

Transcript of Interview with Celia White by Marion Lougheed

Interviewee: Celia White

Interviewer: Marion Lougheed

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Transcriber: Marion Lougheed, Victoria Clark

Abstract: Celia White is a law student at a university in Toronto, B.C. She recounts how her life has been affected by COVID-19 and her thoughts on how the world has reacted to it.

Additionally, she talks how COVID-19 has affected her family, where she gets her news, and what conspiracy theories she's seen floating around,

Marion Lougheed (ML): Um, yeah! So, um could I just get you to say your name?

Celia White (CW): Celia White

ML: And the time? And date?

CW: Um, it's May 27th at 2:09 Eastern Standard Time.

ML: Yup, ok, great, um, and you said you're ok with having your video recorded as well as audio?

CW: Yes

ML: Great and how old are you?

CW: 29.

ML: And what's your gender? If you'd like to share.

CW: Female.

ML: And ethnicity?

CW: Um, British White Caucasian

ML: Sure. And where do you live?

CW: I live um, in Toronto like North York. What is this? Is this North York?

ML: Yea it's, it's North York, yeah, I mean its technically part of Toronto but it's, yeah, North York is the neighbourhood.

CW: Okay.

CW: But I also have permanent residency in Nanaimo in B.C.

ML: Great and you spend your summers there, usually, right?

CW: Yeah, well, I only just moved here in August 2019.

ML: Just in time for Covid.

CW: Yeah, exactly.

ML: So why did you move-

CW: So, what, what-

CW: Sorry?

ML: Why did you move?

CW: For school I'm going to law school here at York.

ML: Great and what's it like living there?

CW: On campus?

ML: Yup.

CW: Or there being B.C.?

ML: Uh, either one, whichever one you want to talk about.

CW: Um, I've never lived, uh, in residences before or like on campus, um, so, it's, it's a new experience, um, it's weird to be so removed from the city and like so many amenities, when I think a big attraction of living in Toronto is like the multiculturalism and all of the amazing food and activities and opportunities and residence is, like campus is just, just removed enough that it's not super accessible so it's been, it's been challenging, I guess, to live here when I'm so used to living very entrenched in community in BC where I grew up close to family and friends and also with a lot of access to, um, outdoor activities, which are difficult to find here, like they obviously exist but it's hard to access them in the same way without a vehicle and, um, to have a similar kind of relationship where like there's always tons of people in parks here versus, like, being able to find a beach and be there all by yourself back home.

ML: Great thanks. So, what do you spend your time doing normally like pre-pandemic what were some of the activities you'd do on a day-to-day basis including a job or school or anything like that?

CW: Uh, So I had classes full time, um, I would go to campus five days a week except for the days that I decided not to because I was lazy. Um, and I, once a week I had a cello lesson with a

cello teacher here on campus, so I'd walk over to his office. I would go to the gym and the pool somewhat regularly and maybe, once every two weeks, I would leave campus to go downtown to visit my girlfriend and we'd often go out somewhere, eat out at a restaurant or, um, go to a movie, something like that.

ML: So, when you first learned about COVID-19, what were your thoughts about it?

CW: Um, hm. When I first learned about it., I'm trying to think about how I first learned about it. Oh! Actually, I was really, I was really sick when I first learned about it, with what seemed to be a flu, and the early narratives about COVID-19 had very specific, a very specific list of symptoms, um, which is interesting to look back on because those have consistently changed and expanded and, so, in the beginning I was like, "Oh, I definitely do not have Covid," because I had a super wet cough, and everything around Covid-19 was, um, pointed towards a dry cough, and, so, I remember I think it was a Wednesday and I had a night class and I remember reading about it online and being like, "Oh well, I'll go to class anyways because I really can't miss this one and I'll just sit away from the other students, and I definitely don't have Covid so its not a problem," which is a very different attitude then I would take now, um, and I remember a student passing around hand sanitizer so that everyone could use it which is also funny to think about because like passing the bottle around it feels like is a behaviour that people wouldn't participate in now either and we talked about, in class, we talked about. it was a class on globalization, actually. Globalization and the law, um, so we talked about the interconnectedness of the world through markets and travel and, um, social understanding of public health and how all of those were, were changing and narratives were being introduced that were unprecedented in terms of a threat to public health that was ubiquitous, I guess. And then I went home that night and I was, I remember feeling very scared but also like I had, I had, I was of two minds, two very distinct minds where one was that I was very scared, um, and felt overwhelmed because I had no idea what to expect and the possibilities were quite terrifying and I was especially worried about my mum, who's super high risk, but then my other mind was, um, really nonchalant like, um, oh it's probably not gonna be that big of a deal and I'm glad that people are, are responding so severely to it but what that means in that we'll have it under control in no time, um, and it's like nothing to worry about or have anxiety over.

