

Interviewer: Cristiano Favazza

Interviewee: Retail Worker (local friend who choose to be anonymous)

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Abstract: In this interview the interviewee wishes to remain anonymous. In the interview he will discuss what it is like to be an essential worker in during the COVID-19 pandemic. He works as a retail associate at local hardware store and will talk about what it is like working with customers during the pandemic. As well he will discuss his social life and family life and how it has been affected. In addition will give his views on how the news and media has handled the pandemic and how the government has delt with it. He also goes into detail about how he thinks the virus has affected people as whole specifically the mental affects it has had and will continue to have on people.

CF: All right. Today is Sunday, November 15. The time is 10:12pm. So, we're here today to discuss your experience during Covid-19 pandemic. As of right now, there have been 11.1 million cases and 246,000 deaths. So let's start this off. Um, why don't you start off by telling us a little bit about yourself such as you know, your rath... race, ethnicity, gender.

RW: Um, I am a white male, mid 20s on the younger side, 23 years old. Um, I am a retail associate works full time at a local hardware store still open with full hours during COVID. Yeah, that's the a that's the, the primary position.

CF: All right, well, uh,

RW: We are in the Twin Cities, them being a place that is currently suffering a resurgence, as are many other places, but has handled lockdown procedures and advisory relatively well.

CF: well, when did you first learn about COVID-19? Like, what were your thoughts about it?

RW: Um, it started off in a lot of smaller internet circles regarding global news. Um, regarding the outbreak, initially in Wu Han China, and that was a, that was early. I believe, late February,

early March, very early on. Much, much long. While before it became anything International, it started off as this outbreak within many circles, especially, especially within conspiracy circles, assuming that this was going to be this this world altering thing, which, for once in the blue moon was something that they were actually right about. Um, of course, there was all sorts of things that were thrown around at first about how it spread people, you know, bringing up things about biotech, biomedical and, and toxin laboratories that are in there that were in the city, places that would expermin..ech, experiment with pathogens and the like, of course, there was other things about other medical testing laboratories selling of, you know, test animals and other live specimens or dead specimens to markets. On the side, there's a number of things, but what in the... end seemed to be the most commonly agreed upon to be the confirmed start was lab animals being sold to wet markets that would be then served publicly, leading to lab animals being... being given to the general populace. So I heard about it early on, and personally did not expect it to be as widespread as it has become, but certainly things a lot of things have changed.

CF: All right, yeah, what issues of concerning the most about COVID

RW: Ah, boy... Well, of course, personal mostly mostly familial health, actually, personal health, especially with somebody in my age range, I'm not terribly concerned, my most concern is about it would be would be becoming an asymptomatic carrier that would go on to jeopardize other people's health around me. But first and foremost, of course, is the concern of my family. I have a lot of elderly relatives, um, and other people who have been sick because of course, this does come around flu season as well. But beyond that, my biggest concern has really been the shutdown of standard operating systems throughout the throughout the country as a whole you know, the the the supply chains supply and demand regular business operations, they're are places, hemorrhaging money. Other places are making lots more but my biggest concern is for the actual function of the country because it is a goes without saying it is a dangerous virus, but at the same time, it doesn't need to jeopardize the state of the country to such an extent.

CF: alright. They're all good points. Uh, let's actually go back, you said you have a job. So um, how is how has COVID-19 affected your ability to work or how has is affected your life at your job?

RW: Um, I worked full time prior to COVID breaking out and I have not stopped working full time. Since Then and my I live within walking distance of my workplace and I have worked there for a long period of time. And because we are deemed an essential business and provide an essential service to the areas nearby, we have not had any reduced hours. And contrary to some other places nearby that have been taking large hits, most notably food service restaurants, and the like, having to take the most extreme measures we have had the contrary in while we have taken measures, we don't have the same health standards as others, and we have had a massive increase to business. Um, it goes without saying that at first people most concerned with stockpiling sanitarian medical equipment, of course, the you know, the the the regular toilet paper and hand sanitizers are the first things to go since then being the immediate response. And

then after that, now we're feeling the the late stage reaction of people who have been self isolating and been in quarantine for months now, who are, you know, doing everything around the house, they haven't done for the past 15 years. So in all cases, business has increased compared to and looking directly at numbers compared to last year's numbers at the same time, making immensely more money than than was before. Um, personally, it hasn't really affected me directly other than by, ehh by proxy having to cover more hours and fulfill more duties due to other people being at more health risks. The elderly, workers and Associates at the business, taking leaves, leaves, leaves of absence or otherwise, just stopping working entirely has been the case with some people who get sick mandatorily have to be out for a good period of time before they can even or even supposed to come back into work. All sorts of stuff like that. But all in all, besides the added rush in the stress of the job itself. The the the procedure hasn't changed much it's been the same routine.

