

Transcript of Interview with Lauren Murray by Katie Carney

Interviewee: Lauren Murray

Interviewer: Katie Carney

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Location (Interviewee): Boston, Massachusetts

Location (Interviewer):

Transcriber: Lily Crigler

Abstract: Interview with a college student studying historical diseases about how COVID-19 compares to past pandemics. Comparison to 1918 Influenza pandemic and Black Death.

Katie Carney 0:00

Hello, this is Katie Carney. I am here with Lauren Murray, and we are, um, discussing COVID-19 and past pandemics. Lauren, can you state the date and time, please?

Lauren Murray 0:13

It is December 7th. It's a Monday at 12pm in Boston, Massachusetts.

Katie Carney 0:20

And do you consent to having this recording published on the COVID-19 archive project?

Lauren Murray 0:29

I do consent. Yes.

Katie Carney 0:31

Okay, wonderful. So we have been enrolled this semester, in a course, learning about past pandemics. How has learning about these pandemics, changed your perspective, towards COVID-19?

Lauren Murray 0:43

I think that from learning and reading about past pandemics, especially the ones we've recently covered, mainly like Ebola, and the 1968 flu, I think what has stood out to me the most in reflecting on what we could do differently with COVID-19 is focusing on a more international, like agreement and cooperation. I think that we see so many differences within the US and pretty much everywhere else on how this is being handled. And for instance, I saw something last week about a concert in New Zealand. And I have no clue when the next time that anyone will be able to go to a concert again in the United States. Um, I think just the lack of cooperation on the US's part just proves and especially with how powerful we are as a country, I think that learning about past pandemics has just like shown that with international cooperation, like more gets done, and we see people getting better quicker.

Katie Carney 2:08

Yes, we definitely have seen examples of that. And I agree that Americans have not been the most compliant with rules regarding COVID-19. Is this a trend that we see in past pandemics?

Lauren Murray 2:21

Um, I- I would say that it is it even was more internationally as well, um, I think about the reading that we did- with how in California- I can't remember exactly which pandemic this was- but the anti-mask league that started from this was, like, pretty much backed by physicians and small business owners. And that just seems crazy to think about. And- but we still see that today. And I think that's really upsetting.

Katie Carney 3:00

Yeah, I think that was the 1918 influenza outbreak.

Lauren Murray 3:05

Yes, it was. Just sort of left my brain for a second.

Katie Carney 3:09

Yeah. Do you think that this pandemic has been easier to navigate than that sort of an outbreak? Or how does this compare to a pandemic like the Black Death?

Lauren Murray 3:21

Um, I just think that although like, obviously, like, numbers show, like very high differences and like, how fatal each disease is, I think COVID is maybe more difficult to navigate just due to its political implications, even though there shouldn't be any since it's a disease. I think that's been the hardest part, especially because, like, we had a presidential election and like, it was like a hot topic, and there were a lot of different opinions on how to deal with it. But really, like, the only thing that I can see of is when we talk about public health, is that how we just need to all come together and focus on the issue at hand.

Katie Carney 4:13

Yeah, the role that COVID-19 has played in politics has been very interesting. And we see this a little bit in the past. Do you think that disease and violence were connected throughout history and has any violence been linked to COVID-19?

Lauren Murray 4:31

Um, I- I almost want to bre- I feel like more on the political side of COVID, I think we've seen violence during COVID, mainly as a result from like, the BLM protests and counter protests to BLM which happened during COVID. And that was a really pressing issue because there are people saying that the protests are spiking numbers and the numbers were run. And they proved that a lot of the cases didn't come from like, protest gatherings. So I think that, at least with COVID, like the violence has come out in like political ways.

Katie Carney 5:26

That makes sense. So we've covered a lot of pandemics throughout the course of this semester, what has something- what has been something that has stood out to you, throughout all of these pandemic, or in regards to one specific one?

Lauren Murray 5:42

I think it's just- I think the thing that stood out to me, and it's probably just one of the saddest things, too, is that it's the prevalence of seeing like underserved and marginalized groups just constantly getting the, like, getting the majority of the illness and the death. And it's due to- I think it's due to a broken system that we have within the US, especially with health care, because, um, like people- like especially people in underserved communities, like they need more help. And we just- we just haven't given it to them yet, and numbers show that too. I think like with COVID-19, how we see the African American community be infected at such higher rates, and due to that, have higher mortality rates. And we can see that in medical racism and systemic racism is how this is a trend. And I just think the thing that stood out to me most is that like, we need to change as a country to deal with a multitude of issues, especially public health.

Katie Carney 6:57

Yes, I would agree. So we have time for one more question. As you said, we've seen this trend of marginalized groups being affected most throughout history, and it's especially evident with COVID-19. So do you think that we have learned enough or at all from past pandemics?

Lauren Murray 7:18

I think we've maybe learned a little bit, but we still have a long way to go.

Katie Carney 7:25

Yeah, I mean, and that's sad, right?

Lauren Murray 7:29

Yeah.

Katie Carney 7:31

Well, thank you for taking the time to speak with me today and for answering these questions.

Lauren Murray 7:36

Thank you so much for having me, Catherine.

Katie Carney 7:39

My pleasure. Bye bye.

Lauren Murray 7:41

Bye.