ML: And how have your thoughts changed since then? You alluded to it a little bit but-

CW: Um, I still really experience that like, two sided mindset where I, I often flip flop between, um, having a lot of anxiety and, um, feeling like a deep sadness about how truly horrible this experience has been for so many communities and individuals, um, and also, for like society, um, as a whole in terms of businesses failing and people losing access to certain things and, um, just a very dramatic change and I'm like really afraid about people that I love getting ill and I know of people who have died actually, like my friend's uncle, so it feels very real and tangible, um, but then the, I still have this other mindset where I'm like it's gonna go away any minute like it feels, so it still feels so surreal is part of it because, in my very close social circle and like what I

visually see on a day to day basis, feels quite similar to my previous life other than, um, like the limited activities that I have now. So it's kind of like a, an abstract, intellectualized fear where sometimes I can forget how real it is and, um, yeah and, and not take it as seriously. I'm trying to think of an example um. I guess just like going out and not wearing a face mask and, um, I've become a lot more fastidious about like washing my hands and being really careful about um physically distancing myself and other people that I'm not regularly interacting with, um, but I still, I still like leave the house and, I got in a cab the other day and the cab had like plastic sheaths up and everything but, um, I'm still participating in behaviour that's potentially risky because it just like, the threat of death I guess, which is the most or one of the most severe possibilities of this doesn't feel real.

ML: So, when you got in the cab would you like to share where you were going?

CW: Yeah, I was, so I have two pet rats, and I was shipping them through Air Canada cargo to B.C. because I am, going back to B.C. in early June, um, and I wanted to, like, get them there safely before I left. So, yeah, I brought them in a cage with myself and the cab driver to Air Canada cargo and that is also kind of interesting because there's a public perception around rats that they're disease carrying, so there's, there's just an added variable that is interesting, um, that I find people negotiate in their minds when they interact with me when I have physically the rats with me of like how, what they're thinking about in terms of protecting their health. There's a like an added variable there.

ML: Did you notice any specific behaviours?

CW: Um, the cab driver was actually really lovely. He was super curious about them and wanted to see them but then when I got in to Air Canada cargo, um, the, the employee was going to pick up, their like in a kennel for transport and he was gonna pick up the kennel and there was no handle and he was like how am I supposed to pick, how am I supposed to pick it up if there's no handle and I said oh just grab on the sides and he grabbed the sides and like held it super far away from him and then he was like, "Ew, are they gonna bite me?" which like isn't necessarily, that could have been his own issue, his fear of being bitten but, um, I was like "No! They're, they're domesticated pets," and they're, they were also inside another cage within the kennel, there was no way they could have reached the walls of the kennel and he was aware of that and I think he just like, you could tell he was viscerally grossed out.

ML: Yeah, that's so interesting.

CW: Yeah.

ML: Um, what about you what issues have been most concerning to you during the pandemic?

CW: Most concerning, um, well, from a family perspective I've been really concerned about how its affected my family members and, um, so specifically my sister and then I've also, I also have a lot of trepidation about how it could affect my mum but she hasn't experienced any, any issues really, um, for my sister she used to be a, a foster parent for a seven year old child who has, who's like on the very severe side of the autism spectrum, she's non-verbal and, um, can make a lot of noise when she's trying to communicate like she'll scream or yells and my sister, um, had basement tenants, she owns a house and she was renting her basement suite to tenants and, they, out of so, there were, there's a lot of issues that are, that are wrapped up in this one scenario but one of the issues was the pandemic and the fact that they, felt like they couldn't move, um, because it, it wasn't safe to move to a new location, um, and highly discouraged and so out of frustration with like being trapped inside all day which wouldn't normally happen, um, and my sister's foster daughter also being trapped inside all day and not going to school the tenants called the police and filed a noise complaint and as soon as there's, um, a police record, the foster, the child welfare system takes the foster child away like they immediately remove the child. So she was put in a group home, um, and group homes do not look after adequately cause like she needs one on one care, and so she started, she stopped eating, she started bashing her head against the wall and had huge gashes on her forehead and just self harming and they put her in a diaper, whereas like, with my sister she was totally capable of going to the bathroom like they they just don't know how to look after her and they don't have the capacity to look after her, um, and so, my sister not only had to deal with going to the tenants landlord, um, board for a hearing, where she had, could potentially have been sued for up to 30,000 dollars based on like the documentation of noise complaints, um while also losing her child like it is her foster child but in many ways, her daughter, and, um, and not being able to access her daughter to like provide her the adequate care which was really awful and, and the tenants have since moved out, um, and didn't, they were actually, I don't fully understand but they weren't legally able to sue because, um, they, they chose on their own accord to move out which is kind of bizarre to me but I mean that worked out for my sister, um, because she wouldn't have been able to afford that at all, um, but now she's fighting with the ministry of, um, I think it's the Ministry of Child Welfare or something I don't know what its called in B.C., to try and, like, get her foster daughter back because their policy is that once, once there's a police record of you, you're not allowed to be a foster parent. And, yeah, she's, so there's, there's just a lot of uncertainty and like, pretty awful trauma for the, the girl and my sister and, um, at the time my sister wasn't on super good terms with my parents so I was really the only one she was talking to, um, so I felt really like emotionally, I don't want to use the word burdened, I feel like that's not totally an accurate term because like I love her so much and would gladly support her in any way but it, it was a very like dampening, heavy feeling to be her supporter through that.

