

Transcript of Interview of Trisha Howes by Anna Schaller

Interviewee: Trisha Howes

Interviewer: Anna Schaller

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Transcriber: Victoria Clark

Abstract: Trisha Howes discusses the course she's taking on past pandemics and how it has affected her view on the COVID-19 pandemic.

Anna Schaller 0:04

Hello, Trisha, do you consent to being interviewed and recorded for the COVID-19 Archive Project?

Trisha Howes 0:14

Yes, I do.

Anna Schaller 0:15

And could you please state the date and time of this interview?

Trisha Howes 0:19

The date is December 4 of 2020. And the time is 9:05am.

Anna Schaller 0:25

Perfect. Thank you. So I was wondering how, from your knowledge of past pandemic, from this course, how this pandemic compares to other things you've learned about and other disease, pandemics, and outbreaks?

Trisha Howes 0:46

Definitely. So I think this pandemic overall, kind of parallels almost every other pandemic we've learned about, in that it kind of started with it an inability to really nail down or really decide on like, what was the main contributing factor to the, like, increase in the rate of spread. And I think that has really led to, or at least to us, I know in other places in the world, they're doing much better than us. That has obviously led to the detrimental effects of this pandemic, with the economy with kind of just like social life in general, and especially with mental health. In the US, I think that has been seriously kind of declining in its overall, like, where we were for mental health purposes, has really been taking like a hit due to this pandemic. And I think that just is kind of due to people not really knowing who to trust, what to do exactly. There's just been kind of like mixed signals from everywhere. And I feel like that kind of happens a lot in the pandemics that we've learned about in this course, is just kind of a lack of trust in the government bodies, the scapegoating of certain demographics of people, you have Asian Americans being scapegoated in the beginning, and still the lasting racist or lasting racism that resulted from that, I feel like you can still feel the effects of, some I feel like it parallels like kind of those ways.

Anna Schaller 2:42

Yeah. So kind of going off of that, do you think it was good or helpful? Or gave you more hope in learning about past pandemics as we like going through this one? Or do you think it was sort of not as great to learn about them?

Trisha Howes 3:02

I don't think it gave me necessarily more hope, I think it was more comforting to learn that this has happened before. Unfortunately, this will probably happen again, and that everyone's reactions, both my own reactions, and everyone around me, was kind of typical. I mean, we see it time and time again, history repeats itself over and over again, because we can't seem to learn from our mistakes. So I think learning about all the fear mongering and all the scapegoating that has happened in previous pandemics and kind of the complacency in the acceptance of the effects of various pandemics and epidemics and the death rate. And seeing how that has happened in history before and are seeing how it's happening again, it didn't necessarily give me hope. But it made me feel comforted in that in, I guess, humankind in a way and that like we aren't awful people, this just happens. And as awful as that is to say it's happened before. Like this is nothing new, in a way.

Anna Schaller 4:13

Yeah. Lastly, is there one specific thread that you've seen, throughout all the pandemics we've learned about that also is happening now, that is a special interest?

Trisha Howes 4:31

Thank you. It's like what I said before, like the complacency and the acceptance of the test, and the higher mortality rates. We saw it with the cholera pandemic, the cholera epidemic epidemic, right the cholera epidemic in the 19th century, how people just kind of accepted that this is the way things are now and began to resume their normal lives. Even though people are still dying, the disease is still being spread. And people were just kind of disregarding the disease. I think that's something that I've, I saw when we were reading about that pandemic, that epidemic that is kind of made me realize like, "Oh my gosh, that's what's happening happening right now with this pandemic." It's awful. It's horrible. And I definitely think people need to kind of change their mindset and be more aware of how their actions do have like that ripple effect. Even if you're not a carrier, you go and out could signal to your friend who is an asymptomatic carrier that, "Oh, it's okay to go out," when, in reality, it's not because we still are living in this time when people are dying daily that for reasons that are entirely preventable.

Anna Schaller 5:56

Yeah. Well, thank you for participating in this project. That is the end of the interview.

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