CF: Alright, um, well, you did mention earlier that you aren't thrilled with the whole country being shut down. Now you did say that where you work business is going really well. How do you think COVID has affected the economy as a whole?

RW: ahh, It's it is there's no one straightforward answer because in some cases, most notably in like I said, the food industry and food service industry, and in the small business, and less, less thoroughly regulated as say, a franchise or a corporation. Um, they're taking the biggest hits, huge amount of smaller businesses are being absolutely hit almost to, to uncoverable rates, but unrecoverable rates I should say, but at the same time, those key select other industries are for lack of a better term monopolizing on the the the opportunities that are happening, delivery businesses, most notably like food delivery, and grocery delivery, Amazon, to name one another, are making immense amounts of money and certain businesses that are... major suppliers things like for instance, Walmart is the most common one that comes to mind our while they are changing in their operating procedures, the whole as most people know, masks, social distancing, do limited a limited number of people limited time of shopping, that sort of stuff, is um, they are making huge amounts of money. And I think that the in there is a lot of good coming out of it. There's a lot of ingenuity and adaptability that's coming out of a lot of companies a lot of places are using business methods that they wouldn't have otherwise out of necessity, places that would never be doing delivery or non non contact pickup things like that are are cashing in on that and it's it's it's a smart thing to do. But the main issue comes from those businesses that are small enough to not have good procedures like that. I mean, any large company place a fast food,... fast food place has the means and the funds to get masks to everybody get new standardized procedures to everybody. Everybody saw the same strict set of rules and keep things functioning healthfully and safely while operating fine. A small place with say, you know, 10 to 15 employees, small businesses that are just you know, one one building places have almost no method of doing that. They mean the most they can do is look at the model set by other businesses and follow it but when it comes to actual proper response, proper methods of switching over it is extremely difficult for them to, to adapt in the same way that bigger businesses can and really small places, you know, individual locations, family owned businesses, small things like that. Those are just going by the dozen, there's just shutting down every day. It seems at least I you know, I cannot back down, ya know,

CF: it in a way is happening. Yeah,

RW: yeah, you can, I mean, it takes just one trip down through the city to see how many places that were previously operating. And not just like, not, not just like small places that don't didn't do good business, places like bars and restaurants in downtown, downtown where we are, are closed indefinitely, with no set date as to when they're opening, they're not making any money period. Other places that, you know, I can't think of, you know, what any, in particular are just right off the bat, but there are places that are just not, uh, not able to change their their full method of operation to accommodate something like COVID. I mean, certain buildings aren't big enough to accommodate social distancing, certain staff aren't equipped well enough to be able to operate like that. It's, it's there's a lot of issues that those places have come across, and there's really no recovery from them.

CF: No understandable. Um, well, with small businesses and lots of these getting shut down, have you known, anyone who's lost their job because of COVID?

RW: Hmm. Personally, within my own personal life, not lost, there are a number of people that began working a lot more at the store, where those who actually worked second jobs in the restaurant industry, people who are cooks, and waitresses, waiters, servers, bartenders, they, the a they had reduced hours at first and then eventually, later on, most of them ended up quitting those jobs. Though I do know one person, indirectly, a an affiliate of mine, who is in the food service industry in the United Kingdom has been because of their more even even more strict lockdown procedures, especially where this this individual is, I believe in the North Yorkshire area, they have not they have been a restaurant chef for about a little under a decade now. And since the outbreak, they have been completely unable to find any employment that lasts or would provide more than a number of days a week with a very, very inconsistent means of pay. Just lucky enough that they're eligible for benefits and things like that. But but certain people have been completely without work. All right, yeah, no, that

CF: hopefully, your friend in the UK can find something better. Um, let's move on to your family. I you said earlier that you're worried about your family or like elderly in your family that could get sick? Do you live with anyone who is at risk?