ML: Yeah that's, that's rough, that a rough situation.

CW: And then another, I guess, another big concern is loneliness. Um, that has been a theme even before COVID-19, through my experience in law school I've been super lonely... after

having moved away from home and like... leaving everything I knew and a big part of my identity and um creating this new... life in an environment that's, that's like strategically designed to be lonely which is law school um through its competitiveness and its, um, rigour I suppose but, um, Covid-19 has only really exasperated that like it, it forces people to not interact and I lost access to, um, like personal, um, support mental health support systems like seeing a councillor and, um, its very, I found it extremely difficult to work from home it's, it's, yeah it takes a lot of like self discipline and resilience to continue working at the same capacity which for some reason was expected, um, despite completely different environment and, and like working atmosphere. Yeah the, like, the course load didn't change at all, the number of assignments didn't change which, I actually found the work harder or more difficult because we could no longer have discussions with other students in the same way and, um, writing exams online is weird and confusing versus writing it in person in the classroom there was a slight learning curve so the fact that the course load wasn't reduced at all, um, paired with, like, the learning curve and the isolation was pretty brutal and it, it made me really angry actually that, like, our school system is so fragile and so myopic that it can't even adjust, like, through a compassion based lens in an unprecedented time of a global pandemic, that just seems ridiculous to me that, like, the administration wouldn't give the students a choice even to finish their semester later and take time off. Just like everything proceeded as normal and we kept getting emails like, "Oh, I hope you're doing well in this really difficult time," and then the rest of the email would be like, "Here's all your homework which you had before, please hand it in at exactly the same time."

ML: Do you know of anyone who, um, who either left the program or had special extensions?

CW: Yeah, I do, well I got special extensions and I do know a number of other people who got special extensions but. um. I don't know of anyone who left, a lot of people talked about it, um, a lot of people lost summer opportunities that were already set up, like they had a summer job and then it the offer was rescinded or canceled or whatever, um, and in terms of the like, the extension process, um, Osgoode, which is the law school that I'm going to has, um, a system where they like, have their set exam dates and then for anyone who isn't able to meet those for whatever reason they have to prove it and it has to be like, their application has to be accepted um then they're allowed to write on an alternative date which is also set in stone and that's the last possible time that you can write it and though I was anticipating that those dates would be pushed, um, later after, um, everything was shifted because of COVID-19 but they weren't pushed they were, they were two weeks after the original exam and like nothing changed so I think that was really difficult for me and a lot of the students, u,. One of the difficulties for me was that I was sick like I mentioned before, and then I got sick again I wasn't tested but I suspect it was like perhaps COVID-19 or something of the sort, um so I ended up missing, like being bedridden for, um, two weeks plus unable to do any work and that, that's very significant in like law school or any school really to be that far behind, um, so I wasn't able to even write some of the exams on the, the extension date and I had to petition for supplementary relief which is this like intense rigorous process where you submit this huge application and a board reviews it and they, they only review it after the point that you were supposed to have written the exam so if they say no you fail, like there's no going back um.. so it was quite a risk and really stressful to

like make the decision to not write, which didn't really even feel like a decision honestly, um, with the chance that if I didn't write it they could say no and I would be kicked out of, kicked out of school or like fail the semester.

ML: How stressful.

CW: Yea.

