

Transcript of Interview with Liana Smith and John Peyton

Interviewee: Liana Smith

Interviewer: John Peyton

Date: 2021/04/14

Location (Interviewee): Palmyra, Pennsylvania

Location (Interviewer): Indianapolis, Indiana

Transcriber: John Peyton

Abstract: Liana Smith describes how COVID-19 affected her life, family, work, and social situation in her hometown of Palmyra, Pennsylvania. She also discusses difficulties with her coworkers and others about vaccine denial and conflicts over mask-wearing.

John Peyton: All right. So Joanna is recording right now. So let's start this. We are recording. My name is John Peyton and I am here with Liana Smith and Joanna Reese. The date is 4/14 2021 the time is 3:19. Joanna and I are in Indianapolis, Indiana. And Leanna is in Palmyra, Pennsylvania. Liana I briefly, I want to briefly review the informed consent and deed of gifts document that you signed. This interview is for the COVID-19 oral history project which is associated with the Journal of the Plague Year: A COVID-19 archive. The COVID-19 Oral History Project is a rapid response oral history focused on archiving the lived experience of the COVID-19 epidemic. We have designed this project so that professional researchers and the broader public can create and upload their oral histories to our open access and open source database. This study will help us collect narratives and understandings about COVID-19 as well as help us better understand the impacts of the pandemic over time. The recordings demographic information and the verbatim transcripts will be deposited in the Journal of the Plague Year: A COVID-19 Archive and the Indiana University Library System for the use of researchers and the general public. You have any questions about the project that I can answer?

Liana Smith: Nope.

John Peyton: Okay. Yeah, and I'm just reading through this. So taking part in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part or you may leave the study at any time, leaving the study will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. Your decision whether or not to participate in this study will not affect your current or future relations with Indiana University IUPUI or the IUPUI UI Arts and Humanities Institute. Participating in this project means that your interviews will be recorded and digital video and/or audio format and may be transcribed. The recordings and possible transcriptions of my interview copies of any supplementary documents or additional photos that you wish to share. And the informed consent and deed of gift may be deposited in the Journal of the Plague Year, a COVID-19 Archive and the Indiana University Library System and will be available to both researchers and the general public. Your name and other means of identification will not be confidential. Do you have any questions?

Liana Smith: Nope.

John Peyton: Okay. In addition to your sign document, would you please offer a verbal confirmation that you understand and agree to these terms?

Liana Smith: I understand and I agree.

John Peyton: Okay. I am also asking that you verbally confirm that you have agreed that your interview will be made available under the following license. One Creative Commons Attribution Noncommercial share alike 4.0 International and to the COVID-19 oral history project, the Journal of the plague year a COVID-19. archive and the trustees of Indiana University acting through its agents employees or Representatives has an unlimited right to reproduce, use exhibit display perform broadcast create derivative works from and distribute the oral history materials in any manner or media now existing or hereafter developed and perpetuity throughout the world. I agree that the oral history materials may be used by the voices from the waterways and IU including its assignees. It's a science and transferees for any purpose including but not limited to marketing, advertising, publicity, or other promotional purposes. I agree that I you will have final editorial authority over the use of the oral history materials and I waive any right to inspect or approve of any future use of the oral history materials. Moreover, I agree that the public has the right to use the materials under the Fair Use us copyright laws section 107 of the US Copyright Act. Do you agree?

Liana Smith: I agree.

John Peyton: Finally, I want to ask for a verbal confirmation that you have agreed that your interviewee will be made available to the general or to the public immediately. Do you agree?

Liana Smith: I agree.

John Peyton: Okay. So, we're gonna, we'll start off with some with some background questions. I know that we talked about some of this stuff in our pre interview, and also some of the stuff that your friend Zoe shared with me. What are some of the primary things that you do, just on a daily basis?

Liana Smith: Well, I'm a full-time student at Harrisburg Area Community College. So currently, that's fully virtual full online. I also provide in-home childcare, for a family in the next town over as well as elder care for a family down the street for me. So on any given day, I'm either waking up and going to work right away, or I have class and then I'm going to work.

John Peyton: But all these activities are pretty local then, right?

Liana Smith: Yeah.

John Peyton: Ok. Ok. Um, and, and, yeah, so I know you live in Palmyra, Pennsylvania. What's it like to live there? What's the community life like there?

Liana Smith: Oh, the area that I live in. It's a pretty close-knit community. Now granted, I do live very, very close to my family. on my father's side. We're talking within a half a mile from my paternal grandparents and uncles and their families. So that plays into the close-knit community that we have. If your typical community. I live right by an elementary school, so the average age of my area has dropped significantly in the past couple of years. So there are definitely more families and more children, young families in the area. So the dynamic has changed a little bit. But yeah, we all try to help out help each other out and just be neighborly.

John Peyton: Yeah. Is it pretty rural?

Liana Smith: Not super rural. But it's more rural than it is even suburban.

John Peyton: Okay. Okay, cool. So we'll get a little bit to the COVID pandemic. So when you first learned about COVID-19, you know, what were your initial thoughts about it? And then I guess the second part of that question is, how have your thoughts really changed since you first found out about it?

Liana Smith: Well, definitely at first, because I was still living in Illinois at the time that the pandemic started. And at the time, I was traveling a lot, so it was a slight concern for me. But I'm the type of person who just kind of uses humor to cope with everyday stress, so I would make jokes about it. I guess my initial thoughts were very similar to everyone else's that, oh, it's just gonna come and it's going to go and it's not gonna, it's not going to affect us. Like the Ebola outbreak back, what was it last decade or the decade before?

John Peyton: It was last decade.