RW: Um, the people that I live with aren't immediately at risk, although they are, they are much older and technically much closer to the age range that would be or that is, is noted to be the most susceptible and the most at risk for COVID? Um, I'm fully aware that one main thing about COVID is that there there there it is extremely possible and in certain cases, likely that certain people like myself might become carriers that may not show active signs and symptoms of the virus but carry it nonetheless. And it also isn't that out of the question, considering that I'm in a line of work that that regardless of procedures taken still puts me in close proximity with other people. So having other people around me that are more at risk is one of my major concerns. None of them have become sick or you know, have gotten sick. Um, and none of them have had

any shown any symptoms, from respiratory issues, coughing and the like to loss of senses of smell and taste, to fatigue, to fevers, none of that has come up. But I have less direct relatives who also live nearby that we don't necessarily care for. They still live on their own and are fully capable, but they are in their 80s. Much much older, that have other underlying issues. And I have that we we've we've contacted and been in touch with him, but I haven't seen them in months because I'm in the position that we're in, we don't want to and I in particular don't want to run the risk of exposing anybody in that age range to issues like that. It's a they're the most at risk and some of my other little less connected family members have other underlying issues, health, health issues, and they haven't They've taken the most extreme measures they they haven't been had face to face contact with almost anyone in as long as I can remember in recent history, they have been all self a, self-managed, they by their own avail, but they have, you know, staying inside having people drop stuff off outside and they come out and pick it up later things like that they've been taking extreme measures and it's just the necessity for the people who are at most risk as.

CF: Of course, well has like day to day life in your house been altered, like what you and your family would do, or just activities, you guys would regularly do pre outbreak?

RW: personally no, like I said, my job has stayed the same and has been consistent throughout the last months. And it's it's always working in the evening. And that's remained consistent for a quite a long time. But my my personal relatives, my my family that lives with me, they they have, I suppose they've had their lives the most disrupted My mother is a very social person, and spends a lot of time you know, at events and locations with other people. Um, and there are many people that she hasn't seen in a long long time. And it goes without saying that she like many other people are kind of stir crazy the way things are. Um, my stepfather is retired. So he his his day to day schedule hasn't been particularly disrupted. But the the general psychological toll of much, much less variation in day to day lifestyle, not going to places not doing things that has been a pretty sick and had it has had a pretty significant impact on, um, I'd say, everybody in the family and it's a natural, it's to be expected in a natural side effect that would come with keeping the same routine to such a strict degree in any circumstance. But nonetheless, while it hasn't caused many physical changes beyond you know, the regular remembering instinctively to bring a mask with you, if you any go anywhere outside or keeping to six feet away when you cross somebody on the street. Other than that, it's been mostly just a mental toll that's been taken because of

CF: Uh huh. Yeah, I think a lot of us are feeling that one. Um, well, lighter side. What kind of like leisure activities or just recreational stuff Have you doing? Like, you know, watching shows, playing games, reading a book?

RW: Like most others, Yeah, like most others, there's been a lot more of that lots of, and lots of games, lots of videos, lots of movies, all sorts of stuff like that lots of reading. Another big thing is I personally network with a large number of people from a lot of different particular places

from all around the world. And one thing on a on like you said, a positive note I can say is that COVID has actually brought a lot of people together a lot more. Because while we were close beforehand, while we all kept up with each other, many people have been stuck inside on one hand been stuck inside with let much less people to talk to in person less ability to socialize in person to others, but also they have a lot more woes in their day to day life that they that you know as misery loves company love to share and a lot of camaraderie and kinship has been formed around our all mutual suffering in this event. So it's in a strange mcccobb way it has brought people together a lot.

CF: That's good, yeah. Um, all right, guess then let's uh, move on to your community in the sense like around your neighborhood, or you know, your job and you say you you say you live close to your work. So, how are the people in the town, customers? Have they been handling the outbreak good? Like, are they wearing masks following the rules? Have you met anyone who doesn't want to or claims they don't need to for some reason?

RW: in our community in particular, the response has been, I would say, especially an average has been very, very responsible and, and and sound and there's a large elderly population in the neighborhood and they are very they're very, very, I'm not exactly sure what the best term would be. But but but well minded in well mannered and would none of them none of them act in any rash or extreme way. But if any of them were to be it would be rash and extreme in favor of restrictions and keeping keeping a track on things. Rather than against we would be more we were more likely to to have somebody yell at somebody for not wearing a mask than we would have Have somebody yell at somebody else for making them wear a mask if that makes sense.

CF: Uh huh Yeah.

