that's what you're asking.

CB: Yeah! I was just wanting your opinion. So you just said that the Women's March was trying to form a community, and I had not heard anyone say that before. So how do you—why do you think—what indications did you see that they were trying to form a community?

CS: Well, for one thing, at the rally, a lot of people from a lot of different organizations in Nashville and Tennessee as whole—like some people specifically came in from Memphis where there were, you know, work for certain kind of social activist organizations. And you know a lot of people even before the rally, it wasn't just talking about, you know, a lot of speakers weren't just talking about, you know, what we were protesting, or why we were there, or anything like that. But specifically, here's some realities, here's some things that exist and here's what you can do and what we can do to kind of combat that beyond just marching. Nobody took my phone number there but say at the Muslim Ban march, a couple of weeks ago, in the west end in Nashville, you know, by then some of the same people were organizing it. And specifically I'm thinking about Power Together Tennessee and some other groups in Nashville, in particular, but there they gave out a couple of text numbers and I still get texts and calls from them about sort of community organizations events and also events mobilizing people. And so that didn't happen at the Women's March so that came later. I'll admit that. But I think in a very real way there's this—also the way people were talking about resistance and fighting back on, you know, during the rally. A lot of it was in terms of, understandably, like this is something ongoing. This is not something you come here this one day and you march and then you're done. This is something that—this is a fight that we're going to have to keep doing and it's going to keep coming back, you know, for the next four years supposedly. And so I think, yeah, it's not necessarily I heard someone say, "Hey, we're forming a community," but I think by talking about how everybody at the actual physical march could continue working within the resistance. I think that there was a real sense of community being constructed and I think that's also evident in the fact that you have groups like Indivisible, but in a lot of ways, people talk about, more generally, the resistance and I think that part of that has to do with too a lot of the alt-government accounts and the popular—within the first week of the presidency. But like I think there are other factors, I assume. I think the very fact that the movement in a lot of ways is referred to more generally than a really specific faction like Indivisible or, on the side, the Tea Party. I think that kind of speaks to, you know, kind of the attempt to construct a community or around the shared values. I hadn't thought about that before you mentioned it. But, yeah, I think that's an interesting way to look at it, now that you bring it up.

CB: So you think it's specifically tied to political action or do you think it's something broader than that?

CS: I mean I think political action is certainly a big part of it, but, yeah, I think it's—I think even more generally it's the community has to do with shared, cultural values. I mean, obviously, the nature of culture is that one person for that matter one group doesn't get to decide the values of the culture. You know, as much as religious organizations actually done that throughout history now that I say that out loud. But, yeah, I mean—I forgot where that point started. But, yeah, I think, yeah, a lot of the point of the march was to, you know, to make a very specific political statement, but, you know—yeah, it also reaffirms some cultural values. Obviously those—I mean those that intertwine a lot, but it's like the way I put it to some people is that, you know,

yeah, I'm liberal, but I wasn't a member—it's not my fault that one political party or faction decided to politicize my sexuality, you know? And so it's kind of like that where definitely kind of cross over, but I think, more than any really specific political action, I think the nature of the Women's March and the community that fostered or attempted to foster had to do with, yeah, just making it very, making it very clear that, "Hey these are some cultural values that we hold. This is as much America as the people who voted opposite our views."

CB: So what—I'm trying to think of the best question to jump to. I'm wondering about how you feel about the state of women in politics and whether or not you see this Women's March as making any changes?

CS: I mean just by the numbers, I have seen floating around multiple numbers about, you know, three times as many women as before have filed to run for office across America. And, again, I feel like at least one of those numbers I heard came from PEW but I don't know otherwise where that comes from. But, yeah, I've just seen several really empirical signs that, yes, women do seem to be more interested in running for office than they were in the past. I've also seen—and this is partially because my sister works at the YWCA in Dayton, Ohio which is, yeah, in their chapter's very focused on women's issues but also race and other cultural issues and social issues. But, yeah, you know, they've had several events like interest meetings for women interested in running for office, and I've seen a whole lot of others. And, again, that may be a matter—I'm willing to accept that that's potentially a matter of visibility and what I was aware of, but I am under the impression that, yeah, there have been more of those sort of meetings, and there has been more of a push to sort of empower women in that very real and political way since the election. And so, yeah, I've seen some actual numbers and other data floating around to support that even though I can't directly site it. My students would call me a hypocrite right now. But, yeah, definitely information I have received, that definitely seems to be the case.