Liana Smith: Yeah. But definitely my my thoughts have definitely changed. They changed pretty darn quickly, from when everything shut down on March 13, to now even from March 13 to when I came home, so I came home, April 1st of last year. And even traveling home because I drove a half friend Zoe actually drive me halfway to Ohio, where my brother picked me out because he was staying with a friend in Pittsburgh. So it was a pretty close drive for him. But then when I came home, I wanted to isolate myself. Just because traveling across state lines. It was very, because we didn't know what was going on. My family definitely thought that was a little bit overboard. Now definitely, if I had done it now, it wouldn't have been considered overboard. It would have been Yes, absolutely do that get tested, and stuff like that. And then once once the mass mandate came into play, it again changed very quickly. I still remember when we all started wearing masks. It's like a vague memory. It's a fuzzy memory in my head now but my parents owned a small business and so they had friends who were making them cloth masks to wear when they were working, and I remember my mom handed me one she is wear this when you go out. And my collection of masks has grown exponentially since then. But yeah, I think once once mask wearing began, that altered reality yet again. But now we're, what 13 months out. And it's just kind of it's, it's a part of my everyday life. Like, I keep masks in my car. I keep masks on my key chain like COVID has become such a reality. And just such that it just it lives rent free in my head. Just the constant threat lives rent free.

John Peyton: Yeah. Yeah. So you mentioned Zoe. Is this the same Zoe that drove you back?

Liana Smith: Yes. Yes. It's the same that Zoe.

John Peyton: Okay, and where did you travel? I didn't get that.

Liana Smith: We traveled from Elgin, Illinois, which is a suburb of Chicago. It's about 45 minutes from Chicago. And then my brother met us right outside of Akron, Ohio.

John Peyton: Okay, so you didn't like go outside of like the country or anything?

Liana Smith: No, no.

John Peyton: Okay. Yeah, I bet that was probably pretty stressful, though.

Liana Smith: It was, yeah, I had to basically load up my life in suitcases and even then I still had belongings still in Illinois. Which I have since received, but.

John Peyton: Alright, so here's another question, what issues have what is yours I've really most concerned you about this pandemic? And how those, I guess maybe how those concerns changed over time as well.

Liana Smith: Ultimately, it's just the fact that I've become so aware that there are some people who don't care about the health and well-being of others. I, myself personally, was verbally accosted at the liquor store, because a man came in and wasn't wearing a mask. And the employees told him "sir, you need to wear a mask." And he came well within two feet of my person. And I said, "Sir, we're in a pandemic, you need to put on a mask." And he swore at me, and I was literally shaking.

John Peyton: Yeah. That's not cool, at all.

Liana Smith: It's just the lack of concern for other people. And I see it, I hear it from my parents, I hear it from my sister, because they all work in customer relations where you have people who put up a fuss over it. And so that's really become a very disheartening fact for me. And so that's, yeah, that's, that's my main concern. And that's the main realization that I've made during all this. But I've also realized how important it is to have connections with others, whether it's virtual or physical connections. And technology has played a huge part in that. My niece was born last February. So being able to for my parents, especially to be able to see her through FaceTime or Zoom, what or what have you has been really important. So just the importance of connections, and interpersonal relationships.

John Peyton: Yeah. And, and yeah, we will, we will actually get in a little bit more to that as well. And I mean, other than that one experience traveling at the beginning of the pandemic, have you done any more traveling within the last, you know, 12 or so months, really?

Liana Smith: Not really. Now, I'm trying to think like, where the furthest I've gone is, and I think it's like, an hour or so. I have done some traveling with one of my jobs. My uncle runs a food truck. He runs a nonprofit and operates food truck as a source of income. So he and I have schlepped around the state. But I don't think I've gone more than an hour and a half, two hours from my, my home base, if you will.

John Peyton: Yeah. So yeah, we can get into family and household a little bit right now since since you were kind of alluding to that. How has COVID-19, how's it kind of you know, affected your day to day activities, you know, just outside of work, you know, like, in your household with your friends, all of that.

Liana Smith: I've said it before to my friends. I love doing karaoke. And like, before, the pandemic started, before I moved out to Illinois, I was going to karaoke at one particular bar in Hershey, every Thursday, religiously, religiously. Whether or not I would sing was another thing. And I really really miss that. I missed that environment. I miss the relationships that I need with the staff there. Because I was a regular customer, I had been working in retail, and I would close that store and then go over every Thursday. So, oh that that's one thing that change, I came home and I couldn't go to karaoke, and it made me really sad.

John Peyton: Just getting up on stage, I feel you there. I kind of like that. I like going to karaoke bars, too, so.

Liana Smith: And just like visiting with my friends, I have a friend who's getting married and in September and I'm one of her bridesmaids and like we haven't been able to like be in person together. Like she went to buy her wedding dress the other week. And it was really hard for all of us not being

able to be there in person and be present in person. But again, like having the technology and be able to FaceTime and see it. It was nice, it would have been much nicer to be there in person. So, it's definitely changed the way that we do that. And the way that we hang out because she she's my best friend. I've known her since I was seven years old. And prior to COVID we would go over to her mom's house and we would play games and we would drink and we would eat so definitely the in-person interpersonal dynamics have massively shifted.

John Peyton: Yeah. And and can you kind of say that just about how you associate and communicate, you know, also with your family and, and friends, other than the ones that you've kind of mentioned? Is well as there are a lot more Zoom and all that stuff now, even with family?

Liana Smith: Yeah. Now, my grandparents, I'm fully vaccinated now as of last week, and so are my grandparents, who live just down the road now. Last summer, I was doing a lot of work on their property, I was helping my grandmother with her flower beds in her gardens. because growing up, she was so passionate about them and they're her pride and joy. And as she's gotten older, she's not able to do that. So obviously, like I would wear a mask when I was around them. They don't super understand technology. They're both well into their 80s. So technology is a little difficult for them. But yeah, I do a lot of texting with my family phone calls. With my other friends are you we use Discord a lot. So we'll voice chat we'll video chat with that. And then now with the development of like, group watching with Netflix and Hulu and Disney and stuff like that. Being able to watch movies with friends. That's been really nice. So the technology is there and the technology is very helpful. I just miss being able to like be there in person and like do it in person.

John Peyton: Yeah. So I mean, would you say that that's definitely kind of the biggest challenge that you've faced during this whole pandemic?

Liana Smith: Yeah, so I I'm an introvert by nature. It takes a whole lot of energy for me to like go out. Um, but yeah, that's that's mainly been the whole challenge and like now that I'm vaccinated, and like other adults in Pennsylvania are working are now eligible, like is going to be hugely tempting to go out with my friends again. But yeah, the technology, it's great. It works really well. And but yeah, it's it's difficult when all you see is your friends through the screen.

