

Transcript of Interview with Devyn Nguyen by Reil Gil

Interviewee: Nguyen, Devyn

Interviewer: Gil, Rei

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Location (Interviewee): Ladera Ranch, California, USA

Location (Interviewer): Tijuana, Mexico

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Transcription formatted and perfected by: Kathryn Jue, 06/12/2021

This interview was recorded as part of The Covid 19 Oral History Project, a project of the IUPUI Arts and Humanities Institute associated with The Journal of a Plague Year: A Covid 19 Archive.

Rei Quinones Gil 0:00

We are recording... um and so I'm going to like read the script. So my name is Rei Gil and I'm here with Devyn Nguyen, the date is May 4, 2021. The time is 8:08pm. We are meeting remotely I am in Tijuana, Mexico. Devyn is in Ladera Ranch, California. Um so Devyn, [laughter] I want to briefly review the informed consent and Deed of Gift document that you signed. So 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 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. The 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. So do you have any questions that about the project that I can answer?

Devyn Nguyen 1:30

No, no at this moment.

Rei Quinones Gil 1:32

Taking part in the 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 lost benefits to which you're entitled. Your decision whether or not to participate in the study will not affect your current or future relations with Indiana University, IUPIU or the IUPUI Arts and Humanities Institute. Participating in this project means that your- your interview will be recorded in digital, video and/or audio format and maybe transcribed the recordings and possible transcriptions of my

interview, copies of any supplementary documents and or additional photo 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?

Devyn Nguyen 1:32

No.

Rei Quinones Gil 1:32

Okay. I'm also asking that you really confirm that you have agreed that your interview will be made available under the following license. That is Creative Commons Attribution Noncommercial Sharealike 4.0 International CC DUI and CSA 4.0. And finally, I want to ask for a verbal confirmation that you have agreed that your interview will be made available to the public immediately.

Devyn Nguyen 3:02

Yes, I confirm.

Rei Quinones Gil 3:05

All right. So I guess and jumping right into it. Um. So the first question is um... So I want you to picture that it's January 1, 2020. What was your year supposed to be like? [dog barking in background].

Devyn Nguyen 3:26

Um, I guess, I was envisioning myself picking up more hours at my job at a boba place. And working to get an internship. So then I could finish out my... my last few- couple semesters. And in our undergraduate career, I was supposed to graduate at the end of 2020. So I was imagining getting like my first bigger, corporate job or internship. That semester, that's what was my goal! When... so that would be like, spring semester was about to begin. And I was going to focus on on, yeah, getting a job downtown. [Laughs].

Rei Quinones Gil 4:19

All right. So I guess, with that in mind, I mean, what has your year been? You know, since then, I guess since you learned about the pandemic. Um, I guess what kinds of things do you do now on your day to day and like, where do you see, um... You know. How do you actually how do you feel about like, you know, how this past year has gone?

Devyn Nguyen 4:50

It was a little different. I was a little discouraged with like [clears throat], not going to school anymore in person, and I still hadn't had a job at the time. I was kind of afraid of the lack of real world experience I'd get with my major in business by the time I'd graduated. And as the year went on, at the beginning of the pandemic, I thought I would still graduate in person. And as the year went on, I realized that the chances were becoming slimmer and slimmer, and we did a virtual graduation. But I had gotten lucky. And my opportunities had still expanded, and I ended up getting remote job for the first time, I've never worked for a person or a business remotely. So that was a new experience for me graduating online and working I- so I moved back down to Southern California with my family. And they are... my dad is one of the partners of a small business, and so I was kind of experiencing that firsthand where small businesses were readjusting to the pandemic and trying to figure out how to survive. Especially it was a gym, so gyms were especially struggling. So I got to see how a small business was able to adapt and move outdoors, whereas many other small businesses that were much like, my family's, were not able to meet- like, stay open. So yeah, it was a complete redirection and new type of business model. And people, a lot of people have seen that with a bunch of other industries, not just like, fitness- moving out doors, but like restaurants and stuff. So I kind of observed other businesses, stay open and kind of compared that to like my own experiences. And since then, things have been opening up more and more, but that had... been like a big thing like how businesses are staying open in this country, and like, specifically in California and Orange County, which was a really different experience than living in San Francisco, and the people down here are much different in the city. You know, Orange County had been on the news quite a few times for the anti-COVID protesters, anti-mask protesters. [Laughs]. And it was a very tense time to be living down here, and especially feeling unsafe, sometimes, but you know, I was able to stay safe for the most part. And last summer, you know, I had seen a lot of like different groups, you know, people I went to high school with were still going to bars and like, you know, putting themselves and others at risk. Whereas like, you know, myself because I had my, somebody in my household is high risk. So we were trying to be, you know, pretty COVID conscious, and just for other's sake as well.

