

Transcript of Oral History Interview with Dang Yang

Interviewee: Dang Yang

Interviewer: Abigail Jurusik

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Abstract: Abigail interviews Dang Yang on the Covid-19 Pandemic and how it has affected Asian American students through his important role as the Director of the Office of Multicultural Affairs at The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire.

Abigail Jurusik 00:01

There we go. So hi, my name is Abigail Jurusik. And what's your name?

Dang Yang 00:06

My name is Dang Yang.

Abigail Jurusik 00:07

Right. And currently it is May 20 2020. At 3:34pm. As of right now there are 1.5 7 million confirmed cases of COVID 19. In the United States are 300,000 people have recovered and 93,000 111 deaths, and we're interviewees from Wisconsin, there are 12,885 confirmed cases of COVID-19 with 467 deaths. Alright, so getting started, would you be willing to share your demographic information for the study?

Dang Yang 00:45

Absolutely. The specific demographics that I understand that you're looking for is that I am male. I'm cisgendered. I am 36 years old, I was born and raised in Wisconsin.

Abigail Jurusik 01:01

And what are the primary things you do on a day-to-day basis?

Dang Yang 01:05

Professionally, I serve as the Director of the Office of Multicultural Affairs, and I've been in that particular role for about two years now. And in that particular role, specifically, what I do is I work with a team of staff and we're supervised students services that's very specific and unique for students of color on campus. And in addition to on campus services, specifically for students of color, we also provide services for campus climate related initiatives now includes any sort of programming and Speaker Series, or educational components for all faculty, all staff and all students and is widely open to as well. So there are two, two very unique and discernible functions that we do one for the students of color, specifically and one for the entire campus. And so on top of that, a lot of it is strategic planning

and identifying what your priorities are how to utilize your resources to make the biggest impact and meet the needs of our students, as well as meeting the needs of the campus climate to us for making sure that regardless of where our students go, that they will feel welcome that other equitable practices happening everywhere, not just in the Office of Multicultural Affairs.

Abigail Jurusik 02:11

Right, right. And so, when you first learned about COVID-19, what were your thoughts about it?

Dang Yang 02:18

When I first heard about COVID-19, there wasn't a lot of information, other than the information is coming from overseas, reading information and articles from the BCC, and seeing their articles about the different experiences that people are having. And so it i It really felt distant, it didn't feel like something that I had to worry too much about. I kept a close eye on it, because understanding how global issues impact, higher education, and how it impacts our students really matters. So I knew that a large number of our international students came from China, as well as Malaysia and from the Asian countries. And so I was that perked up my ears perked my interest, and so I was paying relatively close attention at that particular point once and it was from China. And so I want to make sure I understood how that might impact our Chinese and international students. And that was my first approach. And my first...The first way in which I was looking at that that news and that information on the global level.

Abigail Jurusik 03:22

So how has like, once like started, like they started closing down campus? What was that like for the students who are from abroad from Asia?

Dang Yang 03:37

Oh, I think I understand what what what your your question, it's my understanding of the experience of the international students and specifically the Chinese Malaysian students. You know, I've had an opportunity, I've been very fortunate to be very close with a number of international students, and working in partnership with CERN for national education has been an important priority of mine was last year. And so, working really closely with some students, what I found is that many of the international students decided to stay here. There was a small group of students that I know that went back to as well. And on top of my head, I don't remember how many total international students went back to their home countries and how many total international student stayed home or stay here in the US. Those who stayed in the US primarily stayed on campus in their dorms. And, and either that or they stayed in the United States in their restaurants off campus. And those who went home just simply went back home. I remember talking to a student who went back to South Korea, and that particular student had articulated that when they went back they had they themselves had to undergo a 14 days of quarantine to and so I think that that was happening across across the globe, anytime that any sort of international travel is happening regardless of where you came from. They were asking those travelers to self quarantine for these 14 days, I'm sure that the one asymptomatic and, and so I know that some of those students had to do that, you know, they were, they were fine. And I think that they were really happy to just be around family haven't been familiar people. The one thing that that's something international students told me that regardless of whether they went back to their home countries or not, they still had to do their homework. And they still had to engage in some kind of group projects, too, as