CB: I mean the Kentucky Women's Network is doing that too, right now. Why do you think that is?

CS: I don't know. I feel like—well another number that I actually saw from Forbes the other day was that on average women-- on average women contribute, or I think their term was invest, invest 90% of their income, of their net income, either in their families or in the community. Whereas by contrast, men on average invest 40% of that money on either their families other than themselves or community. And, yeah, I think—maybe this is just my own thoughts or feelings coming through, but I think there is very much a sense that, you know, well if more women were actually had a say in politics then it wouldn't be quite so easy for politicians to actually ignore the, to ignore the problems people unlike them. And again I don't know how much—yeah, it's the kind of stereotype I hesitate to make without actually backing up with science, but there is this sort of conception that women have greater empathy than men. And, again, it's a stereotype in some ways I like to resist, but also that I think—also I think probably has a certain element of truth to it in a very real way. And I mean there are some data to support that if we really wanted to go down that route. But, yeah, I think that part of it is just the sense that, you know—I think that's part of it. But then also just this idea of representation and the fact that okay there are far—there are far smaller percentage of women in government than there are a percentage of women in America. You know, I think, at the moment, women are 51% of the

country. They are actually more than half, and they form like what—is it 20- 20 something percent…

CB: It's very low.

CS: Yeah. You know, and I think similarly it's a similar matter for people of color too. You know, it's like people of various—you know, various people of minority groups form a certain faction or portion of the population and they form a much larger lower percentage of representation in government. And, you know, it's just a significant problem in terms of—I think there is a sense that that's a significant problem in terms of, yeah, just understanding, you know, understanding constituents and understanding Americans. And so, yeah, I think there's been a push. And, you know, it's not an anti-white push. It's not an anti-male push. It's not an anti-straight push or anything. It's just that, you know, there is a problem when you have people who are not those things who exist in your country and—the current administration and everything, most everything that was said in the campaign kind of represent this feeling that, oh the people in power don't actually have to pay attention to these people who are not white or not male or not straight or whatever, you know. And I think that a lot of the push, specifically, to put women in office or encourage women to run for office has to do with that basic problem.

CB: So I only have a few more questions.

CS: You're asking good questions because I feel like I'm rambling a lot because I'm trying to find the answers.

CB: No, that's the nature.

CS: Fair enough.

CB: What do the pussy hats mean to you and how—what do you think they symbolize?

CS: You know, I'm not sure what they symbolize. Kind of like Allison said, it's kind of like a bumper sticker. It's such like a small everyday thing in a lot of ways but it's also a symbol to everyone you meet, whether it's somebody that disagrees with you where they have to confront the fact that somebody thinks differently than I do. If you see somebody on your side, that's a little bit—that's a little moment of community or recognition that happens between the two of you. And so I think, yeah—you know, Allison said something like this, and I agree with it. I do smile when I see somebody wearing a pussy hat. So it doesn't mean a lot to me personally. I don't have any further attachment to them now, but I think as a little social marker, you know. I think as symbol, you know—yeah, I mean just if I thought to move to Wisconsin but if I—it's far enough away that if I ran into someone wearing an Austin Peay State University t-shirt or a Western Kentucky University shirt, I may well stop and talk to them and say, "Hey, we have this thing in common." And it's kind of like a similar, you know, it's kind of like a similar thing. Although, I probably have more in common with the people wearing pussy hats than any given person wearing a Western shirt.

CB: Yes. So what—I know that you made a sign. Can you tell me…

CS: It's over here!

CB: Oh! It is?

CS: Yeah! I put it up.