Rei Quinones Gil 7:58

Okay, so I guess like.. like thinking about business, and the economy and all that, like, considering at the point that we're in right now, in the pandemic, what do you think about like, like, what concerns you have about the effects of COVID on like, you know, future employment, and I guess, you know, the US economy more broadly?

Devyn Nguyen 8:23

Um, I think that it's kind of bringing to light, how much like how different businesses value their employees and just, you know, essential workers, because a lot of businesses, unfortunately, a lot of small businesses were not able to, like stay operating. Because, you know, they couldn't get help from the government. And then the larger businesses and few small businesses that could

stay operating, it really brought to light, how much they value their workers, you know, so if they're not prioritizing their workers, safeties, a lot of people don't want to come to work. And then there'll be, you know, experiencing more benefits by going on unemployment. And then you see a lot of things about people complaining about how workers don't want to go back into the workforce. And I know, it just brought to light, how much like, like, or how little, many businesses and companies don't value their employees well-being. So I think that's something that people are noticing, and they're not willing to sacrifice their health and safety for companies that don't really value them as individuals more just like, you know, because a lot of people still don't want to pay their workers above minimum wage, which is minimum wage, most of the time, if not, every time, not livable wages for people who are not like especially not like teenagers, people who have families to take care of. So I think that that's coming to light and people are like, you know, realizing their worth as human beings and people are protesting which they should. Um. Yeah, I think [sigh] I don't know. I think a big part of it is like, you know, the workers while being concerned.

Rei Quinones Gil 10:07

Yeah. So I guess like... like you mentioned that right now you're working remotely. Oh, sorry, my cat... Yeah. So right now, you mentioned that you're working remotely. I mean, how do you like envision, I guess, transitioning back into, like, in-person, working in person, or like, if that transition is even going to happen? I mean, where do you see your own future, like with your current employment?

Devyn Nguyen 10:36

Um, with my current employment, I was actually hoping to move back in-person, because I've never experienced a real adult job like that before. I wanted to progress and grow with the company. But I've actually seen a lot of other people's transition, we're in that phase right now, where a lot of people, you know, their offices are opening back up, and they're requiring people to come like one to two days into the office, and people being remote have realized that that's not always necessary. So... but a lot of HR departments I've seen are struggling, because half the people, half of their workers want to stay remote. And then if they stay remote, then half of them want the option to come back into the office. And I think it's finding that balance between how companies can, like, organize a system where they figured out if people want to work remotely, or work in the office, because I think a lot of people are unhappy with whatever they're told to do. And people want the freedom to choose. And then, you know, for a lot of jobs that do require traveling, like, they don't necessarily people are realizing, realizing that they don't necessarily need to travel or like the expenses. So, um, for my future, [sigh] I would hope to work back in person, or at least have a hybrid modality, like, you know, a lot of schools are developing, and I think that is also gonna, you know, stay in, you know, the future, a lot of schools are going to maintain that and jobs, hopefully, because I think that having good balances.

Rei Quinones Gil 12:15

Thank you. Yeah, I like that. Um, so you mentioned that you had to move back home, right? So, um, I guess how has like COVID, like affected how you associate and I guess, communicate with your friends and family, now that you are back home?

Devyn Nguyen 12:40

Um, at the beginning of quarantine, it was much different, where everybody was like, very strictly, like locked inside their houses with very minimal activity going outside. And I think that geographic location has a lot to do with how people are living their lives in COVID. So being in Orange County, it was very normalized to go out and about. But at that time, like, and even now, I'm pretty picky on who I spend my time with. Because, you know, I usually spend time with people who are pretty COVID conscious. And even now, but at the very beginning, everything was completely like, you know, online communication. And it kind of made learning how to, you know, like interacting with people again, like since then it was like a big readjustment, because people are so desensitized to being on their screens all the time. And then I think I had a very unique experience, this pandemic, because my job had opened up back in the summer, and we were outdoors, and we were pretty COVID conscious. So I have been able to stay in work and more of like a positive environment, not like our work environment that like, you know, a lot of essential workers were pretty miserable. So I was pretty lucky to have a healthy work dynamic and work environment. So I've actually been able to stay like, pretty socially active compared to many other people. And so I know that a lot of people are still readjusting to social interaction, especially now that we're like, kind of phasing into, like a transition period, back in person. But I don't know, I think I've never communicated with my own family, this much even before I moved to college. [Laughs]. And I think, luckily, it's been pretty beneficial to my family relationship. Um, with my friends, I did lose touch with some friends that I was pretty close with back when I was in school. But yeah, I don't know. [Laughs]. It's been pretty different. I mean, pros and cons, and I think I have a very unique experience where I was able to maintain like social relationships in a safe manner.

