Interviewee: Spataro, Joseph

Interviewer(s): Nicholas, Damon

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Transcribed by: Otter.ai

Edited by: Nicholas, Damon

Byline: 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. This interview was conducted through the University of Cincinnati in partial fulfillment of credit for HIST3158 under the supervision of Dr. Rebecca S. Wingo.

5:08PM, Eastern Standard Time

**Damon N:**

Alright, we're recording. My name is Damon Nicolas, I am here with Joseph Spataro. The date is 2020 September 30. The time is 5:18pm. We are talking over discord currently. I am located in Cincinnati and he's at school in Daytona Beach, Florida.

So I just wanted to briefly go over and I'm forced to do this, but I want to briefly review the informed consent and deed of gift document that you've signed. This interview 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 pandemic. We have designed this project so that professional researchers and the broader public can create an upload their oral histories to an 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, these recordings demographic information and the verbatim transcripts will be deposited in the Journal of the plug here a COVID-19 archive, and the Indiana University Library System for the use of researchers and general public. Do you have any questions about the project that I could? Answer?

Taking part in the study is voluntary, you may choose not to take part or you may leave the study and time leaving the study will not result in any penalty or loss of 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 IUPUI, or the IUPUI Arts and Humanities Institute or universe Cincinnati, through which we are running this project. By participating in this project. This means that your interviews will be courted in digital video and or audio format and maybe transcribed. The recordings and possible transcriptions of my interviews, any copies of any supplementary documents or additional photos that you wish to share. And the informed consent and deed of gifts made deposit in the Journal of plague year a COVID-19. Archive in the Indiana University Library System and will be able to will be available to both researchers and the general public. Your name it means our identification will not be confidential. Do any questions regarding this?

**Joseph S:**

No.

**Damon N:**

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

**Joseph S:**

 Yes, I understand.

**Damon N:**

I'm also asking that you will verbally confirm that you have agreed that your interview will be made available under the following license being the Creative Commons Attribution Noncommercial sharealike 4.0 International and the COVID-19 oral history project the journal 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 preform perform broadcasts create derivative works from distribute the oral history materials in any manner or media that is now existing or hereafter developed in that fertility throughout the world. I agree that this oral history materials may be used by the voices from the waterways and IU including it's assigns and transferees for any purpose, including but not limited to marketing, advertising, publicity, or other promotional purposes. I agree that IU will have final editorial authority over the use of the oral history materials, and I waive any right to inspect or improve of any future use of the oral history materials. Moreover, I agree that the public has the right to use the materials under the terms of US copyright law section 107 of the United States Copyright Act.

**Joseph S:**

Yes.

**Damon N:**

I want to ask you for a verbal confirmation. The have agreed your interviewee will be made available to the public immediately. Yes. See, you agree that you're okay with this being made to the public immediately?

**Joseph S:**

Yes.

**Damon N:**

Okay, background questions, I don't need to ask your date and time. Um, so first thing is, could you just say your full name? And what are the primary activities that you would normally do on a day to day basis?

**Joseph S:**

 I'm Joseph Spataro. Is that pre COVID? Or now?

**Damon N:**

Uuh, I'm gonna ask for pre COVID.

**Joseph S:**

 Well, normally, I'd be going to all my classes on campus, as opposed to the hybrid online thing that we have going on now. I'd be spending a lot of time at the climbing gym, just going out to dinner with friends or like grocery shopping and whatever events the school has going on just sort of like socializing with kids in class, I guess.

**Damon N:**

Alright, so where do you live right now? And what is it like to live there?

**Joseph S:**

I’m in Daytona Beach, Florida. It's kind of interesting. Because a lot of people here don't care. So I think the limitations on like, going out aren't as bad as they are in other parts of the country. So it's still pretty open.

**Damon N:**

When you first learned about COVID. Were you in that same location?

**Joseph S:**

Yeah.

**Damon N:**

What were your initial thoughts about it back then?

**Joseph S:**

 Well, I guess I used to think it wasn't gonna be a big problem, because it still wasn't really in the States or like, that was sort of back when it was like, first in Washington. And that was it was like, sort of just there. And I was like, that's fine. It'll just stay in Washington. that's their problem. But now it's now it's a global thing. It's definitely not just Washington's problem. Mm hmm.

**Damon N:**

So regarding issues for, like, COVID-19, what concerns you the most? Let's throw some examples out like the, like, long or short term health issues, economic tolls it's taken, like social tolls.

**Joseph S:**

I could I say that the immediate health Yeah, issues. Definitely just that. Just like, Well, first off getting it. But also just like, being stuck at home. not exercising, or having fun. Mental stuff, too.

**Damon N:**

Yeah. I feel like a lot of people are feeling the same things. Yeah. Um, so regarding employment, did you have a job?

