

## Transcript of Oral History Monologue by Emile Karreman

**Interviewee:** Emile Karreman

**Interviewer:** Self

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**Location:** Pennsylvania

**Abstract:** In this monologue, Emile Karreman shares her experiences with living through the COVID-19 pandemic. Emile discusses a wide range of topics from her political and economic concerns with the pandemic to sharing some of the positive outcomes that she believes came out of this time.

**Emily Karreman 0:01**

Hello, it is 10 o'clock PM Eastern Time, August 26, 2020. My name is Emily Karreman, and I am a first year of college student. I live in Pennsylvania at the moment. But I- the college that I'm going to is in Massachusetts, but I'm taking classes at home because of the pandemic. When I first learned about COVID-19, I honestly didn't think it was as serious as it eventually turned out to be. I think a lot of people felt that way, when it was just in China, a lot of people definitely in the United States and in Europe were not as concerned, we didn't know that it would eventually morph into something like this. The issues that have concerned me the most about the COVID-19 pandemic is how unprepared the United States is to provide personal protective equipment to like hospitals and nursing homes. And also, it's- how it let the unemployment benefits lapse. So a lot of people who are unemployed aren't getting that extra money that is going to help them stay afloat. And so I'm worried that a lot of people are going to face economic fallout, and evictions and continuing unemployment due to this pandemic, for circumstances that they had no control over. COVID-19 has not affected my employment because I'm just a student at the moment, but it has definitely affected how I am attending school. I remember, the last day of high school classes in person was March 13, 2020. And after that, we just thought it would be a week off of school, and then it turned into two weeks. And then eventually it became the rest of the school year. And a lot of the high school teachers didn't really have any- they didn't like have any base of knowledge for how to conduct remote classes, because, you know, no one really expected that to end up happening. So it was rather chaotic for the end of- the end of my senior year of high school. It was definitely unexpected. It was strange, all of the rituals that people typically do in their senior year of high school, down to graduation, prom, things like that. My class was never able to do because of the pandemic. And you know, I feel bad for, you know, having to miss out on that. But I really do believe that closing down was the best option that we could have done to keep everyone safe. COVID-19 has really affected how I communicate with friends and family because I can't be around people all the time, I'm still doing, you know, quarantining or self isolating, whatever the term is, at home. So the only person who I have consistent contact with is my mom. Other than that, everyone who I talk with it's via Zoom, which was something that I only very rarely used before the pandemic. But it's crazy how much we're using it now, to communicate with each other. During COVID-19, I started playing the guitar again. So that is one positive thing that came out of it. And I taught myself to play the ukulele. And I've read a lot. So, it's- it gives me the opportunity to do more things like you know, music and literature that are interesting to me that I didn't really have the time and opportunities to do before. But at the same time, it didn't take away things such as sports and school that I was otherwise involved in. COVID-19 has, well, the effects on my community is interesting because the area that I live,