John Peyton: Yeah, yeah. And, you know, I think that's definitely something that, you know, we all can relate to, you know, in one way or another. So, what have you done for fun? I know that you said that you like karaoke? But yeah, like what are you doing for fun right now, like, with COVID? Or what have you done, I should say?

Liana Smith: Well, with my friends, we play Jackbox a lot. Jackbox games. Every once in a while, we'll play Among Us. I just started playing Animal Crossing, too. So a lot of video games and that kind of stuff. Especially throughout through the colder months, because it gets really cold here. So you can't really do much outside. Yeah. But trying to keep those interactions is really important than not just, like mindlessly playing together. I think. I think now the time that I spend with people, whether it's through a screen or in person, I have much more there's there's much more of an intention to and it's more intentional, to be there and actually, like be there in mind and body instead of just being physically there and then mind off somewhere else.

John Peyton: Yeah, yeah. I mean, yeah, it does definitely change the way that you kind of looked at those, you know, face to face interactions beforehand, as opposed to now so. All right, oh, we're gonna add a little bit to, to your community, specifically. So, you know, how, I guess how specifically has the COVID-19 outbreak affected your community in Palmyra, Pennsylvania?

Liana Smith: That's actually a very excellent question. Um, I definitely think that it's forced people to be out of their homes and walking and just being in the community, even though they can't be in community with others. There are times where I'll get like my folding chair, and I'll go and I'll sit in our front yard, and my neighbors across the street will be in their front yard, and we'll just be talking back and forth across the road. But I don't, I don't really know. I mean, I guess I could think of it in terms of like, my church community as well. Because COVID hit that pretty hard. Um, there were quite a few members of my church who were hospitalized with COVID. None of them died, thank the Lord. But that was really difficult because those are people I've known pretty near my whole life. I'm sorry, that train of thought just like stopped right there. But I don't know. I unfortunately, have remained slightly removed from my physical community, just because like I was gone for a year and so many things changed while I was gone, and even though I've been home for over a year now, I still feel like I'm catching up on things. Yeah.

John Peyton: Yeah, that was actually part of my next question. I mean, so you've made it very clear that you kind of want to flatten that curve by self-isolation. What about your friends, your family, and the community? How have they responded to those calls to self-isolate, and flatten that curve?

Liana Smith: Um, my family has been pretty good about it, most of my friends have, as well. Some of them, some of the people in my life haven't been as good at it. And I've made it very clear to them that it makes me very uncomfortable being around them. And so that's definitely caused tension in those relationships. And I fear that once all is said and done, though, I may have lost some relationships, but when, like, in the grand scheme of things, I would rather keep myself and my community safe than please one or two people. Um, but in my, like, direct physical community, from what I've seen people have been very good about social distancing, I will say that, on Superbowl Sunday, I was driving down a street here, parallel to mine, and there were people having a Super Bowl party. And that just that made me incredibly mad, or like, knock on their door be like, what are you doing? No, no.

John Peyton: Did you?

Liana Smith: No I didn't. I'm not that bold. I'm not that bold. But I think in terms of like Palmyra community as a whole, we've been doing okay. We haven't had any major outbreaks that I know of, particularly in the schools. The school district that I live in, it's still relatively small, but it's growing year by year. And I think that there's still one elementary school that has yet to go full virtual for any period of time. I know, the high school, middle school, and three out of the four elementary schools have all gone virtual for a period of time. But yeah, I don't really recall any massive outbreaks within my area, and within my direct community. But unfortunately, you do have those people who are like, I'm not going to wear a mask like that gentleman at the liquor store. And as much as the little portion of my brain says, just fight them, just yell at them, try to branch their attention, how selfish they're being the like, the bigger part of my brain is like, you don't want to die today. You don't want to get in a physical fight with someone over a piece of cloth, even though it's hugely important.

John Peyton: Yeah, and, you know, just to comment on that, it's, I think it's just amazing how the concept of wearing a mask has become so politicized.

Liana Smith: Yeah.

John Peyton: You know, and I mean, almost to the point, you know, they say, don't judge a book by its cover. But, you know, you can kind of almost kind of tell somebody's politics, you know, by the fact that they're willing to put up a fight and not wear a mask. That's, that's something that I've kind of noticed a little bit.

Liana Smith: Yeah, one of my favorite stories. So I have been accosted many times, because I live in a fairly red area and I don't want to politicize it, but I do. And I had someone mutter as they walked past me sometime in the store, way to be an effing sheep. And let me tell you, I turned around and I bleated at them like a sheep. I looked them dead in the eye and I just went baaah, and walked away and they were so baffled. They were so baffled, because I'd rather be a sheep than a wolf in sheep's skin.

John Peyton: Yeah, that's a good analogy. I actually like that. So all right. Um, we've gotten into a lot of the relationship questions. I mean, it seems like it definitely has taken its toll, you know, on your relationships with your family. You've grown a little bit more distant from, from what you're telling me from some of your friends, especially the ones that want to hang out all the time. And you're being a little bit more cautious, more willing to self-isolate. So let's get a little bit into what's the next thing employment? Yeah, let's, let's get a little bit more into that. I know that I know that you're a full-time student. And I remember you telling me that you also that you also work for a landscaping company? Yeah. What's the name of that company? I don't think I got the right name of that when we...

Liana Smith: Oh I don't think I gave you the right name of that one. Ah, so it's Greenscapes Garden and Lawn.

John Peyton: Greenscapes Garden and Lawn.

Liana Smith: Yes.

John Peyton: So um, in, you know, in relation to, I guess, you know, working outside, which is, you know, obviously, what you would be doing there, how is How is COVID affected your job doing that?