Rei Quinones Gil 15:04

Interesting. So I guess like, yeah, you said that, you know, this is definitely the most you've [laughs] talked and like and interacted with your family. What kinds of things you guys do, like, you know, in the day to day?

Devyn Nguyen 15:20

Well, pretty uniquely enough, I go with my parents every day to work. [Laughs]. So, um, because they are part owners of the gym and my dad, like, kind of works like the administrative part of like three different companies. But the gym is the only place where we are on- like he is on site. And then, you know, funnily enough, my mom is the manager. [Laughs]. So I mean, I've never had that work relationship with my family. And it's been really interesting and, you know,

helpful for me, because that's my... that was my field and I was in business. So I've kind of been able to observe firsthand how businesses operate. And I learned a lot more than I did in some of my- most of my school life. Um, so that's like, one thing. And another thing is, we kind of created this system where we try to cook dinner every day, we take turns, so we, you know, eat dinner as a family, which is very different, because in San Francisco, we'd eat dinner alone. With our cats. [Laughter]. Yeah, and so I guess like, because, you know, even working remotely at home, and then, you know... which, you know, you do class work school in your room, and then all those lines have been blurred. So it's like, you know, we've all been struggling to find that balance to kind of like, you know, compartmentalize all the aspects of our life into like, the respective places. So we can have a healthy like work-life balance, that's also kind of happened with my work with my family, because, you know, we're always working together. And then, so also organizing my life with my family work balance, 'cuz everything gets all blurred together, just like remote work at home. So that's been a new challenge I've never had to face in my life. But it's interesting.

Rei Quinones Gil 17:17

I guess. Can you can you like, explain that a little bit more?

Devyn Nguyen 17:22

Um, so yeah.

Rei Quinones Gil 17:23

What does like organizing, like all that mean? And like, where does that fit in with, like, your family dynamics and things like that?

Devyn Nguyen 17:34

Yeah. So I mean, especially like, this kind of evolves throughout the pandemic. So in the beginning of the pandemic, like, we are all locked inside. So... little fun fact, during the beginning of pandemic, we had eight people living in my house. So my parents, me, my girlfriend, my brother, his girlfriend and my sister. So that was also another reason we had a lot of social interaction, [laughs] because we had so many people living in one house. And, um, yeah, from that point, we'd like, you know, it's a lot of people. And you kind of have to, like, figure out how to, you know... I don't know where I was going with that. [Laughter].

Can we start over? Start over! Ask your question again, ask your question again!

Rei Quinones Gil 18:19

Ask my question again? I can ask my question again. Yeah, I was just like, wanting to know more about how the...

Devyn Nguyen 18:25

The work part.

Rei Quinones Gil 18:26

Yeah, like this work life balance, and like, how it factors into like, your family dynamics, because you work with your family. And I guess how much like, living at home and interacting with them so much, like how much that has, I guess, has changed or maybe hasn't changed so much? Like, you know, your family, how you interact with family and all that? Yeah.

Devyn Nguyen 18:49

Yeah. Well, my parents are my bosses. So they're my superiors and basically, I just work as a receptionist at the gym. And they treat me like, all the other employees. But obviously, according to the other employees, I have to be on like, you know, my best behavior and have my peak performance. So nobody thinks I'm like, you know, getting special treatment. And so, [unintelligible]

What?

Rei Quinones Gil 19:19

So nepotism baby.

Devyn Nguyen 19:20

Yeah, literally, well, I mean, it's a... it's like a pretty basic job. It's not like I'm climbing a corporate ladder. So, I mean, I'm just working at the front of the gym. [Laughter]. Um, but you know, like, still, I mean, in any workplace, you got to be like, respectful and, you know, keep family life and work life separate. But a lot of the times those lines overlap because, you know, our family goes to the gym or a lot of my co-workers have been, like, you know, adopted into my family. So like, you know, we've become found family with everyone, and so they'll be coming. We've had some issues with that. So we've had like, some employees get too close. And then then like, they end up creating tense work relations and end up not working with the company anymore. So, I mean, hasn't just been for me, but like good for other people who get involved with, like, you know, small businesses because, like, as owners, they get really- they become really invested in their employees and, you know, care for them, you know, holistically as a person, as an individual, not just as an employee, and sometimes, you know, family and work doesn't always mix very well. [Laughs]. So we've had some, you know, bad experiences, and some mostly really good experiences. So, you know, even when we come home, it's, we have to figure out how, you know, not to talk too much about our work life at home, because we need to keep it separate, because then it becomes too overwhelming, and you don't want to, like have these weird tensions with your own family members. And then especially like, because, you know, some of my best friends and like, people who feel like family are also employees. So kind