CB: Oh, I didn't even notice that.

CS: Yeah. I went for the sort of simple, graceful kind of.

CB: Oh, nice. I like that.

CS: Yeah. So and I actually like it when you get closer. Part of the reason I wrote like this because I was trying to do something more ornate, and as you can see I was trying to draw out the letters and doing such a bad job that I just got—I don't know. I don't know how else to describe it, but, basically, you know the difference between a paint brush with bristles and like a little foam brush kind of thing?

CB: Yeah.

CS: I just got all the broader foam ones because it was very hard to mess letters up with those. So that's why I ended up with these instead of—it's pretty small little strip of cardboard so it's not like a lot would fit on it anyway.

CB: Yeah.

CS: So on this side: this side says, "All love," in a kind of rainbow pattern of colors. On the other side it just says, "Resist hate," which—I don't know. I appreciated in some ways—I thought it would have been nice if I came up with something more clever like Allison, but, at the same time—like I said, I like something about how—I like the sort of grace of, or the gracefulness of these sort of simple, direct messages. And so that just felt right to me, and, again, I guess that kind of helped—I'm not good with measurements like maybe 2-2 and a half feet.

CB: two and a half feet maybe?

CS: By like a foot maybe?

CB: Foot and a half?

CS: Yeah so not very big, but definitely big enough to read from a distance. And so, yeah, I had that—I was kind of working with that restriction anyway. But, yeah, I think also—I mean I keep talking about the Women's March and the movement in really general terms. I don't know. I think that kind of shows in my choice of signs, how—yeah, I sort of almost rather even kind of pointing to really specific issues although the rainbow sign may in general, at least at the

march—the first march in a lot of ways more interested in making a more general statement, I guess.

CB: Yeah, so…

CS: Also, before I forget, something I liked about this: I like the love sign—I just realized I had this and didn't know what to do. But what I like about it is that it's not written right side up. The love thing is kind of like that famous symbol, like at the park in Philly. But "all" is sideways, too, and the result is that you can read it both ways. Like "All love" and "Love all," which, you know, means different things, but I think both kind of speak to what I was trying to say.

CB: What about the criticisms of the march. What have you-what did you hear, and how would you respond to those criticisms?

CS: Yeah, I mean the big one, you know, I'm aware of them. Some criticisms I was aware of, or one I was aware of and didn't actually hear too much of directly, was the-kind of about the pointlessness of it? And the idea that "Oh, but this doesn't really *do* anything. It's not really an action." And I disagree with that pretty significantly. Just because, yeah, the whole spirit of the march even the night before and every time I've gone to a march since, in those moments I've had more hope than I have had since November, really. And also, those are the times that have pushed me to actually call. And just with everything they do and say, Rand Paul and Mitch McConnell, take away my faith that they might actually listen to me on anything, but I do still call Rand Paul, and it's because of those moments that I actually do. And so there is-I wouldn't undercut the actual value of mobilizing people and fostering that community, and fostering the feeling that we are not alone in our mission. The big one that I actually agree with in a lot of ways had to do with intersectionality, and in particular the fact that the most significant or network in the past few years is obviously Black Lives Matter, and I recognize absolutely the problems of white people only marching when, suddenly, issues become relevant to them. I think that is a huge problem. Yeah, I think it's a huge problem. I think it's something that we absolutely have to be aware of. I can't speak for the Women's March as a whole, or the movement as a whole in terms of that awareness, but honestly I think a lot of the ethos of the march had to do with the fact that "well, okay, we've been privileged enough to sit-you know, just kind of sit and do nothing up until now, but this is our reality now and we can't really sit by and say nothing anymore." And so, I think it's absolutely a problem that white people, myself included, did not go to Black Lives Matter marches, but the thing is, you know, from this point, I think while that is a totally valid criticism, I think it's also worth noting that certainly, from this point on, I would. And I had never protested before. But then again, it's kind of how, a week or two later, we went to an impromptu Muslim ban march. And it closed down a mile of the West End, kind of impromptu, just to get our message across. And the very nature of intersectionality is that the privilege people have and the challenges they face, it's not identical from group to group. So I don't-when I say this, I don't mean to equate the experience of being brown or black and being Muslim in America with the experience of being non-Muslim but being black-those are entirely different experiences, and the nature of protesting both things is different. But, you know, whereas in the past, it would have been much easier for me to say, "Well, it doesn't necessarily affect me, and I don't have to be as mad. I don't have to get out in the streets." I'm not Muslim. My family has been in America since, basically, the end of the 19th century, so I'm