Liana Smith: It hasn't really affected it. Now, last summer, I did get into a bit of a tiff with my one coworker, because she, she's a bit of a conspiracy theorist, I'll say. She's like, I'm not gonna get the vaccine. They're not gonna chip me da da da da. And I just kind of looked at her. I was like, okay, okay. You don't want them to track you. Yet you drive a car, you've registered with the state, you have a state issued driver's license, and like all of these other things, and she didn't really like that. So we just kind of dropped the subject. But yeah, it hasn't changed really, because like you said, we do work outside and like, from what I've seen, it's highly unlikely for COVID to be transmitted when you're outside. However, being in a vehicle with other people is a little nerve wracking. Um, so I think I think this year, with like, new variants I might discuss with my boss like, hey, not super comfortable being in a vehicle with someone who I know isn't taking this seriously. And like, my boss is spectacular. He is an amazing, amazing man. He has been taking all the safety precautions possible. So I don't think, I don't think that will be an issue. Because he wants to keep because employees safe so we can continue working. I definitely think that people are more appreciative of the work we do now because they're

home more. So they can see it more than they actually. We've had people say, Oh, this year more than anything, I've noticed, like how hard you guys work. Um, but like, I'm not going to be starting up with them for another month or so. Just because school. But yeah. Working in landscaping is one of the jobs that actually offers a little bit of job security, even in the midst of a global pandemic.

John Peyton: Yeah. So basically like your employment status working throughout this pandemic really hasn't changed, as opposed to, you know, a lot of people your age, or even a little younger, that are working in restaurants, for example.

Liana Smith: Yeah.

John Peyton: Yeah, it's definitely, it's definitely a big deal. My twin sister works at a spa at a four-star hotel in Hershey and her like.....when we have big spikes, like we did after the holidays, it's...it's a gamble. It's a gamble with that. It's a huge gamble. And I yeah, I know a lot of people who have lost their jobs or had to go on unemployment even for a short amount of time due to their jobs closing. So yeah, I definitely...I definitely am very, very blessed to have sort of a constant employment status. There was a little bit there in December where I wasn't working because the family that I provide childcare for, their eldest daughter tested positive for COVID and she was very ill. She didn't have to go to the hospital, but she was she was pretty sick. And I've had mano before so I have nothing but empathy for that. Even though it's very different, but I understand what it's like to be fighting a viral infection. That just wrecks you.

John Peyton: What about your family's business? How, how has that faired during the, during the pandemic?

Liana Smith: They have actually done incredibly well. So they...at the beginning, they lost a whole bunch of their wholesale accounts due to the shutting down of restaurants. So that was that was really scary. But their retail business has increased to pick up that slack now, and even now, a year later, they're still, they're still doing exponentially more retail than they have in past years. It was really funny. So my parents own a bakery. And so back when everyone was like, I'm gonna make bread. And the first thing that they start with is sourdough. And it took years for my parents to perfect their sourdough recipe. So their customers would come to them with questions about sourdough, and they would just laugh. They would just laugh. They'd be like, you do realize we sell it for five bucks. Five bucks a loaf. And like, we do all the work for you. Yeah, but they have an incredibly, incredibly loyal customer base. And their wholesale accounts are picking up now. Again, they have been for a couple months. So yeah, but in terms of operating a small business during a massively deadly global pandemic, they're not doing too shabby, which, which is truly a blessing to be able to say.

John Peyton: I guess that in mind, I mean, would you would you say that, you know, that more support needs to be provided to these local businesses, and, you know, to people, you know, that might have kids that that might not be able to, you know, to take care of them—kids that might have medical issues or medical issues of their own? You know, I guess, would you say that, that, more support needs to be provided in those areas, as opposed to other? Like, what are your thoughts on that would you say?

Liana Smith: Oh, definitely, definitely, I am all for people supporting their local businesses, and local small businesses. Now, when the PPP loans to the paycheck Protection Program... is that it? When those first came out, and so much of them were going to the large corporations. It really, it really stressed this

house out. Because, yeah, you have to pay your employees. If you want to operate a business, you have to be able to pay your employees. And just the hoops that needed to be jumped through in order for them to get access to that government funding was just obnoxious. It was a noxious. Because like, yeah, small business that I would support a small business over a corporation any day.

John Peyton: Yeah. Yeah, that's like, my, it's like, my mom always told me growing up, you know, support your local businesses. So I'm right on board there. And, you know, and we have seen a lot of, you know, these big corporations, you know, that are being given a lot more support, that have gotten a lot more support, you know. Things are kind of starting to change now, I think with the new administration. But yeah, I, the last guy that I interviewed, he said that, you know, he said the same thing that you're saying, you know, that that small businesses, they're having to jump through a lot more loops to get that badly needed support.

Liana Smith: Yeah. And in regards to what he said about families with children. Yes. Yes, it is so difficult, right now for families to find reliable childcare and I've heard it many times from many people. I am someone who I take the health of myself less seriously than I do the health of those around me. So I, when I'm thinking about doing something, I think about how is this going to affect the children that I watch, the elderly woman that I care for. How is this decision going to how could this is potentially impact them? Now, a couple of weeks ago, my family was exposed. I was the only one who wasn't directly exposed. So I was the only one who was allowed to leave my house. But I was still not going to work until that 10 day quarantine was over. And then one of the children that I watch was not feeling well. And she got a strep test and a COVID test this, she's a carrier of strep. Now, so that came back positive because it will always. But I lost sleep over the idea that I could have potentially brought COVID back into their house. Thank the Lord Almighty, I didn't. But I have heard so many people say, I had to cut my hours at work, I had to stop working in order to care for my child, because I don't trust anyone. And so people are having to choose between working and providing for their family, or caring for their family. And it's an incredibly unfair decision for someone to have to make. So I think if there was definitely more support through the government, like what other countries have been doing with providing, like either bi-weekly, or monthly stipend from the government for basic human functioning, and basic family operations. So I definitely see how the lack of that support, not financial support from my own government here in the U.S., I can see how that is negatively affected so many.

John Peyton: I agree.

Liana Smith: If I could care for all of the children, I would but the four that I deal with three days a week is enough for me right now.

John Peyton: Yeah, yeah. No, I, I without getting too much into my politics. Yes. I wholeheartedly agree. So you did mention that, that COVID has had a negative impact on the employment of some of the people that you know. Can you get a little bit more into that?