**Joseph S:**

No, I did not.

**Damon N:**

Has COVID-19 affected the employment of anyone you now?

**Joseph S:**

No, not even my parents.

**Damon N:**

Do you have any concerns about the effect of COVID on the economy? In a broad sense.

**Joseph S:**

Yeah, just I mean, like, currently, obviously, everything's like, pretty down. But I think things are starting to go back up. And I think as soon as there's a vaccine, it's like, everything's gonna be fine. It's just sort of like a temporary strain hahaha. Yeah.

**Damon N:**

All right. Um, regarding your family, and household. How's that? How's COVID affected your family's day to day activities? And I feel like this is probably more applicable when you like, live with them.

**Joseph S:**

So yeah, like over the summer?

**Damon N:**

 Yeah. If you could give us for that perspective. That'd be good.

**Joseph S:**

Yeah, um, well, I guess like, once that started to ramp up. My dad started working from home. He actually worked at the hospital at the time. So he still had to, like, work. And he still does work from home most days. And my mom was or still is a dental hygienist. And I think they closed down for a little bit when it first started. But now they've already opened back up and she still goes to work every day now. So it's was a little bit weird. But other than other than that, everything was pretty normal.

**Damon N:**

Okay, so you didn't really feel like the pandemics really affected how you like, associate or talk to your friends and family?

**Joseph S:**

 Not really, no.

**Damon N:**

 So what do you feel like have been some of the biggest challenges you've had to face during the COVID outbreak?

**Joseph S:**

Definitely the social aspect of it. Just not like not being able to go out very easily or like that. hang out with people. Is it more so like, just more of a sense of being alone.

**Damon N:**

Yeah, I'm sure. Yeah. So you've been able to do any things with recreation, like recreationally with your family or friend groups during COVID?

**Joseph S:**

Um, I’ve gone outside a couple times yeah. I like to go on hikes and like, I've I rode my bike a couple times when I was still back home, just to like, get out. But it's definitely changed it.

**Damon N:**

So, obviously, like, I can already know you for to what extent that Discord friends can know each other. But you're obviously you were like, more always an outdoorsy guy. Would you say you've maybe gone out less as a result of COVID?

**Joseph S:**

Probably a little bit less. Just because everything like, I don't know, people just kind of stop doing stuff. Yeah, so definitely less. I've been kind of just like, stuck inside. Playing games. Most days.

**Damon N:**

Getting mad at Overwatch.

**Joseph S:**

Yeah. When I'd rather be like at the climbing gym or like doing trips with the climbing club or I don't know, being on campus with people.

**Damon N:**

 Um, so regarding your school specifically, I think it's kind of interesting that you do go to a school in Florida because Florida is like, the Florida of America.

**Joseph S:**

 Yup \*laughs\*.

**Damon N:**

So regarding this community questions, it'd be cool if you could try and answer them just from your perspective of a college student in Florida. Yeah. So regarding the community, not only like the school itself, but like the area around the school, how has it been affected by COVID?

**Joseph S:**

Definitely less than other places. Because, I mean, we still have like, almost all our classes are still in person, at least somewhat like all of my classes are, like, show up once a once a week. And then the rest is like online. So you still like go to class and see all the same people like in class, it's just you have to wear the masks on campus, dude. And that's like pretty much it.

**Damon N:**

Do you feel like people are pretty receptive to wearing masks? Because obviously, you see stuff online about people.

**Joseph S:**

Yeah. So. So at my school, yes, most of the kids are smart enough to wear the mask, but like outside and around town and stuff. You don't really get a lot of people like, you know, with it around their neck or like not even covering their nose or just like, yeah, stuff like that. Like he can tell the like community outside the school is definitely not so into it doesn't really care a whole lot.

**Damon N:**

Cool. Um, so well, the follow up question that was like how people are responding to it. But would you say like, it's pretty pocketed in terms of mask usage at your college?

**Joseph S:**

Um, so, well, there's actually a, like, a county order that you have to wear a mask if you're indoors. Mm hmm. So you kind of do like, see people at stores mostly wearing them? And I think it's got a lot to do with that, like, order. But you know, every now and then, somebody will not. But okay. Yeah.

**Damon N:**

This is a really broad question. Some scraps, like one part of it. Have you seen anyone around you, like change their opinions related to the pandemic, as its progressed?

**Joseph S:**

 As in like what they think about it? Severity wise?

**Damon N:**

 Yeah, or even just the information behind it.

**Joseph S:**

Yeah, I think I think most people are like me were at first, like, they weren't worried. And now it's kind of to the point where it is now it's like, oh, wait, it's kind of real. And then also, like, I've seen some people kind of like back off from it, though, as well. Like, oh, this is kind of crazy. This is a lot. And then they start to like, look at some of the numbers about fatalities and are like, almost less worried just because it's all like, you know, it's mostly old people. And they're like college kids. So they're, like, they kind of less worried about it now.