of navigating that. This pandemic, especially with all these different issues that are arising with, like, you know, people want to, like... We want to make sure everybody is taken care of, but there's only so much a small business can do for their employees, and, you know, you become invested, like, "Oh, we want them to pay rent," but like, you know, it also depends on like, employee performance. So like, we're trying to figure out that balance together. And like, you know, me too, I'm just an employee. So like, there's things like, I have to stay out of, you know, like, things that are administrative issues, and like, I'm pretty emotionally invested. But you know, trying to figure out that place.

Rei Quinones Gil 21:48

I guess. So, moving on a little bit. And taking all like that into mind about, like, I guess how much the... you know, your work, life is so important, and like, how much the people you surround yourself with, that's, like, you know, your community, right? I guess, um, how would you say that, like, the COVID-19 outbreak has, like, affected your community? And, you know, that can be like, yeah, taking it back, maybe school, or work or, you know, the larger community you like, live in, um, and, you know, you can speak on any of that, or some of that.

Devyn Nguyen 22:34

Um, so for I think for like, my family community, like my immediate family, I think it's really developed a lot of our relationships, because, you know, we're all in different parts of our lives, like, my younger brother, who's just starting college, who started during the pandemic, and didn't get to move away like I did, when he was supposed to. Um. And it really took a toll on him, like, individually, but as for like, the family dynamic, like, it's the most I've ever interacted with him. As well as for my sister who's seven years older than me. So we're all in completely different parts of our lives. And I think it brought us together. It might have held them back individually. [Laughs]. But I think like you know, then, like family wise, we've been pretty developed. I think, for my friendships, I've rekindled a lot of friends, like, you know, my close friendships, and we've got to experience many different things like different societal movements and stuff. And it brought us closer, because we realize, you know, we have similar values, and we're kind of learning that together, especially living in Orange County, where things can be very polarized and still, like, you know, sticking strong to our own beliefs and values, and trying to navigate those conversations with people who are not always like-minded, around us. Um, for my school community... [Sigh]. It was kind of a weird period, trying to graduate in a pandemic and like, still try to maintain like different friendships and like, relationships with professors. I feel like I wasn't able to develop some of the relationships with professors that are necessary for adult life, because everything's through a screen and it's really hard to connect with, you know, something like if you want to create relationships with like your superiors and like, you kind of need that face to face especially if you're shy like me. [Laughter]. Because in the beginning of my school years as, in our undergraduate years, I was really shy, so I wasn't able to, you know, create those friendships with professors. So by the time I felt like I would have been ready, and like, you



know, mature enough, I didn't really get that opportunity to, so I'm hoping as I continue to go to school, postgrad, um, I get another chance to do that. But yeah, I kind of was held back because of the pandemic. And hopefully after that I get more opportunities. Um, I mean, the work community, pretty, pretty strong, because we were able to adapt and stay open by being outdoors and being COVID safe. So I think my work life and working remotely, that was something new. So those parts are growing.

Rei Quinones Gil 25:37

I guess, you mentioned like, COVID safe? I think with that, like thinking of that, how would you say that the people like around you are responding to the pandemic or have responded to the pandemic so far?

Devyn Nguyen 25:53

Well, I think because we are naturally drawn to like-minded people, my immediate circle, has, like, maintained similar practices and behaviors and values. So we'd all been pretty safe since the start, like my friends. There had been some people I noticed on social media from- that live around me, and that I'm not really friends with, they were completely not practicing COVID safe [laughs], you know, procedures. And other places, like my cousin had a similar job as me at a gym in LA, and she would tell me every day about how they weren't- saying she eventually quit. So she, they didn't wear masks, they didn't, you know, protect their employees safety, because, you know, against the customers, they would prioritize customers, which is very different because at my work we prioritize employees over clients. And, you know, if you practice, like COVID safe procedures, chances are more people are going to feel comfortable, and more inclined to support your business. And if there's people who are rude, it's not like they would want their business anyways. Um, so yeah, I mean, we've stayed pretty strong with that. And, um, the other employees, and business owners also feel safer practicing those procedures, especially during the beginning. But as more people are becoming more vaccinated we're definitely, like experiencing that transition. And, you know, things are becoming a little different. Some people are going out more and stuff, but usually the people that I know, that are doing that are vaccinated. So. That's what I've seen.