RW: we haven't I as far back as I can remember, um, while I would have been at the store, I haven't encountered anybody who has become irate or aggressive or angry and combative about being requested to wear a mask. We haven't even had many customers come in without them. And those that do, to the best of my knowledge, usually indicated such quickly and asked to borrow one, or are very, very, very understandable. If we ask them to wait outside there has I have not personally seen any of the more sensationalized negative responses that we've seen, and other places? Um, it's what else what else is there really to say like, and like I said, the neighbor, the neighborhood is, is good at just following procedures to keep their safety in mind because the large demographic within this community is is elderly, and is at risk. And also, yeah, all things considered. Another big factor too, is that the neighborhood is somewhat, I would say close knit. It's not out of the way, or exclusive by any means. But it's distanced enough from the major metropolitan areas in that are that are nearby, both both downtown's are a bit of a ways away. And thus just naturally, then there's only one major street that runs through the neighborhood. And while connected to other other major highways and roadways throughout the, throughout the cities. It's not one of the biggest ones. So naturally, we, the most common people that come through here are people from this neighborhood, and not many others. There's not people who

this is their destination. This is where they're going to it's mostly people traveling to and from in between the downtown's somebody who would be in downtown with this makes like a huge more amount more population density, and people going coming, and just just the just the sheer influx of how many more people it would be a lot harder to manage. And by nature, there would be more, probably more conflict and more issues with that. But that's just speculation I don't, I don't operate or work downtown. And I'm not downtown very often. But I can only imagine what that many more people would inevitably resulted with handling it. So

CF: yeah,

RW: all in a close knit place. And because of that, the reaction has all around been pretty responsible. And another thing that I would like to add to it's, which is a very good thing, and a nice a nice refreshing thing to see from the neighborhood, is that because they are as close knit as they are and familiar with, say the local businesses, ours included, there has been concerted efforts by members of the neighborhood, and the community to specifically cater to and, and continue to, to be patrons of these businesses with the intent of keeping them afloat. Um, a lot of the restaurants in the areas have had to take very serious measures in order to stay open. And the response from the community has been overall very, very positive. They've been giving them lots of business and they've been expressing their concern and helping them out a lot. It's a it's a good thing to see another example of like I say, the the the surrounding overall pandemic, bringing a lot of people together and strengthening a lot of communities in a lot of ways.

CF: Alright, other than your job? Do you participate in any forms of church school or social clubs?

RW: Nope, not really.

CF: A.. alright Uh, yeah,

RW: let me think of any other. Any other instances, like I said, the most of my, my personal social interaction occurs with people indirectly, online by email or other means like that, um, I don't attend I haven't attended school for a number of years. I'm close with people who have and I feel quite sorry for them in the current state of things and a lot of, for a lot of reasons. But personally, I have not been afflicted by by the the, the rules on social distancing, lack of not grouping, not attending large events, things like that. That has not been a huge setback for me.

CF: All right. Yeah. Um, well, has anyone you know, had to do social distancing, or have you yourself had to be isolated. or not, I'm sorry, not social distancing, self isolation?

RW: Oh self-isolation

CF: Yeah. Yeah.

RW: Yes. Um, some of our co-workers have had to take a mandatory leave due to that. Um, I've known a couple of people who have come down with minor sicknesses. Then they of course, would have to get screened for that. I know people indirectly that that are from other countries, one in Colombia, one in Bulgaria and one in the United Kingdom who have not contracted. Well, two of them have contracted COVID although neither are threatened, health wise, is seriously at risk. And others have had their entire their entire workplace switched entirely online. But personally, I have not had to do that I have not had any symptoms or sickness or anything like that. Um, although like I said, I'm I am, I don't put it beyond of a possibility that there is still a chance that I may have contracted it on some level or to some extent, and it just is simply asymptomatic.

CF: All right, hmm. Well, has COVID affected any of your relationships with you know, your family, friends, loved ones.