**Damon N:**

So two ideas being “self-isolation” and “flattening” the curb. Both of those in quotations have emerged during the pandemic. How have you or your family or friends responded to the ideas of self-isolating and flattening the curb?

**Joseph S:**

I guess probably as you're supposed to be on it. We don't really go out when we don't have to just like to go to the grocery store. We always get food to go if we're like Getting it from a restaurant whenever, like eaten anywhere. And we've worn our masks everywhere.

**Damon N:**

So there wasn't like, really any negativity in your like social sphere. Those ideas?

**Joseph S:**

No, my family was definitely like, just alright. Like, this is what we have to do now. Yeah, yeah. I mean, I know. I know, like some kids at school that are super… like there's this one kid in the climbing club that's like, yeah, COVID is a social construct. It's a bunch of BS. He like never wears his mask. It’s a little, yeah it’s a little sus.

**Damon N:**

Okay. Um, so I guess this would be a good follow up question. I'm like, did you ever really talk to that guy at all, like, pre pandemic? Would you say?

**Joseph S:**

Uh, actually, he’s a new student this year, so no.

**Damon N:**

Okay. Because I was gonna say a follow up question was how has COVID changed relationships with, like, people around you?

**Joseph S:**

Oh, yeah, not a ton I guess. Because most things, like over summer, I don't have like a ton of friends back home. So I mostly just kind of like, there'll be people on Discord. And then like, my family, who they still just continued working most like most days kind of was just the same. And nothing really went like worse, but it definitely wasn't like, it didn't improve any relationships, either. or anything like that. Yeah.

**Damon N:**

 Um, so regarding your health, have you or anybody, you know, gotten sick during the COVID-19 outbreak?

**Joseph S:**

 No, not anybody that I know.

**Damon N:**

Okay, and in what ways do you think COVID-19 is affecting people's mental and or physical health?

**Joseph S:**

A lot. For sure. It's just like, not being able to go out and just be with people like all the time very easily as well. Like, I know, some people have their small friend groups are like the four or five of them, like, will hang out, and they'll just like, leave it at that to try to not, like spread it everywhere. That's kind of like what I'm doing, like, hang out with like two people every now and then. And that's pretty much it. But that's definitely been, like, rough. Just sort of not like yeah, just not like socializing with people or talking with people or doing like literally anything. Mm hmm. And then same thing with like, physical. I know a bunch of people like that go to the gym all the time. And then the gyms have been closed in certain areas, like for forever. Yeah, it's just kind of the equipment. Yeah, like, if you don't have this stuff in your house, it can be kind of hard to get anything done, especially depending on where you live, like just going for, like a hike or things like that. Like if you're in a city or something. It's not a very, like doable thing that just go outside and get some exercise in and stuff like that. So I think it's definitely made people not lazier, but you just can’t.

**Damon N:**

Yeah, lack access for me is definitely why I don't work out.

\*both laugh\*

**Damon N:**

So regarding like, your news intake, what's been your primary source of news during the pandemic?

**Joseph S:**

I mean, I guess I can just say, the internet in general, I don't have like a specific, like news channel that I get everything from I try to just –

**Damon N:**

Like Reddit?

**Joseph S:**

Yeah Reddit,I get a lot of stuff from Reddit, like the Google, like Google News, I guess, kind of when you tap on the little Google search bar, and like, you go to the more news or whatever, it'll just pop up with a bunch of stuff. So I kind of got some info that way.

**Damon N:**

 you really wouldn’t say your new sources have change dduring the course that pandemic would, you?3

**Joseph S:**

 No, I’ve always used kind of the same stuff.

**Damon N:**

Okay. Um, with all the media attention from COVID-19 Do you think there's important issues that the media is covering or perhaps not covering because of all the attention?

**Joseph S:**

I think there's maybe some international stuff going on. That's been less less talked about, like, I know, all the and other people in China, the Uyghurs or whatever, how you pronounce it? Yeah, yeah. Yeah, there's something going on. It's all the stuff that I get on social media because I literally don't hear about it anywhere else. And then like on Instagram, it'll be like, you know, somebody's got some posts about you know, Yemen, how they're having some sort of crisis.

**Damon N:**

Like I know Armenia, like in a war with Turkey right now, almost.

**Joseph S:**

Yeah. And I think it's just like because everything is kind of just so crappy here. Nobody has, like, the time of day to think about, like anywhere else, I guess because it's already like, Oh, I guess a ton of people are unemployed and everything's like kind of crap and then nobody wants to think about, you know, other places, but…

**Damon N:**

Okay, that’s a good answer. So regarding our government, this is gonna be a fun one. How have municipal leaders and government officials in your community responded to the outbreak? Do you know anything specific to Daytona or Florida?