Rei Quinones Gil 27:43

So earlier, you mentioned the, like, issue surrounding, like, social movements. I was wondering if you could, I guess, elaborate more on that. Like, what kinds of things have you seen, like arise out of the pandemic? Or through the pandemic I suppose?

Devyn Nguyen 28:02

Yeah, yeah. Like, you know, and the revival of like, the popularity of the Black Lives Matter movement, that's not really a product of that pandemic, but it's something that we had all

experienced, all, you know, because it's a social media movement, and obviously, like, the... the issues are not on social- like, it's not like a social media... [Laughter].

Rei Quinones Gil 28:29

Take your time! Take your time if you need to think through it.

Devyn Nguyen 28:34

Okay, okay. Um, and it's not something that is restricted to social media. It's something that's very much happening in real life. But it's something that the whole world observed on social media because we weren't really outdoors. And we're all observing the news through the elections and stuff. So I guess, a huge thing was Black Lives Matter. And like, in the beginning of the pandemic, and still now, which it's important to, you know, stay focused on. And notice how a lot of people's efforts were very performative. That's something we were all noticing, since all our eyes were on each other and seeing how everybody responded to these issues, and like the backlash people would receive if they didn't respond. So that's why a lot of people's efforts were very performative, just because of the social pressure not because of genuine, authentic reasons. And I think that's something we're all noticing within each other, and then a lot of like the Stop Asian Hate, and noticing how that the Stop Asian Hate kind of elicited a legislative response, whereas like, the Black Lives Matter is still- we're still working to, um, you know, witness like the appropriate like political response and like with laws and stuff. And how it took, what? Like almost a year to convict that cop who murdered George Floyd, sadly. But, um, so I think that's been a big part of it. And um, luckily, I have like a close circle of friends who are, you know, who share the same values and same beliefs and like, we've made a lot of efforts while in Orange County to support people, like, you know, those who are affected by the movements. But it's very different. Living in Orange County, then living you know, where we previously lived in San Francisco. Because a lot of people are not- don't share those values. [Laughter]. Um, and they, there were more, there's more support for like, down here, more people felt strongly about masks than they did about, like, actual murders. So that was very uh... interesting experience.

Rei Quinones Gil 31:14

So you kind of, you kind of went in a little bit into what my next question was gonna be. But like, I guess I'll ask it anyways, in case you want to like, add on some more. But I guess, what do you think are important issues right now that like the media may or may not be covering?

Devyn Nguyen 31:33

Um, I definitely feel like the media makes the Black Lives Matter movement seem like a trend. And it only pops up when, you know, certain events become publicized, when it's actually been something that's- that's been happening for hundreds of years, like, historically, it's not something that's new. And it's not something that happens, like, you know, at certain times, it

happens every day. And it's something that needs to be, you know, a priority. And people need to be consciously thinking about because even if they can't make a difference, like, within our own government, there's things that- work that people need to do every day. To kind of... kind of like... like, people need to consciously focus on these issues, since like, these issues are ingrained in our system. So it takes like, the conscious work of individuals and how they live their everyday lives to work against that. And I definitely feel like the media only responds when, when it's too late. So I think it's until more people start, you know, unfortunately, start getting killed that people respond to it, instead of like focusing on the preventative actions that a lot of us are trying to make. So yeah, I think a lot of these issues, and a lot of these, like, violent occurrences continue to happen, but the media kind of has like more of a r- like a responsive approach. It's always like too late.

Rei Quinones Gil 33:23

Mmm-hmm. So I guess, I guess just to like, I guess, clarify what have been your- like your own primary sources of like news and like information gathering during this pandemic?

Devyn Nguyen 33:37

So especially during last summer, in my house, the news was always on the TV. And of course, things always circulate on social media. Um. And then, you know, firsthand experiences of like, people that they sh- like, either they spread the like, word of mouth from both sides. So because I live in an area where there's a lot of different opinions floating around. Um, so word of mouth, and then also like, people's own experiences shared on social media, so not, not exclusively news sources on social media, but also people's own experiences, and like, shared videos and stuff.

Rei Quinones Gil 34:19

Like first-hand accounts and stuff, yeah? Okay. So um. So, kind of in the same line of thought, but moving more towards like the actual COVID pandemic, um. Have you... Like, what are your thoughts and how like, like, maybe local, state or I guess federal leaders, um, have responded to the pandemic differently? Do you have any thoughts towards that?