Liana Smith: Um, my, my sister, my twin sister, like I said, she works at a spa. And for a while they were shut down and she was like, I have no money. Now, luckily, we live with our parents. Um, they call us their genetic squatters. Fair enough. So she's had periods where she wasn't working. My partner, my boyfriend is still out of a job. He's still trying to find a job. And he's been, he's been out of out of a job for

months. Um, luckily, though, he's also working for his parents, or not working, living with his parents. But that's just one case. And then my best friend, as I mentioned earlier, she's a massage therapist. And they had to close down for a while. And so that was very stressful on her and her fiancé, and it's still stressful for her even though they're back up and operating. Because they'll have clients who don't want to wear a mask. I definitely think that my friends from my, I don't know, generation, if you will, definitely have a different perspective on it than others.

John Peyton: Like an older generation, you would say?

Liana Smith: I guess. I don't know. Am I old? Don't ask because I'm a nanny!

John Peyton: I mean, yeah, no, I'm 27. So I'm older than you. And I think you mentioned that you're 22. So I mean, you know, we're millennials essentially. So you know, perhaps like a baby boomer generation is what you're saying?

No, I mean, like my friends within my own generation. So I identify as as a zillennial, if you will. I was born in 1998. So I identify with some of the factors that identify people as a millennial. And I identify also with Generation Z. But yeah, the others in my life who were born within the same time as me, a lot of them are like...I don't understand why people can't just stay home.

John Peyton: Yeah.

Liana Smith: Because like, whether they're working in the workforce, or they're in school, their lives have been turned on their heads, they're not able to graduate on time, they're not able to get jobs. It's, it's incredibly stressful. And just like, the financial distress that I've witnessed from my peers, makes me very upset. But then I also have to remember that I'm in the same boat as them, so.

John Peyton: That makes sense. So we'll get on a little bit to health here, based off of some of your other answers. You have not had COVID, correct?

Liana Smith: Not that I know of.

John Peyton: Ok.

Liana Smith: I have not knowingly tested positive for COVID.

John Peyton: Well, because sometimes it's a little murky, where, you know, they might have gotten it early, before we even knew what it was with some people. That's the way it is with some of my friends. And, um, and yeah, you know, you have mentioned that, you know, people that have gotten it. So in what ways generally do you think that COVID is just affecting people's mental, and also physical health? I know that you've talked about the isolation, mainly, but are there other things that you could think of?

Liana Smith: In regards to the mental health so the young lady in the family that I nanny for she her anxiety about like going to school has gotten to the point where she's all virtual. She attends all of our classes through Zoom, because her anxiety has gotten so bad, that she has a hard time leaving, leaving her home. And that to me, is very concerning because she's, she's young. She's 16. And so, to see her be fearful of going and interacting with her peers, it's very hard for me to watch. But others that I know, there's a gentleman from my church who's still having residual effects from COVID, physical residual effects. He has been in and out of the hospital multiple times since he was first admitted and

discharged, and he was on a ventilator for I think, 36 hours while he was in the hospital. So that in and of itself is incredibly traumatizing. Yeah, but I definitely think that COVID is making people stop and think more about how they're taking care of their mental health and how they're addressing that.

John Peyton: Alright, um, we're gonna get in a little bit to news. So based off of some of the stuff that you've said, and I'm kind of on the same page as you. You know, we're, we're a little bit more liberal, I guess you could say. So, what have been your primary sources of news throughout the pandemic?

Liana Smith: My primary sources of news on any given day is NPR. I grew up listening to NPR. I listen to it fairly religiously. So NPR and the BBC, mainly are two, are my two primary sources of information. I also do enjoy kind of learning more about news stories from like the late-night hosts who cover them, just because like everything so terrible all the time. You just need those jokes thrown in there to kind of lighten the mood, and I will live in that's a privilege to have the ability to kind of find, find the...like create space to laugh.

John Peyton: Yeah. How have your...I mean, have your news sources changed throughout the pandemic or how have they?

Liana Smith: They haven't.

John Peyton: Oh, they really haven't?

Liana Smith: They really haven't changed at all. If anything, I've kind of expanded a little bit to kind of broaden my horizons. Just a little bit. Like I'll read the Wall Street Journal every once in a while, but mainly it is NPR and the BBC. Just because I know they're...now NPR, I will admit is slightly left leaning. Just a little bit. Like, here's center and NPR's like there. So I do try to like, analyze the news from kind of both sides of just adjacent to center. Just so I can kind of get my story straight in my mind. But yeah, my news sources haven't changed much at all, if any.

John Peyton: Yeah, so. So you really, you really don't watch you know, MSNBC or CNN very religiously?

Liana Smith: Not, not really? No. I mean, occasionally, occasionally, I will. Watch an Anderson Cooper clip, stuff like that. But when I'm going for like a new source, I want just the facts. Like, I don't want to know, anyone's opinions about it. Like if something terrible happens, I just want to know, something terrible happened. I don't want to know how the reporter feels about the terrible thing. In that moment. I just want to know what happened, how it happened. And what is going to happen following up.

Yeah. That makes sense. Because yeah, I mean, it's, it's, it's very...even from caster to caster with these national news networks, be whether they're conservative or liberal news networks, you know, you see a very wide variety in that political spectrum, even from caster to caster and what is said, I would say,

Liana Smith: Yeah, and when you go for just a straight shoot, bull's eye "what's going on," you don't have people playing the blame game. Because that's the last thing I need in my scope of thought is who is at fault. Because if say, like a factory exploded, I don't care whose fault it was. I want to know what happened. What is going on? And the efforts that are going to be put into place and taken following. I don't want to think about whose fault it is.

John Peyton: Yeah. And then another question. Are there any important issues that, that your sources of news, you know, haven't really been following that you that you wish that they were?