RW: Um, not in particular, mostly, because the, the a people that I stay as close to the closest with, um, I consider within my, my familial bubble, there's not a large number of them. And those I don't have, we don't have problems with seeing each other in person close up. Um, of course, we haven't had any any large events, we haven't had any, you know, family holidays, um, birthday parties, celebrations and things like that, that we've, of course, kept to a minimum. But personally, it has, it hasn't changed much beyond our composure and behavior outside of our homes and in public, which you know, of, is just the usual being mindful of others staying the mandatory six feet away, or else and masks all that jazz. But otherwise, it's mostly the people around us that I've seen affected the most by that sort of procedure. I mean, I've read, I've read articles and plenty of no shortage of blogs, with people talking about how they how how or how to how to cope with being stuck with your partner or significant other during lockdown and how to how to you know, maintain relationship, calm relationships with your family, throughout lockdown while being you know, being trapped in the same house with them. And it is there are definitely people that are it is taking a severe mental toll. And, and I not to say that it doesn't happen in our in within my family and within the people around us, I've definitely noticed an increase in, in stress, in anxiety and in general irritability. Which is, to be honest, I think that's the symptom of people being stuck with each other for extended periods of time. Unless there are people without any, in the rare instance, where are people with, with with no issues of compatibility with each other at all, which is kind of uncommon, considering the human condition. Things that would otherwise be minor arguments or disputes can turn into very serious matters, leading to a lot of argumentation. And I've seen that and I've heard of it. And thankfully, I've been spared mostly of it.

CF: Well, yeah, it actually was that that was great, because it kind of answered one of my next questions, which was, how do you think COVID is affecting people's, you know, mental and or physical health is being more or less like, probably their body, not the virus? (There is some talking over each other but not too much affect)

RW: I will, I'll be totally honest. Um, I think that the overall psychological toll of this disaster is going to be more long term impactful than the actual virus itself, the virus is undeniably a threat, mostly to people with pre-existing conditions, mostly with, you know, to people who are vulnerable people with respiratory issues, people with, you know, other health complications that compromise their immune system or things like that. It there's a lot of things that make it dangerous, but I think that what is going to be even more harmful is, um, people, especially in this day and age, subject to so much information, much of it negative. I mean, the way the way and the proliferation of social media, of news meet online news media, of people's worlds at this point, almost revolving around reading and hearing about what's happening in the world around them, most of which at this point is negative, combined to the fact that they are cooped up inside their homes, prevented from going out and seeing other people prevented from going into public places. restricted an activity to a huge degree. The toll that that takes on a individual over a period of time is severe. Expand that To a population of the US 3.4... 350, roughly roughly 350 million people is going to be in the it's going to be extremely damaging. It's the the psychological impact of that sort of behavior is a part of a lot of people's concerns. And probably the most just counter argument and opposition to the length, the safety measures that are being taken, honestly, I see, there's a lot of people who are, who are against the amount of measures that are being taken. there's a there's a number of different reasons. Some people don't think that it's a threat, which I don't think is a rational standpoint, personally, but other people are concerned of how damaging is going to be for people to take such extremes to to isolate and keep themselves quarantine. That is it. It takes a psychological toll. It is very serious. And people nowadays are extremely vulnerable to it. So I think it's I think it's gonna be a problem and is a problem currently.

CF: All right, yeah. So um, I believe that too, it's gonna be my myself is currently being mentally affected by this. So

RW: Yep. Yeah,

CF: So I agree with you.

RW: A lot of people are and it doesn't help that, like I said, I'll expand upon the, the the the internet aspect of things right now, even before the pandemic 2020 being what it was, there was a lot of international events that were very sensationalized people, people really highly regarded 2020 as being a champion of absolutely terrible years. We had everything from from wildfires internationally early on to you know, indications would look like we're going to be military

conflicts breaking out again, in the Middle East. There is of course been the the political drama surrounding the presidential election. All of this most people are viewing through social media, online news media and things like that, which I strongly believe in my in my perspective, are very, very sensationalized, very blown up and exacerbated. Specifically, focusing on the negativity of them. You don't hear a lot of good news nowadays.

CF: Yeah, actually, that's a really good transition to the next set of questions,

RW: Shoot.

CF: What have your primary news sources been through the pandemic and have any of them changed. Because said news a news stores failed to a provide the information you wanted, or ignored information you thought needed to be stated?