about as far as possible from getting deported, but we still all recognize that this is something-we needed to stand up for our fellow Americans in that way, and so we went out and marched. We went out and marched for them. Because again, Muslim Americans were out there marching for us a couple of weeks before. And so, again, I'm saying this, not to try to undercut the criticisms of the Women's March, but I think also that criticism wasn't even so much of the Women's March. And here I'm referring again to the matter of race and the Women's March. I think the criticism wasn't so much of the Women's March itself, so much as maybe a greater atmosphere surrounding protest and middle class white liberality in America. And so I think it's a valid criticism, but I also think that probably, the Women's March did more to make it clear to white liberals that they need to actually mobilize for issues of race. I think it made it clearer to a lot of white liberals than it had been before the Women's March. Maybe I'm being too optimistic there, but I feel like that happened with me anyway.

CB: Yeah, I think that most of us grew up, when we were adults and first kind of becoming cognizant humans, Obama was president. And so, when we could make our own decisions about whether or not to march, it didn't seem as though the issues were that important because Obama was president and, you know, things were okay. And so I think this kind of got us out of our lull.

CS: Yeah. And yeah, well yeah, and I think in general too, Obama wasn't a Hillary Clinton figure. He was a liberal, he was pretty decidedly left on social issues. And so even aside from just having a black president in the White House, I think having someone who did a lot for LGBT rights and who, Deporter-in-Chief as he may have been, he also was clearly more receptive to refugees and the Muslim population in America. And so, on a lot of these issues, I think it was much easier to kind of ignore the opposition in America and within our fellow Americans on the street, on any given day. Yeah, I think you're totally right about that. I'm going to check my phone just to see if Cameron has texted me. [Checks phone]

CB: Well, my last question-

CS: I wasn't pushing you-

CB: No, it's good. The time is fitting really nicely.

CS: Okay. Cool.

CB: Okay, so I've just been asking people to sum up their march experience in two to three sentences. So what are your takeaways?

CS: Whew. I would consider my personality, or my temperament, to be naturally cynical, but constantly looking for the optimistic way out. I kind of expect the worst, but I want so badly for things to go well. And so, of course, expecting the worst in terms of political and social reality in America, for me, that happened on November 8th – I think it was November 8th – yeah. I was about to feel it undercut the severity of it if I could remember [the date]. But that's just who I am. I was having trouble with the optimism. I was having really significant trouble finding the good for some time. I sort of invested in my social infrastructure in the couple of months after the election, but even then it wasn't helping a ton. I didn't have a lot of hope. I think I said this

earlier, but the Women's March gave me more hope than anything else. And honestly, it's been lasting. And this is a lot of associated-it's not just the Women's March. It's a lot of quasi-associated things, like the capital "R" Resistance, or what have you. There are many other factors here, but I think if it weren't for the Women's March, I never would have regained quite the level of hope that I have now that we as Americans can actually listen to each other and learn about each other and work to make America a better place, not just for ourselves and the people who look and act exactly like us, but for people who specifically don't look and act exactly like us. Without the Women's March, I don't think I would be-and I don't think I'm confident that'll happen-but I am confident that we have the tools to make it happen. And the Women's March is really what gave me that confidence.

CB: Okay. Was there anything that I didn't ask that you had planned on answering? Or just anything that you think is still important to say?

CS: No. I've already talked too much. No. That was thorough interview. Yeah, I don't think I had anything else.

CB: Cool. I will stop recording.