ML: Did you get a response from them?

CW: Yeah, I just heard yesterday that they accepted it all.

ML: That's good.

ML: So, you mentioned um summer employment for some students, has Covid effected your employment status at all?

CW: Yeah I was supposed to go to Argentina to, um, it wasn't a paid position, but to intern for the United Nations International Labour Organization Office to do research on, uh, legal research on human trafficking and migrant labour and that was supposed to be for four months like, I would have been there already and at first we got an email saying, um, they were delaying the start date until June and then like a week later they sent an email saying it was totally cancelled but they would hold our positions for next year. Um, but that's, that's kinda tricky because next year will be the summer between my second and final year of law school and most law students are expected to work in the post that they will later apply to article with or to article at, so if I were to, um, go to Argentina like take that opportunity, I could potentially be really hindering my, my like career trajectory. So, I haven't really decided what I'm going to do.

ML: So, you have some concerns about the long-term effects on your employment from the pandemic?

CW: Yeah, yeah, I like it's troubling but I also have the mindset that I don't really want to work for a place that has like such a limited, um, rubric of required experience that me not taking one summer job or having one thing over another would prevent me from working there like that doesn't seem like a healthy community to work with anyways. I'm trying to keep that kind of attitude.

ML: Do you have any concerns about the economy more broadly?

CW: Yes? Um, yeah but I, I don't, I don't know what my concerns are like it's all, it's all beyond me. I, I studied economics a little bit in undergrad but I still, I just have no idea how this is going to effect the economy in the long term and there's well and yea I think nobody does know, like, the quote unquote science or like math of economics is, um, based in a vacuum world anyways like it's not real so I don't think anyone can really predict, um, how this is really going to affect people. I'm very concerned for how this could, um, exacerbate inequality and like most strongly hit marginalized communities that really, that really scares me especially in the context of, um, the way the like laws have been changed and manipulated through a state of emergency, um, and how those changes benefit certain like, elite groups and further marginalize other people, um, but these, these are all just like regular fears that I have anyways. Um, yeah, I, I know of businesses that have permanently closed which is like businesses that I loved and supported from where I'm from in Nanaimo which is really sad and I know that like the community, my community the, um, friends who are like artists and musicians, um, are really, like, are being hit hard in terms of their kind of like anarchist run art spaces, are being shut down, um and I think, I think that just means there's going to be like a new emergence and recreation of those spaces um I just don't know what that'll look like yet and its sad that like, um, individuals have lost jobs like on an individual scale its really, really awful for people and on a community scale I feel more like there's, there's going to be a resilience despite the like sad changing dynamics.

ML: Can you give an example of the laws that you were mentioning?

CW: Um, I mean what comes to mind is how in Toronto police have arrested people for, uh, like walking together outside if they don't necessarily live at the same address or sitting on benches um and the, the problem is that they often cannot cite the law that allows them to do that and like part of the, part of the justice and legal system requires that people who live within the laws must be aware of the laws like in order to, for them to work and the public isn't aware let alone the police who are, like, um, who are exerting those nebulous laws, um, it's, it's more just like a fear based response mechanism I think, to, like trying to create a sense of control and a sense of lock down. Are my curtains too loud?

ML: Oh, no, I think it's fine.

CW: Ok. Um, that it just, it like results in a fascist environment that has the potential to most significantly hurt people who are already marginalized by the law like People of Colour who are already targeted, um, what's the word like um in an unbalanced way, what's the word for that, they're like-

ML: Disproportionately?

CW: Yeah, disproportionately targeted, thank you, um, like those are the people that are gonna suffer the most from this state of emergency that gives, um, legal practitioners and like people who enforce the law power to um enforce ideas that aren't even necessarily bound by any specific law that is passed through a, the regular process in Canada's political system with cheques and balances.

ML: So speaking of the laws and the new regulations, um, two of the key terms that have sort of become common parlance are self isolation and the idea of flattening the curve so how have you or people around you responded to these kinds of requests? You already talked a little bit about not going to class and stuff like that but are there any other things you have done or not done?