Devyn Nguyen 34:58

Um, yes. [Laughter]. I'm pretty disappointed with a lot of government leaders responses to social pressure as opposed to like scientific resources. Um, because a lot of people claim different things scientifically. And they'll be like- they'll claim, oh, like different doctors, different scientists say, all these complete opposite opinions. But I think that, for example, in California, our governor has responded to a lot of social pressure, because a lot of people were angry and upset. And a lot of protesters, when, you know, the CDC would say otherwise. And especially in Texas, that was when they were the first to lift the mask ban, I had seen a lot of people in agreement in California. And I just was pretty disappointed because the pandemic is clearly not over. And, I mean, when people look at the news, and they see people, others, like being allowed

to behave a certain way, they think it's fair for them to also behave that way. When obviously, leaders of all this all like the leaders of each state are so different. So they're going to like, you know, make different decisions based on their own, like opinions and, you know, subjective studies... When I think other countries have had much more united, you know, policies.

Rei Quinones Gil 36:45

Are there, I guess, mentioning other countries, do you think that there's any, like... how should I phrase this? Like, is there like a, like a specific country that you've seen, that has been handling, like the pandemic and its effects, like efficiently, and maybe we should model after?

Devyn Nguyen 37:07

I think a lot of Asian countries and- have handled it pretty well, a lot of, you know, decreased numbers of COVID cases and COVID deaths. And especially, um, countries who are like islands, like, for example, New Zealand, who had been doing pretty well and Australia, which is, you know, they've had a pretty successful accounts of recovering from COVID. And there had been several outbreaks coming back, because, you know, people were traveling internationally. But when they were completely locked down from the rest of the world, they pretty much returned to normal. And um... but their laws, I believe, are much more restrictive than the United States. So I think that's why they're able to recover pretty quickly.

Rei Quinones Gil 37:59

Okay. And, um, I want to backtrack a little bit, and take it a little bit more small scale. But, um, for my next question, I just want to like, like, send a reminder that you don't actually have to answer this question, if you don't, you know, feel so inclined. And um, uh, uh, you don't- to not share any, like personal health information that you want to remain private, or also the health information of someone you know, who can identify, like giving any identifiable information for someone you may know. But with that in mind, I guess have you or anyone, you know, gotten sick during the COVID-19 outbreak?

Devyn Nguyen 38:48

Yes. I was sick. Most of us were affected by it. There are pretty like, there's like a handful of people who were- we were in contact with, or had been in contact with COVID and didn't get sick, but they still continue to be, you know, COVID safe and like are getting vaccinated. So it was kind of just unpredictable who it would affect, but um, yeah, we got pretty sick.

Rei Quinones Gil 39:18

So... [laughs] excuse me. So I guess what was your experience in responding to that? I guess, sickness.

Devyn Nguyen 39:32

Obviously, they shut down the gym so everybody could be safe, and especially during the holidays. Because yeah there was a little outbreak in Orange County. It's kind of like inevitable to come into contact with that because there's people who do not... who are not responsible on and go out even like with symptoms, but then at the same time, it's kind of hard to recognize the symptoms because in general, I have a sensitive stomach. So I wouldn't think anything of those symptoms because at first they were pretty mild. It just seemed like you know, everyday life issues. But so to kind of slow the spread, we shut down and make sure everybody who was at our workplace stayed home and like quarantined and got tested before anybody came back to the workplace. But, yeah, it's kind of hard to avoid in Orange County, because there's so many people, you can't control what they do. You know, and you go to the grocery store, and, you know, somehow you might come into contact with it.

Rei Quinones Gil 40:35

Yeah, yeah...um I guess like the next question I have is...I guess in what ways do you think that the...COVID-19 is affecting people's mental and/or physical health?

Devyn Nguyen 40:55

Mental health, I know... [Laughs].

Rei Quinones Gil 40:58

You know.

Devyn Nguyen 41:01

I know... I mean first of all, being quarantined can really take a toll, lack of social interaction and then while that's happening, just like the impending fear that you might, like, contract this sickness. That you don't know the- how it'll affect your body and it could be pretty deadly. That is, a big, you know, factor that's just like inducing anxiety and paranoia in a lot of people. So it's kind of just like the fear of the outside world, which is fair, but then you have these people who are kind of reckless, and that makes, you know, everybody's lives unfair. Because, you know, people are doing their social responsibility while others are not. And, I have some family members in San Francisco who, really, like- don't go outside at all. Don't go to the store, don't go to anything because of that fear and you can kind of see how it's affected their mental health over time. And I'm sure it's like that for a lot of people 'cuz everybody's opinions and beliefs and ways of living life, like, whether it's in the same family or your friends, things- people have become very split. And, this is like, a really. Um, I don't know... I would say, a big time to see people being split over their political beliefs, societal beliefs and then also COVID on top of that. So I think that COVID has been very harmful to a lot of people's mental healths and, and I don't know, there's so many things you can attribute it to but I think that a lot of people who are at fault are living their lives recklessly. [Laughs] But, I mean, it's a, it's like a pandemic so [sigh] I

mean, the definition is like you know, an uncontrollable spread of an infection so it's hard to really understand.

