

LINDA – Fieldnotes – Thursday, January 24, 2008

Subject: Meeting with Tom  
Location: my office, hallway  
Time: 7:05-8:40

After Tom and I talked about his writing he started talking about CSAs [community-supported agriculture]. Expressing interest, I asked if there was somebody who I could talk with. He talked about drop-off points and my face deflated. He argued that I could see the interactions between people, e.g. they ask how to use a rutabaga. I told him we were looking more for families, how people live, and he argued that food is very important.

82P

I argued that that is only one aspect of people's lives. In our back and forth he mentioned Just Foods, and I talked about the social distance between those who offer services and those who are served, those who want people to do a particular something and those who may not want to follow what an "outsider" wants them to do [I made a skeptical face]. [I may have said way too much; I wish I said that might be helpful, but...] I contrast the "outsider"/"activist" with Haja and Cindy as "grassroots." At some point I tell him that Varenne wants me to do life histories with them.

168P

Tom then suggested that I meet his friend Sonya, the grandmother of DeC\_\_\_, the young man he brought with him to the Harvest Festival, and his friend Loretta. Sonya has a garden, at 124<sup>th</sup> and something. He worried that it was outside of our area and I assured him that we've been working in Haja and Cindy's garden. Loretta has a garden on 126<sup>th</sup> and Madison. He tells me Sonya organized the tenants of a building [her building?]. He said she was without heat for awhile. We considered a list of different places to meet, including TC, the library, a community center, and her apartment, rejecting her apartment since might be "shy" about her apartment. We decided maybe lunch somewhere. Loretta is hard to find, he tells me, has a "street life," with a pushcart. [I don't understand this.]

111P

I realize aloud that Tom had mentioned Sonya before as the friend he had to find by yelling up seven stories because her intercom was broken. I conclude that I didn't follow up with him when he mentioned her to me. He fusses over what to say to her. I tell her to mention me to her, and see if she is interested in meeting me. I tell him he can say I want to do an interview, but not until after we meet. I clarify that I mean that I don't want to do the interview at the first meeting.

He talks about how NPR has some kind of storytelling program that used to be set up at the Studio Museum. You would go in, tell your story, and you would get a CD and the other CD would go to the Library of Congress. He wanted DeC\_\_\_ to go and interview his grandmother. Apparently he was angry with them for not going but also understood. DeC\_\_\_ comes home late.

Sonya is a health aide and money is tight. He said she makes what, \$10 an hour? He mentioned something about dealing with HIV+ people, drug addicts. I say I can ask her

about how she learns these things, how to be safe. He says, and how to raise children. He talks a bit about how difficult life has been for Sonya, how “tragic” but also good. Her daughter, DeC\_\_’s mother, had cancer and didn’t tell them. Apparently she passed. DeC\_\_’s father also passed away.

Somehow we transition from this troubles talk to his work, and say our goodbyes.