Liana Smith: I'm trying to think. With my schedule, I don't get to listen to NPR as much as I'd like to, but I do try to catch up on things and if you know where...like, if you know what you're looking for when it comes to news on what I would call a reputable, relatively non-biased news source...if you know what you're looking for, you can easily find it. And, like, again, I'll admit this as a privilege. Like I have, I have my...we'll go with like a cup analogy. I have my cup that I can fill with so much news every day. And so I have to be very selective of what news I do take in. Because I have generalized anxiety and depression and all of the other typical things that people my age now have. We're all sad and now we're all stuck inside. So we're sad and stuck inside, so

John Peyton: Yeah.

Liana Smith: So I will admit that I have that privilege of being able to pick and choose what I pay attention to in the news. Due to my socio-economic status and where I live. It's not a violent place. It's not crumbling at the seams. I don't think about it often, but I, I am in a very stable place. And if I really want to know something about something that I haven't heard on the news, I'll go looking for it. It's all about knowing your sources and knowing where to find the news that you are looking for.

John Peyton: Yeah. And, and yeah, just speaking to something that you just said, where you live? I mean, I guess I can deduce that, that, you know, where you live in this, you know, very non-violent community. It's had an effect on, you know, the kind of news sources that you watch. And, you know, generally like, what you look up and you know, what you were putting into that little cup that you were talking about in that analogy. So, yeah.

Liana Smith: Yeah, and like, I'm lucky enough to live in an area where police shootings don't happen. They don't. Now that that is a major issue. In my cup, like, at least a third of that is filled with my concern with the epidemic of police violence in this country. And so that is a major topic that I pay attention to. It takes up a lot of space, in my mind. So, and yes, I'm blessed to live in a community where we're not impacted by that.

John Peyton: Yeah. Yeah. And, and yeah, just speaking to that, I mean, you know, that's, always going to be you know, this very politicized issue. You know, you have the conservative side, like Fox News, Newsmax, for example. And then, you know, you have the more the more liberal side of the coin, as well. And as you're saying, you know, those messages are embedded into that media.

Liana Smith: Yes.

John Peyton: So your base...you're getting your news from sources, where, you know, you can formulate your own thoughts, even though you're a little bit more left leaning.

Liana Smith: Yeah. And, yeah, and like, I've been listening to NPR since I can remember. Like, we would listen to it in the car. I remember, as a child, every night, my mom would turn on the radio and the "All Things Considered" theme would play. And it Pavloved. Like the "All Things Considered" theme song has a Pavlovian effect on me. I always get hungry when I hear it, because my mom would listen to it when she was making dinner as a child. So now every time I hear that I get hungry. Sorry, that was a little like side note. But yeah, definitely being able to formulate my own opinions is incredibly important for me.

John Peyton: Yeah, yeah. myself. I grew up with MSNBC all my life. So, so yeah. Alright, so I guess we could talk a little bit about the government. Yeah, we've still got a little, little bit more to do. So how

have your municipal leaders and government officials in your community responded to the outbreak? You were, you were saying earlier that, that they were very willing to make those accommodations? Can you get a little bit more into what the government and your community has kind of been doing?

Liana Smith: I don't really follow like my local, local government, but like, I'm right next to Harrisburg. Like Harrisburg is 20 minutes away from me. So I'm very in tune to what the state government is doing in regards to mask mandates and vaccine rollout and all that. And I have my own issues with how the pandemic was handled at the beginning, and how vaccine rollout was handled. But when you live in Pennsylvania, which is purple, Pennsylvania is a purple state when you look at it on a political map, but Harrisburg is a little blue speck in a very red area. So it's made the job of the state government just that much harder. Um, I like to think that they're doing their best, but I definitely think that almost more enforcement of the hard limits. Like there's a restaurant in my town who refuses, they refuse to shut down, they refuse to stop doing on dine in, they are also refusing to pay the fines. And that's, that's really, greatly concerning to me. Because that is a restaurant. It's a family-owned restaurant in my community. And I, for everything, every for every ounce of good in my person that I think is there, I cannot bring it upon myself to say anything positive about that particular establishment and how the state and local government have handled it.

John Peyton: So yeah, I mean, its just within the state level. And and you said paying the fines? Yeah. Like just for this establishment?

Liana Smith: Yeah, this establishment is refusing to pay. It's like 10s of 1000s of dollars in fines.

John Peyton: Which they are not uploading. Yeah.

Liana Smith: Because they refused to follow COVID guidelines, and they still refuse to follow COVID guidelines. I drove past there just the other day. And there were probably about 20 unmasked individuals standing on the property of the restaurant waving political flags.

John Peyton: Yeah. And is this, I mean, would you say that this is definitely like a more conservatively based establishment? I mean, I can kind of...

Liana Smith: Yes. Yes, they are. Yeah. They, they've posted things on their social media saying that if you walk into our establishment wearing a mask, we'll refuse to serve you.

John Peyton: Okay, that, that baffles my mind. Yeah, that's, yeah, that's...

Liana Smith: And all the state thinks, like the state is just like, Oh, we can revoke their liquor license, we can do this, that, and the other thing. I definitely think that they can be doing more than just revoking a liquor license. Because like, what do you do? They can't sell alcohol? You can still bring it in.

John Peyton: Yeah, they should be shutting them down if they're not going to follow those guidelines is what I'm hearing you say.

Liana Smith: And they've tried. They tried. I think, I think, but yeah.

John Peyton: What's the name of this establishment?

Liana Smith: Ah, there it is in my brain if they come after me, hahaha. It's fine. I don't care. It's Taste of Sicily.

John Peyton: Okay.

Liana Smith: Taste of Sicily in Palmyra, Pennsylvania.

John Peyton: Okay. Yeah. Okay.

Liana Smith: And I don't think I don't think they understand nor care that they're putting this entire community at risk.

John Peyton: Yeah, that makes sense. Okay, um, what are some other things I can ask you here? Okay. We'll get it a little bit to the. To the protest.

Liana Smith: That's ok.

John Peyton: Yeah, this is, this is a totally different thing. Yeah. So, and you don't have to give a long answer to it or anything like that. But what was your response on the government's response to the to the protest, the January 6 uprising? But you know, we can also filter in protest generally. So we can also filter in the protests that took place this past summer with George Floyd and Brionna Taylor, even the most recent one that happened that's starting to happen, you know, last week with the cop that pulled the taser, pulled the gun out and thought it was a taser, and yeah.