**Joseph S:**

Yeah, so Well, like I said, there's the there's the mandated mask thing when you're indoors here in Daytona that's not even a state thing though. That's just like, in the county of Volusia where I am. Put Like, as far as I know, they're not super like pushing it, like a state government level, like a lot. Uh, I think it's like, mostly it's just a bunch of stores doing it themselves. Like, if the company cares, then they'll like actually enforce it. And if they don't, it's kind of like, whatever. So I'd say they haven't. They haven't done a whole lot. Like I don't know, there's always I see pictures of like Miami Beach still being packed and stuff like that, like, recently ----

**Damon N:**

So do you mean haven't done a whole lot in response to the enforcement or just in response to the outbreak?

**Joseph S:**

Both and like, like, this mask mandate, like took a little while to come? And then the enforcement of it is also like, I'm pretty sure you could be fined however much money but it's not like there's police officers in every store like I've never seen anybody like, actually care about it. I mean, I'm sure stores have the right to like kick people out. But they don't care either that much.

**Damon N:**

Yeah, it's a bar like to street like a few streets over from my house that is on a busy street. A bunch of cops always drive by and like, everyone's just outside ripping heaters, not wearing any masks.

Okay. Do you have any additional thoughts on how any leader from like a local to a federal level are responding to the crisis? Or even, like, if they may be doing it differently from someone else?

**Joseph S:**

I think everybody's kind of been pretty bad at it. But obviously, like some states have taken things like, like ramped it way up a lot of the bigger states because they kind of have to, like places like New York and California. Like, there's just so many people if you'd like… I mean, I guess Florida is a big state too. But those states like, definitely, if Florida could sort of take, like, meet them halfway there, like enforcement and their rules and stuff. That'd be pretty good. But, like in New Hampshire, because it's such a small state. It's like pretty chill, and there was like, single digit days of like, positivity rates and stuff like that. So I think it's not like, they don't have to go that extreme, because it's not really like, and if it hasn’t spread….

**Damon N:**

Yeah, I think population density has something to do with it.

**Joseph S:**

 Yeah.

**Damon N:**

 Okay, so regarding the future, Do you think that the COVID experience will transform how you think about your circles or community as a whole?

**Joseph S:**

I guess it'll make me appreciate them, like a little bit more, being able to actually see them and stuff. But I don't know. I've always lived a weird life.

**Damon N:**

Okay. All right. Well, speaking of your weird life, compared to other big events that have happened in your lifetime, how does this pandemic compare?

**Joseph S:**

 It's definitely like the most, like, of all the events that have happened, it's probably the thing that's impacted me the most directly, because like, I don't know, a lot of things I've just been like, Alright, whatever. I mean, I've moved a bunch. So I'm kind of used to like not having friends, but you always like I was able to meet new people pretty quick. But like, I guess what's nice about this is I'm not like losing any friends. It's just like, I can't see them for a little bit. But, I guess it's it's probably not like, the worst thing though.

**Damon N:**

Yeah, honestly, I the only thing like event wise that could really like relate to the scale is like 911. But yeah, I was like, super young. When that happened. I just remember my parents not letting me go into our TV room.

**Joseph S:**

Oh, yeah. I was -- I was on vacation in Hawaii. When that happened. I was like, I was like one or two. So I started I obviously don't remember it.

**Damon N:**

Um, so what do you imagine your life being like a year from now?

**Joseph S:**

Back to normal. (Back to normal?) Honestly. Yeah. Just like everything normal, no more masks no more, like, distancing or COVID limiting groups or anything? Yeah.

**Damon N:**

So that's basically what you're hoping for, essentially?

**Joseph S:**

 Yeah.

**Damon N:**

So with knowing what you now know, now regarding COVID, and these sorts of diseases, what do you think that people communities or governments need to keep in mind for in the future?

**Joseph S:**

Uh, just having a better, like, response ready, like, having some sort of like pandemic team or something, like some general response that they can apply to any sort of, like health issue that, you know, goes across the country around the world. Stuff like that. Just be better prepared.

**Damon N:**

All right, cool. Well, that concludes on my interview questions, so.

**Joseph S:**

I hope those are like sort of good answers. Yeah, I'm pretty boring person. So I find like, I don't know, I can't help it. But I don't know anybody that's died from COVID. I mean, I'm glad that I don't know a lot of those, like, you know, like, nothing's like super changed in my life filter in terms of jobs and stuff.

**Damon N:**

Yeah, you're okay. The whole point in, like, just these interview questions is to get like as many people's perspectives on the idea as we can. So, yeah. This is the perspective of a gamer. \*laughs\*