RW: My news sources have not changed. But that's going to take some elaboration on that part. I do not get news from a particular source. I don't have favorite publications, favorite websites, I have some sources that I frequent more than others, that attempt to be relatively globally objective. But I gather news and have gathered news for the past number of years from a wide variety of international global news agencies, individual agencies specific to certain countries from the United Kingdom, Germany and France, Eastern Europe, Russia, Japan, China, and the Indonesian areas, the the I forgot the the general term for that... Oceania!, that area, a huge variety of news Not to mention over a dozen different and different opinionated news agencies within the US. And I've seen a lot of change and transitioning and method of reporting. But knowing the knowing how news agencies operated ahead of time, really didn't it my perspective of them didn't change much. Beyond how I thought I thought that they were going to act away and they did a lot of agencies from certain pull up with political affinities. Obviously, we'll report certain things and emphasize certain things while opposing ones will do less of that. That's that has been par for the course for the longest time and hasn't changed a bit during the pandemic. Um, news agencies will antagonize each other, and they will focus on information that the other side neglected to do, which goes both ways and will continue to go both ways. Um, all in all, I've found that the overall reports of objective information regarding COVID has been pretty consistent. They have been releasing death numbers, they have been releasing confirmed case numbers they have been releasing statistics about that stuff very consistently. Um, although I am speaking of course, looking specifically at the United States and the United Kingdom. between those two places, they've been pretty consistent about it. But in a lot of cases it's um it's it's, it's To put it bluntly, it's the same shit in a different day. news agencies, taking what lens that they want to on current events and kind of going places with them. It's just another one of those, it's the big thing that is being used as a driving force in a lot of opinionated news media, because there's a lot of places out there that are, if I would name a few, I would say my most primary reliable source on just reporting information would be the Thomson Reuters news agency. They're doing a fantastic job of objectively reporting cases and deaths as they occur. But other ones more common in the United States especially are doing the the usual that they've been

doing and antagonizing others and other pieces of information. And basically, a turning the turning the emergency that is affecting everybody into a another power struggle of one side versus the other, which, of course, it really shouldn't be.

CF: Hmm. Um, well, when you mentioned power struggles or not powers, the what you just said I'm blanking for a second, the media turning people against each other, all that jazz. If we're next question is government. Ah,

RW: Yeah!

CF: so do you think? Well, let's start small, how do you think local leaders from where you're from are handling the pandemic?

RW: I think local leaders are doing the best they can. I think they're really scared though. And if I was in their place, I would be to people like the gove..., for instance, the governor of the place that we are in, um, Governor is a pretty serious position in the grand scheme of things. But depending on current events, a lot of times they aren't that active, the governor will, you will hear hear news of acts being passed of hearings being held of this and that, but a lot of times, unless you're specifically going out of your way to pay attention to the local like state, state and city politics. Um, it's usually not not that big of a thing. But come an event like this. And even a person in a it was like the mayor of a, I won't say a small town because we are a relatively sizable city. But the mayor of a town that otherwise wouldn't have I'm not not to say that they don't have responsibility, but having this much on them is nothing that anyone short of of long standing career politicians and and political figures would have any preparation for leading people in this certain case, they are just as vulnerable as the rest of people. And at least for the first couple months, it seemed like people that were running around with their heads chopped off doing whatever they could to mitigate damage as quickly as possible. I feel sorry for a lot of them, honestly, because they don't know what the hell they're doing. And I can't expect them to because the last time something of the severity happened was probably before any of them were born.

CF: All right, yeah. Um, so we did local, do you think the state governments doing any better probably are the same? (In this Case Minnesota)

RW: A... about the same way when it gets taken up to a state level, it's a it really is hard to say, because speaking from the perspective of somebody living in the state's major metropolitan area, a lot of the activity and the actions that we see attempted to be taken by the state apply to us because we are where the most people are. A lot of the times when the state is passing regulations. On a note, of course, on a statewide basis, we see it the most immediately, because being in the city. That is the place where they have their most concerted efforts. But as you go

outside of the city, the further away from the major metropolitan areas or population is less dense. city centers have a lot less people I'm guaranteed have a stark difference to how things operate. And a lot of the things that the state is attempting to enforce that we are seeing clearly and presently in the big cities is sometimes nowhere to be seen. There are places that I know of up north in our state, where people are still not always required to wear masks when entering buildings, things like that. There are places that still operate that although less common now after the second surge. It's it's really hard to keep that consistent throughout. And it doesn't help that a lot of the states are functioning separate from each other. Once again, politics being as it is with the Difference in leadership, there are places where they weren't taking, they weren't making any moves to reduce hours to enforce masks stuff to, to basically put in place and enforce regulations. I remember being months into our albeit early stages of quarantine and safety procedures in speaking with people, for instance, an example in Arizona, I believe, who actually were surprised when I told them that places were closing early and regulations are being put in place. And they then that means informing them of that was the first time that they actually went and check themselves to see if anything had been changed in their own state government. Which they found out that it had in fact been discussed and talked about, but nothing had been put in place. So they really well, they're, well, certain places are doing their best. They're not very cooperative with each other, at least I shouldn't say cooperative, I should say, I'm on the same page, I guess, places are doing this, or taking action and taking response very inconsistently with each other. And it could be managed a lot better.