Liana Smith: First off, I don't understand how you do that, how you go 'oops.' That's not an 'oops.' Not an 'oops.' In regards to January 6, that was an incredibly traumatizing day for me. I was at work, when it happened. I was with the children who are between the ages of eight and 16. And an NPR notification popped up on my phone. And I was in the middle of reading with the youngest. And I looked at it just briefly, and it said, pro-Trump rioters breach the security at the Capitol. And that altered the timeline for the entire rest of my day. Um, I will say there are now two images that will haunt me until the day that I die. The first one, now I was three at the time that 9/11 happened, but I remember very distinctly, I walked into the kitchen of my friend's house, because my mom just kind of like whisked us over there and we played while they watched the news. And I very remember, I remember very distinctly, I walked in and I saw the second plane hit the building. So that's the first image that will help me. The second is the image of the man waving a confederate flag on the steps inside the United States Capitol. Those images are ingrained in my mind, burned into my brain. And I didn't know what to do. I was like talking with my mom. I was like, I don't know what to say, tomorrow if the kids asked me. And they did. And she told me give them the facts. Give them the facts. So the next day, when they asked what happened, I gave them the facts. But I definitely think that the government could have done more. The previous administration did nothing but fan the flames. Nothing but fuel that fire, as well as Republican lawmakers. I would I would like to commend my state Senator Pat Toomey for being one of just like the seven Republicans to vote for impeachment, based on what happened on January 6. That was a very impressive, bold move that has gotten him censured from the Pennsylvania, like, GOP, which like he's, he's retiring in two years, so cry about it. But that was an incredibly strong thing to do. But yeah, I definitely think more could have been done about that. My...I don't really know what more my state government could have done. Just because like that, that day, from the time that they breach the Capitol at what, what was it like 1:30 in the afternoon? From the time they breach the Capitol, until 11:45 at night, the memories of that day are just blurs of red, white, and blue and violence and screaming, and horrifying images and horrifying phrases being said.

John Peyton: Yeah, yeah, no, and it's...I'm right there with you. I mean, you know, that day, it's indelibly seared into my brain and, you know, I'll never forget it. I was talking to a professor friend of mine. Yeah, I had him for grad school when I was down in Bloomington. And, you know, he said something, you know, I'm just, you know, I think I told him something I had just said. You know, it's good to hear some good news from you in a time where everything's just so dark. And, you know, and that's the thing. You know, I guess the image that really sticks with me, is the one where that police officer was walking up those stairs. And he had all of those people behind him. And you're just, you're just glued to the screen in suspense of what's going to happen. Okay? Is he gonna have backup when he gets up those stairs. He's got one little baton, and, you know, a bunch of people behind them. I didn't know how many there were.

Liana Smith: Yeah.

And you know, people, people are willing to still defend that. You know, and that's, and I'd like to talk to you a little bit more after the interview. But yeah, you know, people are still willing to defend that stuff, essentially. And that's, that's what has really concerned me about all of this. But another point that you brought up, you know, the Republican lawmakers that, you know, were advocating for impeachment. Liz Cheney, she was another one that faced a lot of heat.

Liana Smith: And still is.

John Peyton: Yeah, yeah. You know, and I mean, you know, Cheney, they're very conservative.

Liana Smith: I have never once in my life, since, like, I got into politics and started being able to like, recognize what my values were. I've never once in my life agreed with something Pat Toomey has done, until that moment. But I think one of the things that bothers me the most is the people who say, how is that any different from the Black Lives Matter protests?

John Peyton: Yeah, and I wanted to maybe talk about that a little bit, because as I said, you know, protests broadly construed. So what are your thoughts on that, as two different sides of the coin, I guess you could say?

Liana Smith: It is two different sides of the coin. It's two different sides of...two very different sides of the same coin. I want to say first and foremost, I do not condone violence. I do not condone rioting, looting, setting cities on fire. I don't condone it. But at the same time, the racial inequities in this country, and the racial divide within this country sickens me. It sickens me. The fact that I have family who have, they're an interracial family, and they have interracial children. And the fact that I have heard the eldest boy talking to his brothers about...you can't do that, you have to be careful, like you don't want to raise any form of suspicion. I think he was like 12. He was 12 at that point. And he's saying these things to his brothers who were much younger than him, and that broke me. Because like, people are people. People are people. We all come from the same place. And I know that there are people who don't believe that. I know there are people who don't think that people of other races come from the same place, but we all come from the same place. It's just like the color of our skin solely depends on where our ancestors ended up. And the way that our genetics changed and adapted to the environment. The reason I have light skin is because my ancestors come from Poland, Germany, and those areas where they don't have to have dark skin in order to physically protect themselves from the sun. So it's very hard and like I said earlier, I don't condone violence in any means. And I will, I will fully

admit I was part of a Black Lives Matter protests last summer, in Hershey. It was very peaceful. The Derry township police department was very helpful in making sure that even while we were performing our act of civil disobedience by stopping traffic, which we did not have a permit to do, they didn't get violent. They didn't arrest us. They also didn't let us get hit by cars. They very well could have.

John Peyton: Yeah.

Liana Smith: So that in and of itself is also another privilege. Like I come from...I have realized in the past 13 months that I come from so much more privilege than I ever realized. And so yeah.

John Peyton: Yeah. Has that been really your only experience with protests, the Black Lives Matter movement?

Liana Smith: Yes, just because like I haven't, I haven't been able to participate in any other physical in-person protests, but I quite often make myself heard to my lawmakers. I call them, I email them, I send letters. Trying to make systemic change that way. But seeing what's happened in the past five years in regards to police violence, police brutality, and the shooting and killing of people of color. There's no excuse for it. There's no excuse for it, and you keep like, it's one of those things that you can't change from the inside. You have to bend it to your will. You have to make a lot of noise, you got to bring a lot of attention to it. So that the powers that be are forced to change, because they're not going to change their minds.

John Peyton: Yeah. Yeah, definitely. Um, so I guess we can talk a little bit about the future from here, especially with COVID. Um, so you did mention, you know, 9/11. You actually have answered some of these questions before I even had a chance to ask them. You've been very vocal.