CW: Um. It's been interesting to have connection to Ontario and B.C because um the responses have been so different. So, and I also recognize that the, the, um, top-down narrative has been different to like in BC they are getting slightly different messaging than we are in Ontario and I'm not sure exactly what it is. But I think it's less severe than it sounds here, um, and so people, it's really odd, because I feel like in Ontario people took isolation very seriously and like, for example like I rode the subway a few times and like no one is on it and it feels so weird because normally the subway in Toronto is packed like it feels very apocalyptic whereas in BC, they're, the whole time there were just always people at the beaches and at the parks more so than usual as if there, there was this mindset that being outside was equivalent to isolating like there was something about not being indoors that made it ok to be with other people which I don't fully understand. And my mum still, um, talks this way where she's like oh we can have, when you come home for summer we can have a gathering as long as we're outside it'll be ok like what is your, what is the logic I don't understand, germs like maybe they disperse more.. but they're still like, I don't know it just seems weird and, um, yea in BC it was like ok peoples response was if we can't... hang out with friends inside anymore we'll spend more time at the beach and it's, it'll be great it was just like a holiday, and suddenly it was very beautiful to witness suddenly all of these people who might have been inside watching tv were suddenly outside playing at the park like how wonderful is that, but just such a like, nonsensical response to self isolation, um, and here yeah, um like classes were shut down almost immediately which also happened in B.C., um, and the, the dialogue between like me and my peers just seemed much more. um, serious where we were like oh lets not um.. like let's not go out to that place that we were thinking of going out to anymore or lets like, I've been talking top my friends on the phone instead of seeing them and limiting my social interactions to like one for a while I had, there was um, a friend of mine lived in an apartment next to mine and he and I were like the only people that we each saw like we designated ourselves as the one person, um, and he since moved and I'm sort of doing that with my girlfriend now and she lives in a communal house so its complicated because they all interact with other people so like the, the, um, the risk becomes exponential there but it's still like, we've still drastically limited and are always even if, even if we're not acting in a limited way we're

always thinking it like, it's always on your mind how, whether or not you should be doing something or how safe or dangerous a certain behaviour is, um even like walking down the street people will stop so you can really walk far around them, like everyone seems very aware, very conscious.

ML: And what is your living situation look like right now?

CW: Um, I'm-

ML: Your household.

CW: I'm living kind of alone kind of with my girlfriend, like she will come and stay, she's been here for the past week studying for, um, her comprehensive exams and when she's not here I'm alone. I did have the rats, but I don't.

ML: Yeah. Is it different without them?

CW: Yeah, it's sad I miss them, like, they were, I've always had pets so I'm really comfortable having, like, animal companions and it's a big part of I think, like, my mental health too, is having these like friends to talk to and look after and love it's lonely without them like they used to cuddle with me when I would watch a movie, it's definitely a noticeable absence when I'm so isolated and not hanging out with friends anyways.

ML: And what kind of house do you live in?

CW: It's a, it's like a split-level apartment, there's an upstairs with a bedroom and a bathroom and then a kitchen, living room on the bottom floor.

ML: And, so, you mentioned watching movies, cuddling with the rats, what do you spend your time doing now under Covid?

CW: Um, it's, it's definitely changed, in the beginning I was like living the dream just baking and making kimchi and, yeah, I was like baking cookies and cake every other day and I was embroidering a shirt and doing lots of arts and crafts and exercising inside, um, playing the cello a lot, like, often going for a walk but just, like, on my own and then I got super depressed and

didn't really do anything. There was periods of time I don't really remember, time is a weird concept now, um, yeah focused a lot on school, did a lot of cleaning, I just clean over and over and over again, um, have definitely gone through like, a few shows on Netflix and now I'm kind of coming out of a depression I think, where I'm exercising again, playing the cello again, um, cooking, I was thinking of making, um, ginger ale. You can, like, ferment ginger and sugar to carbonate it and make this really delicious ginger ale, um, yeah, I mean a lot of my life in B.C. revolved around food actually, like I grew almost all of my food, I did a ton preserving, I made cheese I like did everything and I haven't been able to do that as much here because I don't have the resources like I don't have my garden or access to a cow. Um. but I still, like I, a lot of my free time is around food like cooking or eating or. Um. canning I don't know it's yeah, thinking of exciting things to make, sushi, just like spending more time making elaborate meals.

ML: Do you spend time much time communicating with other people?

CW: Yea I have a lot more than usual, um, yeah every few days I'll spend a few hours on the phone calling various friends or my parents or my sister or my cousin, I talked to her the other day, um, yeah, and just like sit, I'll bring my picnic blanket and sit out on the lawn and just talk to them which has been really nice.

ML: Do you talk to any-

CW: And I think that I wouldn't normally do that, like I, I'm not usually good at keeping in touch with people, um, but because of the, the, like, number of activities or like the window of activities has been kind of, uh, what's the opposite of dilated, made smaller, whatever.

ML: Yeah, constricted.