Rei Quinones Gil 43:12

I guess going forward, um, how... how would you say that the pandemic, I guess, compares to other big events that have happened in your lifetime?

Devyn Nguyen 43:30

I don't think, I don't... [Laughter] What do you mean compares? Like what does that...

Rei Quinones Gil 43:41

I guess other things that have happened... Like you know in our lives, like, other-other...I guess, you know that's a hard question, actually now that I'm here, yeah that's a hard question!

[Laughter]

Devyn Nguyen 43:57

I mean it's hard to compare 'cuz you know, events in my lifetime usually affect me or my family in particular and then this one affected everyone so it's hard to compare so, what do you mean?

Rei Quinones Gil 44:09

Well actually, now that you say that, it's kind of like...yeah it affects everyone and I feel like the one thing that I'm like, that's sticking out to me right now that it's like, okay, maybe we were too young but it's like our families and stuff, um...

Devyn Nguyen 44:24

Oh! I was like what do you mean?! [Laughter]. Oh yeah! I mean, like it's kind of like another recession right so...

Rei Quinones Gil 44:36

Yeah.

Devyn Nguyen 44:37

And like...2006, 2008, in that time, the way there was a recession. I'm sure it's pretty similar [laughs]. I mean a lot of people lost their jobs, lost their homes but I was like in elementary school. [Laughter]. So I couldn't really understand like, you know, I only understand the first-hand experience. But, I think COVID hit my family harder because at the time that we were still recovering from different, like, medical experiences within my family and expenses. So, it was just like pretty off timing to take a financial hit on top of everything. But I mean, it's... I don't remember the recession [laughter], like-like I definitely think COVID had hit us harder than the recession but I don't know because I'm a kid so, there were things that I didn't quite understand.

Rei Quinones Gil 45:35

Yeah. I mean [unintelligible].

Devyn Nguyen 45:51

'Cuz you know when you're younger and you're like, a child, you experience issues very differently right? Like your family tries to protect you from understanding all of the, like, the hardships when you're younger 'cuz you can't really understand things at the time so when you're older you kind of experience it by your family's side. And like, you know, you can see the truth behind everything and, um, you can, you know, kind of grasp the concepts more.

Rei Quinones Gil 46:25

Yeah. I know, that's interesting like this, I guess, reflection on um, on the future. Because I feel like, at least now that we're older and we're, you know, adults, um, you know you kind of can reflect on things like that, um. Because even though it didn't make sense at the time, and you know, all that, like now that we're older we're-we, you know, taking that, let's say the recession in mind, like we know that that happened and that affected us in some kind of way. Um. And so I guess, like, leading into my next question, I guess, knowing what you know now what do you think that individuals, communities or I guess governments need to keep in mind for the future? Take your time. [Laughter] I know I hit you with a hard one, huh?

Devyn Nguyen 47:23

So wait are you still comparing to the recession?

Rei Quinones Gil 47:25

No, it doesn't have to be compared to the recession. You can compare it to the recession if you'd like.

Devyn Nguyen 47:33

Because you kind of, you segued into that from the recession.

Rei Quinones Gil 47:34

Yeah, yeah, yeah. I segued into that from the recession.

Devyn Nguyen 47:39

So keep in mind now that we've experienced...'cuz you kinda said that now we're adults right? So...what do I think the government should do?

Rei Quinones Gil 47:43

Yeah, I mean...

Devyn Nguyen 47:55

Or communities should do?

Rei Quinones Gil 47:56

Government, communities, individuals...

Devyn Nguyen 47:59

What communities?

Rei Quinones Gil 48:00

Your communities. Yeah I mean, maybe you can like take this question in parts, I guess. It was just, the whole recession thing and like that, just kind of like just made me think of this next question 'cuz it's like that whole, you know, reflecting on the past. And how that's, you know, leads into the future. Um. So it's like what we're doing right now, what's going on right now, our responses individuals, as whole communities, as, you know, government bodies. What are things we should keep in mind for the future? Um. Like, with all that's happened during this pandemic.