Liana Smith: I have a habit of doing that. I'm sorry. Hahaha

John Peyton: Oh, no, no, no, no, I like it, you know, because it makes my job a little easier. So have there been any other events other than 911 and, and, and, you know, the, the protests that have really stuck out to you over the years? Those are the two that kind of come up to me, I know that we're, you know, five years apart or so, but.

Liana Smith: President Obama's inauguration.

John Peyton: Okay, which one?

Liana Smith: The first one,

John Peyton: The first one.

Liana Smith: I was in fifth grade. My mom kept to be home from school. We all crawled in bed with her. And we all watched. We all watch the inauguration.

John Peyton: Yeah, that's...I wasn't as into politics then. My parents made me go to school that day. But, but yeah. That's, that's awesome. Yeah.

Liana Smith: Yeah. And so my fifth grade teacher, I've also realized that she deserves a lot of credit for the person I am today. In fifth grade, she taught us what the N word was and she taught us why it was not okay. She taught us about segregation. She taught us about Martin Luther King Jr. And I didn't have

to make up any of the work that I missed on the day of the inauguration. Because she was also at home watching the inauguration.

John Peyton: Oh, wow. So you kind of got your model from her then it sounds like.

Liana Smith: I got it from her. I also got it from my mother. Yeah. Like in the in the, in the grand scheme of my lifetime, there's been a lot of bad. In the 22, almost 23 years I've been on this planet, but there's also been a lot of good. And it's times like these where when I'm sitting and reflecting on the dichotomy of things that I is not the right word dichotomy of things that I've witnessed in my life. I've witnessed a lot of powerful things that molded me into the person that I am now. And my values come from a lot of different places that have led me to a lot of different situations. And yeah. Sorry, my train of thought just outdoor again.

John Peyton: Yeah, no, that's good. Yeah, that's, that's, that's good. So, you know, a lot of a lot of impacts. Obviously, your fifth grade teacher must have had a lot of impact on you. If they're, if they're telling you what that word meant, then, and why it's not okay. You know, that's, that's, that's some pretty powerful stuff you know, there, especially just for elementary school.

Liana Smith: Yeah.

John Peyton: So, yeah. All right. Um, so, okay. What do you see your life looking like, in a year from now, you know, especially with everything that we've gone through as a country, just in the past year, but I, you could also say, four years as well?

Liana Smith: I definitely hope that in a year from now, I will be further along in my education, closer to getting a degree. I'm going for a degree in occupational therapy assistant. So it would really be a blessing to be able to be back in a classroom, back in a lab. Just getting one step closer to be working in a clinical setting. And like I mentioned earlier, if I have to wear a mask, it's not gonna faze me. It's not gonna faze me one bit. So I do see us still wearing masks and washing our hands and socially distancing, just like as a society, I feel like that's almost become the norm now. And so it's going to take a lot to break those habits. Yeah, but ideally, I will be not living with my parents, and going to school and working in a less unpredictable space. And a more stable environment. I think the one thing I'm most grateful about with the vaccines is it's creating a more stable environment. And with all of the turbulence that we've witnessed in the last 13 months with COVID, stability, I think is the best we can ask for.

John Peyton: Yeah, yeah. And basically, and I kind of agree with this, too, you know, the things that we have seen the, you know, the alterations that we have seen, with COVID, technological, health, all of that stuff. Even as the vaccine is becoming more and more available, as more people are getting it. That stuff is going away.

Liana Smith: No, it's not.

John Peyton: Yeah it's not. Yeah, I would agree with that. As well, you know, these are these are changes that have been made that that have been enacted by COVID. You know, that aren't going to be going away, essentially.

Liana Smith: They've completely changed the structure of our society.

John Peyton: Yes.

Liana Smith: Completely altered the foundation of it.

John Peyton: Yeah. Yeah. All right. Um, so knowing what you know, now, what do you think that individuals, communities, or governments need to just keep in mind, you know, for the future?

Liana Smith: Don't disband your pandemic Task Force, just because you don't think it's going to be necessary. Always keep that on hand. You never know is COVID hit us out of nowhere it totally came out of left field. Now granted, it came out of left field really slowly, but it came out of left field and it hit us where it hurt.

John Peyton: Don't put bleach in your army there right now.

Liana Smith: Yeah, don't don't drink bleach. If political pundits are telling you to take a drug that some people rely on to maintain a day-to-day life, hydroxychloroquine, don't take it. I'm like looking directly in the camera. Please don't take these lifesaving drugs away from people who need them.

John Peyton: Listen to Fauci.

Liana Smith: Yes, listen to Dr. Fauci. And get your Fauci ouchie. it's worth it. 100%. I get to see my niece for the first time without a mask.

John Peyton: That's awesome.

My niece is 15 months old. She's seen me without a mask once.

John Peyton: Oh wow.

Liana Smith: I get to see her without a mask this weekend because I'm fully vaccinated.

John Peyton: That's awesome.

Liana Smith: And that is a huge step in the right direction.

John Peyton: Yeah. All right. So yeah, we're, we're pretty much about ready to wrap up the interview. I guess. This is just, this is just another question. Do you do you know, any, somebody from whom you think we should request an interview? If so, who would you be willing to...would you be willing to make an introduction for us for that? As I said, this is a this is a collaborative project. You know, it's, it's through the grad students at IU. But there's also other university partners that are that are doing this as well. The one that sticks out is Arizona State University. So yeah, if you have any recommendations, feel free to send them forward.

Liana Smith: Yeah, yeah. I'm thinking about a couple. I don't know how many how much you've gotten into like the world of agriculture and how COVID affected that but I might be able to scrounge up some contacts for you. One that comes to mind is potentially my brother who works for Land-O-Lakes. But

John Peyton: Yeah, yeah.

Liana Smith: I'll talk to him and then if he is okay with it, I can send him your way.

John Peyton: Okay, yeah, yeah, you've got my email.

Liana Smith: Yes.

John Peyton: And, and all of that. Okay, so Joanna, you can turn it off now.