CW: Yeah, um, constricted I, these like gentler, um, more I wanna say human based but that's not really, like, more like, um, person to person based activities have become more prominent and they were always there, like they were always accessible and available but there's so many distractions in this, like, very high paced capitalist economy driven world that its easy to not even have the time, like, to not feel like you have the time because you're constantly being productive whereas now I live this very gentle life where I, like, have a bath and talk on the phone and, um, read a book by the river it's, like, it's very, it's a very privileged place to be in, in this time because like a lot of people are working and a lot of people are suffering and it's not a holiday for most people but, um, yea for people who are privileged like me to have the time it's been, there some like really lovely beautiful aspects to slowing down and like remembering, remembering what life can be like outside of, uh, an ultra productive mindset.

ML: Is there anything in particular that you've either read or watched that sort of stands out to you?

CW: Um, yeah, actually I took this I took a picture of I don't have any social media, um, so I just read they're like these news things that pop up on my phone, they're like these list of tweets like they've compiled lists of Facebook posts or whatever, um, so I read a lot of those and there was one, um, someone tweeted: "Frankly if an educational system and, for that matter, an economy democracy society is so delicately balanced that it can't take a relatively brief pause to keep people form physically, to keep people physically and emotionally healthy then it is fundamentally broken," and that really resonated with me. I think I like alluded to that earlier to, about my frustration with school not being able to slow down, um. Yeah, that really stood out and looking through my phone to see if I did anything else, um, I don't know there's been a lot of just really entertaining memes I guess, of people sharing their, how they're feeling which is often, like, hilariously overwhelmed and raggedy.

ML: So how do you think COVID-19 is affecting people's mental health, I mean you talked about your own experience with depression for example, do you think that was related to the pandemic or do you think other people are having some kind of effect?

CW: Yea! Yea I mean from the people that I talk to everyone seems to have struggled more with mental health than normal I think loneliness is a big part of it the, um also like the ineffable weight of a global pandemic it's like there's I'm not even sure if I'm able to articulate how, how it effects people because it's, it's, uh, like, uh, an abstract feeling of horror, that nobody has experienced in their lifetime before and nobody knows how to respond to and the response is not linear, um, and it's, it's like people are grieving, people are grieving a loss of what they knew before, they're grieving a loss of relationships, a loss of access, um, a loss of their life and identity, like it's very profound for some people and that grief is very, is very real and I think, um, is especially difficult, is like any mental health thing where, um, there's the added difficulty of not being able to articulate or tangibly observe the problem um, and so it can feel very invalidating where you, are you're grieving severely but you're not totally able to explain why so there's a lot of shame and self doubt and comparing yourself with what you see other people to be doing like remaining productive even though that might be a total illusion. Um, yeah, it's a two fold mental health catastrophe of, like, grief and loss and deep sadness and, um, the unknown paired with this shame of not being resilient enough, enough for how you think you ought to be.

ML: And what about physical health, do you think the pandemic other than the obvious people with Covid, do you think it's effecting people's physical health?

CW: I'm, yeah, there, I mean there's jokes around the COVID-15 or whatever where you gain fifteen pounds because you're eating so much more like I think a lot of people are enjoying food

more, like I have been. And, yeah, not able to get outside and exercise as much and there's also the other side of that where, um, people who don't have the income t. or the money to enjoy food more in this time of not having work, um, are struggling because they're not getting adequate nutrition, um, yeah, there's, there's like it's public health, um, is so multifaceted where even though Covid-19 is like one discreet disease it inextricably affects all aspects of health and life um.. like a concrete example is, um, my sister is supposed to be tested for she well, she has MS but she's getting these symptoms that doctors think are not MS or potentially another disease and she was supposed to be tested and all of the appointments were cancelled because the hospitals can't handle it, so there's yeah, there's like the, the tangible lack of access, um, my girlfriend's having problems with her ear and, and was strongly discouraged to go into a clinic to get checked out like they kept just talking to her over the phone, um, which wasn't ever enough because they couldn't look in her ear and see what was physically wrong. Um, and then, yeah, poverty, poverty and the impact on poverty is a huge indicator I think, for health.

ML: So, you mentioned these, uh, Twitter aggregations of things like that, what have been your primary sources of news during the pandemic?