Devyn Nguyen 48:45

I think that the pandemic showed a lot of weaknesses in the government and it's abilities to support a lot families and business and a lot, you know, they say this country is built upon small businesses and it failed small businesses. So I think like it showed a lot of holes within the like, economic structure. 'Cuz a lot of companies had to shut down, a lot of large corporations and small businesses and it was... like we were pretty unprepared for that. So I think we need resources to sustain families and their businesses. Yeah, I think most of it is a government issues 'cuz there's no way individuals and families can really prepare for that because we've experienced epidemics and stuff before but never to this extent so there's no way to anticipate something. Also like, when we would go to store right when the pandemic started everything was out of stock. There's nothing that we as people could've done to- to prepare for that. Because how would we know? And like how would we have the financial means to stock up on all these household products, like not everybody has the means to do that. And I mean like now, now like school-wise we can adapt to like hybrid modality which is also still an issue and a struggle for like, especially younger students who are like, you know, kids whose brains are still developing and having you know, like, kind of, developed with this really like technology based world where it's like, you know, when we were kids we learned in school and we learned with other kids so I think that that's something we need to focus on. As like how to adapt education for everyone. And then also for everyone in different socioeconomic backgrounds 'cuz there's some kids whose- who have a parent who's a stay at home parent and you know, they can kind of supervise them. But then there's some kids whose parents are working where not everybody has two parents. So I think like we need to really adapt like you know, education. And I don't know



how we could do that necessarily [laughs], that's not my expertise but, I mean, it's definitely a problem we all notice. And there's a lot of weaknesses in that. Yeah I think, that's the main thing, schools and work.

Rei Quinones Gil 51:18

So, okay next I'm gonna ask you two questions but I want you to keep in mind that they're two separate questions. Um. And so I'll ask the first- the first questions first [laughs], but what can you imagine your life being like in a year? And so, this is the more realistic question. This is like, you know, everything that's going on and everything that you anticipate, what do you think your life is going to be like in a year, realistically?

Devyn Nguyen 51:54

So I'm pretty set back, like financially, than I had anticipated. You know I thought I'd still be living in San Francisco, I thought I'd have a job up there. But, you know, so now in a year I'm hoping to continue my academic path. So, probably be living somewhere down here. Which is more affordable than San Francisco, to be able to like sustain my own independent life, I can't really afford what I had once wanted but it's okay I don't really want to live there anymore because I mean, COVID took a toll on many major cities where, you know, there's a lot of issues within those cities and like safety issues. So it's kind of shifted my perspective on the place I once lived. So probably gonna stay somewhere in Southern California and continue going to school. Yeah, that's probably where I'm gonna be in a year.

Rei Quinones Gil 53:00

Okay so now that you said that, now I'm not so sure about this next question but I'll ask it anyway.

Devyn Nguyen 53:06

Why?

Rei Quinones Gil 53:07

No because the next question is what do you hope your life is like in a year. Since like, I don't know maybe that realistic tone was a little bit much but...

Devyn Nguyen 53:17

Yeah well I mean, hopefully like I'd be going to school and having like a stable job and like living somewhere because that's where I'd wanna be in a year like hopefully I am- I have a secure place to live and a secure job but you know, realistically that might not be possible. I might be living with my family so... you know 'cuz I had, you know, intended to move out, what like, months ago, that was my goal. I was like okay, at this point, I'd be moved out by now. So like, today, thinking back, you know maybe a year ago, I would've thought I was gone. But, you

know, realistically the dates getting pushed back and like, financial circumstances keep changing, so who knows. Hopefully, I'm able to like live independently on my own. And I really readjusted my goals so hopefully I don't have to readjust them anymore.

Rei Quinones Gil 54:24

I don't know, does that- I mean how does that make you feel I guess? With like, yeah, readjusting goals and expectations and just, where you think your life will be heading? Since like, you know, so much has changed and so much is going to continue changing.

Devyn Nguyen 54:43

Yeah, I mean it sucks but I think it's also like [unintelligible] because either way, my original goals were a little financially ambitious. But, I mean, along with the rest of the world I've had to like, you know, keep like readjusting- adapting you know, my future goals. I think it definitely could be worse I mean, at least I -already finished school. A lot of people still have to continue to do that. So I feel like, I don't feel too bad individually. I'm pretty optimistic and I...focusing on, you know, supporting others. 'Cuz I, at least I have, you know, a safe home right now and I have a family that takes care of me and we take care of each other. So, I mean, I'm pretty grateful for that and, you know, having a stable job. Or, well yeah, 'cuz I have two jobs so you know, I'm... I think it sucks but I think I have a lot more to be grateful for.

Rei Quinones Gil 55:42

That's so sweet, you're gonna make me cry. [Laughter] So I guess before we leave off do you have any last thoughts, anything you want to add on? Or any questions for me about the project itself? Or, you know, any loose ends you wanna tie up?

Devyn Nguyen 56:17

No, I really think we talked about everything. [Laughter] You know, I think we took a lot. A Lot. We talked a lot. Anything else?

Rei Quinones Gil 56:29

Okay well I'm going to end the recording here.

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