it's a very rural area, so it's not highly populated, a lot of people did not or never have taken COVID-19 seriously around here. So there's really not a whole lot of restrictions. And there's not a whole lot of enforcement of the restrictions that's imposed by the state-level government. Which is concerning to me because a lot of people talk about wanting to get back to normal or a lot of people just continue their normal lives as if nothing has changed, but it's- it gives me anxiety thinking about how the seriousness of this pandemic and how people aren't taking it seriously. I do not know if anyone in my family or community has gotten COVID-19. One relative of mine, I believe he may have, but that was in the very early days of the virus back when it was first spreading across the United States, and there weren't tests. And no one was really- no one really knew anything about it. So yeah, my one relative, I believe he- he may have had it, he thinks he had it, he had symptoms of it. But of course, it might have been, you know, it could have been the flu or something else, I'm not sure. So again, I can't say for certain whether anyone I know has had it. I think it's definitely affecting people's mental health because of this isolation, though. It's really hard to balance the dueling desires of wanting to be out and associating with people, while at the same time, wanting to stay safe and protect yourself and your family, and especially vulnerable people in the community who you could come in contact with. I definitely don't ever want to think that I was the person who spread the virus to someone. And so that's why I take like, self-isolating really seriously, but it's- it's hard on my mental health. And it's hard because of a lot of people who I know aren't taking it as seriously. So it's a strange balance to strike there. Um, when it comes to the media coverage of the pandemic, I think there's a lot of false narratives around it. And that was especially prolific during the very beginning of the pandemic. And, of course, now, there's lots of conspiracy theories about so called "plandemic." I don't buy into any of that. I think, you know, it's all bullshit, honestly. But I- I mean, the media sources, I tried to read from reliable media sources as much as possible, I try to- when it comes to pandemic related news, try to read from more scientific sources. I try to stay on top of what the eminent scientists and healthcare providers are saying. And on top of the the guidelines coming from the state government. And what- speaking of the state government, my thoughts on its response to the pandemic is that the state government, I believe, in my state, which is Pennsylvania, where I'm currently living, it had a good response. Governor Tom Wolf, he issued the shutdown at schools and mandated shutting down businesses for a certain period of time, limiting gatherings over I believe it is currently 25 people indoors, 20, 250 people out of doors, but there has been a lot of resistance both from the the General Assembly, which is dominated by Republicans, and in my area from the state, I mean, the local level government, excuse me, which is also very heavily Republican dominated. There has been a lot of pushback on the governor's restrictions, and that extends to members of the public as well. Like I was saying earlier, a lot of people really don't take it seriously. I find that concerning, but a lot of people also think that the governor is overstepping his bounds. A lot of businesses have opened back up despite the governor's prohibition of doing so. And the school districts are opening up and school sports are opening up despite the governor saying that they shouldn't or that the school should adopt a hybrid or online model of learning. And, you know, I think that's really risky. I mean, you can see, there's been so many cases recently of colleges that opened up and then had to shut down within a week because they got hundreds of Coronavirus cases. I think University of North Carolina and University of Alabama and Notre Dame are like three really prominent examples of that at the moment. There's probably going to be more shortly. I feel like that's something that school districts and colleges alike aren't taking into account as much as they should. So, the COVID-19 experience, um, I know a lot of people say this- it really, you know, it

changes your priorities, it makes you think about what's really important. And it makes you reconsider the connections you have with people, because you do have to work harder to stay in touch with people when you're not constantly seeing them. Like for me not seeing people at school all the time, or not seeing people in sports all the time. And then not being able to, like, physically be on my college campus and meeting new people that way. You have to be a lot more intentional about your relationships with people. I think that sort of helps you to, you know, determine like which relationships are worth the work of keeping up during a more challenging time of communication. I think that's a good thing. I- there are some benefits that came out of the pandemic. Like I said earlier, I've had more time to pursue certain interests, and spending a lot more quality time with people who I'm quarantined with just out of necessity. I also think one important thing that came out of this is more local food movement. I know that's like now, not possible in big cities, but in small towns, more rural areas, and I suppose suburbs as well as, though I don't know, though I don't know much about suburbs. But a lot of places are seeing a resurgence of people buying local food. And I really hope that's something that keeps going after the pandemic. That's something that my, my mom and I switched to doing. I always thought that was an important issue. But the pandemic and not wanting to go to crowded, you know, grocery stores, Walmart or whatnot, and having to look for smaller farms and smaller producers, it's- it's really beneficial both to the local economy and to your health really. And so I think that's one important thing. That is one thing I believe, that should stick around coming out of the pandemic, this focus on localized food and localized community support. And mutual aid, during the pandemic is also really important for building solidarity, because a lot of the levels of government aren't responding as they could to this, to the needs of people who are facing eviction or, you know, like having to pay rent or mortgage or having lost their jobs, having to have childcare while they go back to work. I mean, there's a lot of things that the government was really unprepared for dealing with, and civic society, as- as it is was kind of unprepared for dealing with that, but I think it is inspirational. I think it's something that we should build on, the mutual aid organizations that have sprung up, people helping each other through this difficult time. And I think that's definitely- that is definitely another thing that should continue in my opinion past the pandemic. So yeah, that has been my experience with COVID-19. Good bye.