CW: Um, In the beginning I read a lot of news articles, um, that popped up on my phone and I like to read Democracy Now so I would read sometimes that and I also, I like to read a variety of media outlets that like, span the political spectrum even though I find it infuriating, um, so like I'll read the National Post and often feel so depressed and angry after reading that but I still like to read it because I like to see where are all these public perceptions are at, yeah. So I read a few different news outlets and then I would get a lot of news from, um, I don't know if you can call it news, but updates from my mum and family members of what they had read and now I don't even read the news anymore like now I read headlines and, um, I just find there comes a time when it's no longer helpful, it's like messaging that's repeated over and over again. It's often very fear based and I'm, I'm also afraid of how, um, I'm afraid of how focus on a particular event can take focus away from other meaningful things so like, um, the train blockades across Canada around the Wet'suwet'en land protest and land defenders happened very shortly before COVID-19 sort of exploded an. there was just like an absolute media vacuum away from that, um, and I'm curious, in the beginning there was this like, panic over lack of toilet paper and I was really curious about whether, was the lack of toilet paper because of COVID-19 and stores were running out, or could it also have been partly from the train blockades and, and, um, like non-essentials not being delivered as a strategy by land defenders and allies to like make people rethink and reconsider their entitlements I guess, um, and that just like, was not even considered a possibility because COVID-19 took up so much space. So, yeah, so I guess what I'm trying to say is like now I'm trying to reorient myself back to other topics that I feel are important to think about than like just everyday all day COVID-19 and, yeah, I'm really interested in anti- the anti Asian, Asian racism that has come up and reading about the externalities I guess of COVID-19 rather than just COVID-19 itself.

ML: Do you think there are important issues that the government has been covering? You spoke about some things they're not covering but do you think there are important issues that have been covered?

CW: Um, I mean I don't know how to answer that question like, yes? Yeah, they're, like, what they're covering isn't not important, um.

ML: What do you think are the most important issues that the media has covered?

CW: Um, hm.

ML: It's okay if you don't have an answer you don't have to have an answer.

CW: Yeah, I don't know if I have an answer. Like it's hard to, um, prioritize what is more important than something else. I think what I, what's troubling is when there's no focus on anything else and also the, the tendency for media to like pick-up and drop topics, um, for like a monster of the week kind of, uh, approach to news.

ML: Alright great we're almost done, uh, I just have a couple more questions so thanks for all your input so far. Um, how does this pandemic compare to other big events that have happened in your lifetime?

CW: Huh, big events that have happened in my lifetime? I mean it's incomparable in many, many ways but its effect on me has been somewhat comparable to other experiences, um, even experiences of depression like severe depression when I, I don't leave the house and I feel lonely and this, like, soul crushing emptiness and unknown and I'm smiling because it's so awful. Um, yeah, like, the, the experience feels very similar and I, I've read a lot of jokes too where people who've experienced mental health and depression have said, "Oh, like, nothing's changed like I'm as isolated as ever," um, and this is on an absolutely different scale but it was, I guess it was a bit of foreshadowing uh last summer in Nanaimo, when I was still living in Nanaimo in B.C., um, the, something went wrong with the city's water and like all of the water was shut off and people kind of lost their minds. Like immediately all of the water was sold out all over the city, like, there were no water bottles left in any grocery store and, uh, people were, like, fights broke out in the grocery stores in Walmart I think, like, people were fighting, someone was severely injured, like, it was very dramatic and my house was super prepared cause we, I don't know, were, like, we try in the ways that we can to be self sufficient so we had a lot of rain catcher water, we had, we'd had emergency water, barrels of emergency water in the basement so we had no problem and, um, didn't really notice a change which was interesting, um, but became

way more aware of like how much water we did have access to though like if that continued for more than two weeks we would have run out of water for sure, um, so it was interesting it was, the experience was similar I guess in that I got to witness and live out.. the ways in which I am prepared and the ways, and also how limited those ways are and how like entrenched and dependent I and everyone is on this functioning system of global trade and it's similar now like I do like I mentioned, I do a lot of canning and I brought a lot of canned food with me when I moved to Ontario and I had a lot of frozen fish that I'd, that I'd caught back in B.C and just like a lot of food supplies stored, um, so when the pandemic first hit I just didn't go to the grocery store, I didn't need anything I still don't need anything from the grocery store but I go because I want to, I want spaghetti noodles or something, um, but there's, there's ways in which I am prepared based on how I have, like, the values and life that I have which are to have more of a relationship with where my food comes from and may land and community, um, but they're so limited yeah.

ML: So, knowing what you know now after this time of Covid, um, what do you think that individuals, communities, governments, need to keep in mind for the future?