CF: You would do anything different. I guess if you were in that position?

RW: No, actually, personally, I don't think I would, because it's I while there's a lot of things that I can criticize the ones that are making these decisions right now. I think that I feel sorry for anybody put in a position of power where they are. It is it is their responsibility. I'm on account of the safety of their own people to enforce rules and prevent them from doing certain things. The government officials right now are in a position where they have to clamp down on activity and they have to enforce things, which in any set of population is going to have a it's going to have its repercussions. And I feel sorry for all those that have to make that decision that that decision, but at the same time, that's what comes of being in a position of power over others is that you're going to have to make decisions for them. And a lot of times those people don't like those decisions.

CF: Yeah. Well, then moving up to the biggest part of the government. How do you think former President Donald Trump handled the pandemic?

RW: You know, I'm gonna go on a limb here and say that he handled it a lot better than he could have all things considered. Because while of course, there is a lot of a lot of talk in the news, especially about how allegedly, he he knew or was informed about the danger of it ahead of time, and he knew he was gonna be worse than then then or he knew that it was gonna be worse than he said it was that kind of stuff. The fact of the matter is right now is that Trump is at least in in

popular mainstream view, the the biggest scapegoat, at the moment as a public figure there is no people aren't shying away from criticizing Donald Trump from anything under the sun. And that hasn't changed since 2016. And the fact of the matter is, is that they were criticizing him for inaction. When thing when things started to heat up, in regards to relations with China, and he was criticized for inactivity, later on, he was criticized for taking too hard of a stance on certain things and not taking hard enough of a stance on others. And the fact of the matter is that he would have been and will be criticized no matter what he does. If he takes too hard of a stance on this pandemic, he will be called authoritarian, he will be called a person who is restricting people of their rights. He is he is a any any number of things that you could say, but if he does the opposite of that he will be called irresponsible and endangering the health and safety of people. The fact of the matter is that a position like the president is, on a level like myself is conceptually is is, is unfathomably high on the responsibility list. And any person who maintains composure, whatever that may be, maintains composure throughout something like a pandemic like Trump did. While he may many people, I'm sure quick to say how many things and what they would do better, he stuck through it and actually had his response. And he took action, you know, no matter what action he would have taken, it would have resulted in people being upset at him because that is the nature of the climate right now. So I will not rip on him as much as some others because I know for a fact that no matter what activity would be taken, it would be viewed as a negative right now. Honestly, there is no right Real good way, a singular good way to handle an incident like this because you are either no matter what you're either skirting between taking too much action, and not taking enough action, where you're on the fine line between not between allowing people to die, or restricting their rights and preventing them from expressing their fundamental human and American rights.

CF: All right, yeah. Um, well, we are close to being done. I got a few more questions for you. But I guess he would the presidency? Um, do you think current President Joe Biden will be most likely facing the same scrutiny? Or do you think he'll be able to handle it better?

RW: I think that Joe Biden is going to take a lot of action..... Be it is an obvious, an obvious method. And obviously clear way of getting a huge amount of support is going to be taking a firm stance, whether I'm not sure firm in which direction but a firm stance on the pandemic changing things up. And I'm sure he's going to garner a lot of support, mostly, will not I shouldn't say mostly, but a large a large amount of that is going to become coming from people who are more or less opposing, to whatever Trump stood for, and want a change of that. The biggest threat that I see from this is hopefully, Biden himself, doesn't focus too much on undoing the previous presidency, he doesn't focus on being a reactionary to the last person. Um, but the way things are, there are, there are so many people that are more anti Trump than they are actually standing for specific values of Joe Biden, and I don't know where it's gonna go, because I think as time goes on, and as Biden takes presidency, and his his politics, his party system, and his methods become clear through the actions that he takes, I think people are slowly going to realize that, that they voted against somebody, not for somebody. (I mumble something) And, and it's I see a lot of I already see a lot of division amongst both political parties currently. And I think that that's only going to be further exacerbated further on down the line.

CF: Yeah, um, those are good points. You know, it's really true when you say, voted for some or voted for or against,

RW: against, against somebody, Yeah

CF: because I mean, most of most of the last months have been, like calling the lesser of the two evils and you're really, in a state of global emergency with a virus that is not something that helps the mental state.

