

Transcript of Interview with Victor Madsen by Junho Yoon

Interviewee: Victor Madsen

Interviewer: Junho Yoon

Date: 09/18/2020

Location (Interviewee):

Location (Interviewer):

Abstract: Victor Madsen is a freshman at Northeastern University. He went to a high school in Florida, and he shares his experiences since the beginning of the pandemic. Mr. Madsen shares his story about how he was stuck in the Bahamas for a long time due to changes in traveling policies during the pandemic.

Junho Yoon 00:01

This is Junho Yoon from Northeastern University. This is an interview for COVID-19 archive project for the class *Origins of Today: History of Global Pandemics*, class code HIST 1215. I have Victor Madsen, another Northeastern student. We are currently in the third-floor meeting room in Westin Copley place. Before the interview begins, Victor, do you give your consent to be interviewed for the COVID-19 archive project?

Victor Madsen 00:30

Yes, I get full consent to be recorded.

Junho Yoon 00:32

Perfect. Now, could you state today's date and the time right now?

Victor Madsen 00:36

Today's date is September 18, 1:52pm.

Junho Yoon 00:41

All right, great. So, let's start the question with our first—let's start the interview with our first question. So just give us—just tell us the, your, your background, you know, where are you from? And how was your life back at home?

Victor Madsen 00:57

So, I have a pretty unique background, I would say. My parents are from Brazil; I speak Portuguese, and I grew up in the Bahamas from my dad's work. And during seventh grade, I moved to Florida with my mother; my parents are separated. So, my father's in the Bahamas and my mother's in Florida, and I went to high school in Florida. And yeah, that's pretty much it. That's kind of how my family dynamic was so like at different parts of the world, obviously a warm climate and everything, so...

Junho Yoon 01:34

I see. If you don't mind sharing more about your family dynamics, like how you lived in Florida, but did you often visit your father in the Bahamas?

Victor Madsen 01:47

Yeah, so I went to high school in Florida, a school called St. Andrew's school in Boca Raton, specifically. And every break, I would go visit my father in the Bahamas. So that's how we manage time between my parents. And yeah.

Junho Yoon 02:03

I see. Um, and how's it—did you like play any sports in school or anything?

Victor Madsen 02:10

Yeah, I played soccer in school. We had a season before the pandemic eventually hit. There was no problem with that, a lot of the other kids weren't able to have that opportunity. Especially with the sports in the, in the later months during the year, so yeah.

Junho Yoon 02:27

I see. So, how's it like, back at home when the—when the COVID started, you know, getting bigger in the United States?

Victor Madsen 02:36

So, I first started to hear about COVID, I'll say in February, when it was first originating in China. Didn't really think that much about it, saw it on the news, didn't think this would become that much of a problem, thought it would just be isolated there particularly. That was my initial kind of perception of it. And once it started to spread, a lot of talk came from, to my school from my parents, like, "Oh, we should check this out, like be informed," and I was like, "Yeah, yeah. "But like, I started to read a lot more about it, starting to try and gain new information during those earlier stages.

Junho Yoon 03:14

So, it wasn't like that bad until like it started hitting?

Victor Madsen 03:19

Yeah when it—when it started to spread, and I started to hear more media outlets talking about how people were dying, things like that. And it's hard to kind of hit me like, oh, it's actually a big deal.

Junho Yoon 03:30

Okay, um, could you, if you don't mind, could you share any like personal experiences or feelings that you felt towards the current pandemic?

Victor Madsen 03:40

Yes. So originally, starting in early March, it started to come to my school and to their concern. When we were left on spring break, I went to the Bahamas to go see my father. While I was there, when I first arrived there was zero cases in the Bahamas, and through that I wasn't really worried, I was okay, thought school is going to start back up again after spring break, but no one really knew it was very, it was very, it was a period of like uncertainty. And then when I was there, as soon as I arrived, there became to gain a few more cases on the island. So, every day there are a couple more, a couple more, and the government started to look closely into it and turn out to enforce very heavy like, lock downs and restrictions because of their worry of the health care because the health care was so minimal, like not a lot of space for health care, so they became really strict. And once the second week hit, my school declared that it was going full online, but I needed also needed to go back to Florida to see my mother. But as soon as I was going to get the plane ticket, turns out that the planes were canceled. So, no flights in and out of the island. You're stuck here. Luckily, I was okay because I have Bahamian residency. So that wasn't the issue. But I was stuck there, and the, the lockdowns were extremely strict. They had certain days on the weekends where you weren't allowed to even leave your house, otherwise, you'd be fined \$15,000. And there were moments where to go to the supermarket, it'd be a complete mess, because everyone would go at the same time. I experienced a lot of different issues, and the government had these plans, and they changed them and changed them over and over and over. So, like, I experienced, like, how it was like, for them to go through it for such a small like, so to speak, third world country to go through a pandemic. And I thought it was not really reasonable, because they didn't truly look at the way that other countries were doing it, rather than trying to deal with it themselves. Which I thought was a little bit chaotic in a way, but that was my overall experience like, with the whole thing in the beginning of it.

Junho Yoon 06:12

So, like it wasn't so there- the government response, wasn't that satisfactory for you?

Victor Madsen 06:18

Yeah, it wasn't that satisfactory, and once it really started to get bad, and I really knew that this was not going in the right direction, emotionally I was a little bit confused, a little bit lost, a little bit of sad at the same time. It's my senior year and all the events are getting kind of postponed or canceled and things like that. So, it was tough, it was tough for everyone.

Junho Yoon 06:40

Right. Okay, um, so, were you anxious that you wouldn't be able to go back to Florida, or like, how did you feel about, you know, being stuck in the island?

Victor Madsen 06:56

After- I was anxious, to be honest with you, because I was very focused on school, wanting to, to do well, especially the last month, like not giving up like, persevering through it all. And for me, I focus best when I'm back at home, next to my school, that's just how I am. And being in another country, it was just a little bit strange at first, and I really wanted to go back. I had to see my mother, you know, so like, I was very anxious, to be honest with you in the beginning and very, very, like emotional in a way. And a lot of thoughts going through my head every day, "When am I gonna be able to go back? Like, am I gonna be stuck here forever?"

Junho Yoon 07:35

Oh, I see. Okay. Um, so we're kind of running short on time. So, I'm just gonna hop into the last question. How do you feel about the pandemic now, like, how's your college life, like, during the pandemic, the situation, you know?

Victor Madsen 07:49

I'm actually, at first, the whole situation of going to college was very questionable in terms of my family, whether they would be okay with it. But since things here have started to be under control, in a way, people have gotten very respectable, respectful with social distancing and things like that. I figured that I never want to lose the experience. And if I had the opportunity to come to school, which Northeastern was very keen about in the first place, I'm going to take it, and I had a discussion with my

family, and they were very positive about it. Led me the right way and decided that this was ultimately the best thing to do to come to school here.

Junho Yoon 08:25

So, it must be, so it must have been like very meaningful to you, I guess?

Victor Madsen 08:28

Yes. It was very meaningful to be able to just be here right now and meet new people. I'm very happy for that.

Junho Yoon 08:33

Okay. Well, that's the last question, and thank you for the interview and your answers.

Victor Madsen 08:38

Thank you so much.