CW: Hm. I don't know if I have an answer for how to protect people from something like this again like I, I do not have that knowledge or expertise but. where my mind goes is like what can we learn from this about capitalism, I guess and, um, the need for constant productivity, um, and what can we learn about strong resilient communities and what they look like and what kind of, um, sorry oh god, um, what kind of like mental health they, they provide for, for group members, um, yeah, they're this because this experience is, is unprecedented and global, um, there's very interesting opportunity for change and it's making people.. mean as you know I'm very interested in food systems and what has caught my attention is how its made people more aware of where their food is coming from, um, for example the, the meat plants that are infected and now people just even thinking about things that they've never had to think about before like where is my meat coming from, how is it farmed, um, what, what, who are the people that are like working in these factories like there's so many externalities that, that um surround or are entrenched in food systems but it's, it's inspiring or maybe heartening to see that like, people are becoming more aware, um, and perhaps that's like the best answer that I can give is this level of consciousness of how how we as individuals and communities are benefiting from and complicit with these very complex systems of trade and labour and, um, and to think about who benefits and who does not benefit from the systems um.. I think that's something that people can take away, is like this new way of thinking and, and perhaps behaviours can change too with that new mindset like perhaps, um, food systems will become more localized and more transparent.

ML: Great. So last two questions, what do you imagine your life will be like in a year?

CW: In a year? Um, I imagine I, I imagine that I'll be back in school, partly because I just really hope so, like I really hope that we won't be needing to self isolate anymore, um, I imagine, I imagine that some things will have always changed like I think that my hand washing routines

will never be the same again like I am very good at washing my hands now. Um, and I'd like to think that I'll be more motivated to like use my privilege in a position as law student, and maybe future lawyer, to like think more critically about, um what we can learn from this experience and how we can change the way laws are written and applied and um, to think more cortically about poverty and inequality. I imagine, yeah, I like I, I think I imagine a very similar to my life before partly because I, I can't really conceptualize anything else.

ML: And is that how you hope it will be as well or, is that just kind of your realistic take?

CW: Yeah, I also really hope that things will, um, open up again and that businesses will be open and we don't have to self isolate like it would be amazing if there was a, a, a vaccination, yeah, vaccination, yeah.

ML: Great well thank you so much is there anything else, last thoughts that you wanted to share?

CW: Um, I guess one thing is I've done a bit of work in Sierra Leone and, um, I have been in touch with communities there, when they were experiencing Ebola outbreaks and I keep, I just, my mind keeps going there through this experience of how, um, fortunate we are that COVID-19 is not something like Ebola where the risk of death is so much more extreme and, like, I just, I think about it a lot because I can't even imagine and that terrifies me that like this, this kind of global pandemic is totally possible again and again in our globalized world, like I recognize and I want to name that this, like COVID-19 is severe and is killing people like I see that but it could be so much worse and that is just so scary. And, yeah, like, I'm, I, I'm just scared when I think of that and, um, scared when I think of like what communities in Sierra Leone went through like entire communities wiped out everyone death from Ebola going through like it's just, yeah. And, and how I remember hearing from some friends that they were, um, in really rural villages where they hadn't seen white people before. They became terrified of white people because a white doctor would come in, take away family members to take them to the hospital and they would never see those family members again and so there were conspiracies like that they were being, like, they did know what happened to those people so, yeah, there was a lot of mistrust and conspiracy around what was actually taking place and, um, I see similar mistrust and conspiracy now around, um, people who have positions of like taking care of us and like yeah it's just, it's scary to not be in control.

ML: Can you elaborate on those conspiracy theories that you're seeing now?

CW: Um, I mean there's a lot of pushback against government protocols on isolation, um, people, people protesting, um, and like I haven't read a lot about it, um, but from what I understand some of the notions are like people wanting to be treated, um, or like not infantilized, not be told what to do, they can figure it out themselves and, um, I think people being very wary

of a lean towards fascist policing, um, and people, people not trusting what the government says because they like, never trusted them and now, now that mistrust is very scary because they're lives are, are, are very tied up in what the government has to say. Their lives and the lives of others and people are also thinking, I think people are thinking systematically to where I hear a lot of people voicing concerns over the economy um saying things, like, like, what's more important saving a few lives now or saving our economy in the long term. I like don't support these messages I'm just reiterating them, um, and, yeah, so people, I think people being afraid of the government making a poor decision that will then like harm them personally or harm their community, um, which is totally valid, that fear, like of course, of course governments are made of people and people make mistakes and no one has any clue what to do about this and I pity the people in positions of power right now.

ML: Ok, great thank you so much.