RW: Yeah, it's, it's really, it's really disappointing to see to because there is a huge amount of progress that could be made by these parties. You know, for once, in a blue moon, putting aside political differences in order to, you know, have a case of all of these sides working together for the good of the American people... surpassing and, and, and sending above the strict political lines of the right versus left dichotomy. But as we've seen, people that have either pandemic, excuse me, the pandemic has almost become second rate to the election cycle. And everything was focusing on. just not anything But Trump. And I think that I while I don't disagree with the people that hold that position, and I can fully understand why I think that it's an unhealthy mentality when there are bigger problems at hand, there is bigger things and people stuck, stuck in the left right dichotomy of politics, who can't get over there being people who disagree with them are is really one of the biggest threats to things the way things are now people are really angry. And when people are angry, they get stupid, and they're making a lot of stupid decisions.

CF: All right, um, well, wrapping up but a last little bit here is how do you think the future will be now? Like moving forward? I say we get a vaccine say there's a cure. After the world is experienced this, all of it with the masks, the self-isolation, social distancing, a grand fear, just around every corner. What do you think the rest of the world's gonna be like after this?

RW: Well, I have a, a outcome that I can hope to see and an outcome that I worry that we'll see and what I hope to see is after that, Be the initial shock of this taking place that the standard bare minimum procedures to operate become become the mainstream when when the masks and the standing apart from people become regularities. After that things can other things can slowly acclimate back businesses can accommodate that things can measures can be taken, for instance, having spent some time in Japan. And this was a number of months, actually, a month and immediately prior to the outbreak occurring in the first place. I saw a custom that was very much conducting yourself safely and healthily in public, people hardly bunched up too close to each other, except when in certain trends, masks were commonplace. And everything functioned perfectly fine. These none of these things were hindrances, none of these things prevented businesses from from running in from the whole city and the country from running. And if that could become standardized elsewhere, then, you know, it is not out of the question that things would become at least a semblance of going back to normal. But the fear that I have is that it is not going to be a gradual process, it's not going to be something that gets eased into, there's

going to be a harsh response. And I've seen it in other places already, police enforcement of, of quarantine and isolation people, people being asked by the police to go inside and not leave their houses has been seen in the UK, and in European countries, to some extent, very minor extent here. But once that behavior, and if that behavior becomes or that that I should say that methodology becomes more common, where we get closer to the the fear, the fear of the people who are opposed to this measure these measures being taken, which is overarching government control, and restrictions on people that pandemic or not, if you have armed people in the streets, keeping people from going out and telling people to stay in and arresting people for taking certain actions, arresting people for being in groups, that is immediately going to sow discord, any population. And I have this feeling that there's going to be a harder stance taken before there's a softer stance taken. And that is going to lead to disturbances is going to lead to more unrest and more more more civil. unhappiness in general. And I think that we're going to see that personally before we see a just a overall positive increase. And we've seen it in other places, footage out of other countries, China included have has been, in some cases terrifying, seeing the the militarized response to this. And I will make a comment saying that now as it stands officially, China's infection count has Jurassic we lowered to almost none increasing daily in terms of contracted cases. And I don't I don't actually know, off the top of my head when the last time they had a death was when they had a death officially related to COVID. And that raises more questions and answers because I can only imagine the level of enforcement where that would be required to steeply decrease something that that seriously, you would, you would have to have almost total military or police control of cities to cause something to your to stop something from spreading that extremely. And that's what I fear of hope, hopefully does not come here. In America, of course, there's less of an affinity for that sort of mentality and will obviously cause pushback as soon as many things do. But America has been volatile, as we've seen in past months and in past years. And it is not going to shy away from that. And I don't think that it's out of the question that that will be the reaction to more extreme steps further down the way.

CF: All right, well, um, I feel like this interview went pretty well, we got a lot of good information for the archive. Um, so anything else you'd like to say at all?

RW: I think that's, uh, I think that can just about cover it. Um, yeah, that's that is that is my perspective on the way things have been happening. Of course, there are many different people who view it many different ways. But overall, that is my, my subjective take on this whole thing.

CF: All right, well, this is been Cristiano Favazza. from University of Wisconsin Eau Claire. Our special guest here is chosen to remain anonymous, so their name will not be given. Um, thank you very much. for providing your input to the (University) archive, the Chippewa Valley and the Journal of Plague Year will be very happy to have this information.

RW: happy to oblige you.

CF: Alright