well. And so having the differences in time zones, really kind of made it a little challenging. And so they had to work with their respective instructors look like how they will continue to rack responsibilities that they had, and just trying to figure out those logistics so that there wasn't too much interruption. And admittedly, I think that at first, everyone experienced interruptions, you know, domestic students experienced interruptions and technology, our international students had some interruption in technology to as well as understanding how to use a new system, especially if they didn't have to worry about the canvas. Further classes, or did they didn't have to worry about utilizing Collaborate Ultra through Canvas as a synchronous classrooms and didn't have to really it was new things that they had to learn really quickly. I think that one thing I kept hearing was that they were really appreciative of the instructors attempts to do that, to shift things over in such a quick, quick timeline. And so that came up quite a bit from the interest students, I spoke with another international student that I connected with another couple of international students I connected with who live here on campus. And you know, Claire, talked a little bit about feeling very isolated, and feeling very alone. Because, you know, as international students, they had already built a community of students, whether they were other international students, or they were other students in their majors. And so being completely disconnected son, and so quickly from that community really made it difficult because the type of experience that they were looking for by contract basis, international students pretty different than having to having to lose that community suddenly changed the dynamics of what their expectations were, about what their experience in college was going to be. We seem to be very understanding overall, but for the most part, that was definitely something that came up thematically amongst a number of students that that I spoke with, from international students.

Abigail Jurusik 07:29

Yeah, no, it's, you're saying,

Dang Yang 07:32

And again, it's a relatively small number, if I remember correctly, that it's about 250 to 275. International, she was told that we have something like that. And that might be completely wrong. And the group that, you know, I interact with regularly use groups like 10 to 15 students that I see regularly. And so that's just a small slice of the international student population. By no means representative. I ninterrupted.

Abigail Jurusik 08:01

Oh, no, I was just going to comment on how unfortunate it is that like this has, like disrupted, like the college experience that they were hoping for, like by coming, you know, and then also having to do their schoolwork and completely different time zones. And working in group projects, like there has to be so difficult.

Dang Yang 08:20

Yeah, yeah. Yeah, they faced unique situations that I had not thought of, only because it's not something that I had to think about at that particular point. And so you know, I certainly empathize for them. I think they're doing the best that they can

Abigail Jurusik 08:39

Right. So how has COVID-19 affected how you're, like how you do your job, like your responsibilities, or like how you've like, fulfill certain functions that it does?

Dang Yang 08:54

I think we were very fortunate in the Office of Multicultural Affairs to some extent, I think, first of all, like the reason why I say that is because we were already moving towards putting together an infrastructure of supporting students in a virtual platform. Over the last year, he actually started, we had everyone retrofitted with what webcam was in technology so that they could work with students on the fly. And part of the reason for that was because we recognize a trend for a lot of incoming students, especially during instrumentation, that there were some students that simply didn't have access to being on campus. And so we wanted to make sure that we were, we were creating systems that were as accessible for all those populations of students. And so we offer opportunities for students to handle those virtually either by phone but video conference, and if possible, coming in and talking with us and working with us and engaging with us. And so we had the technology infrastructure in place already. And we have those systems in place. We allow those things set up and so at a moment's notice, we could meet with the student virtually. We had done the training with the staff too, as well, so they were relatively ready to go. The biggest thing that that was interrupted regarding the work that we did was because we serve students and we take them with our students services, is really difficult to provide that student services, programming without being face to face with students. On March 16, on that Monday, when the Office of Multicultural Affairs was notified that we should begin transitioning to virtual platform that first week from March 16, through March 20, where we actually did was we rotated in some training, we slowly kind of transitioned to a fully virtual platform, we had one person in the office and everyone else was working from home and everyday would rotate, one person in the office would be there while everyone else was outside, working from home. And so that luckily, we had the technology in place already. So it was easy to pick up our tablets or laptops or mobile devices, and just shipped all of our work home. We had access to cloud base services and things like that. And so we were able to access all of our all of our required documentation easily from home. The programming, I know, one thing I regret the most, is the fact that we had amazing programming that we had to postpone to cancel or to shift. And it took us about a month to really, really learn those skills, but how to do it well. And, you know, I've always known that it takes more effort to do online classes, because I've taken online classes before I've taught some online, and some virtual training seminars. And so it requires a different set of skills, a different set different mindset and pedagogical strategies in order to do that. Well, not just as an instructor, but also as an advisor and staff, who's working with students. And so the staff that I have, though, Kevin, the Office of Multicultural Affairs are relatively young in their professional careers too, as well. So they don't have the same type of experience. So training them out for that, and giving some best practices and some pointers and practice and doing those things was was really good. I think it was it was an opportunity to grow their skill sets that would help them beyond this one job alone. And we really approached it in that particular matter what skill sets do we need? How do we train up? How do we prepare ourselves for not just this semester, but often next semesters, that'll be covered up too. And so we also started thinking about how we transition programs in our events. And so some of the key events and do is primarily community building events. We do a lot of educational events, Speaker Series events. So one of our speaker series that we have the brutal

dialogues, which is a monthly discussion that we host, a speaker that has a discussion about social justice topic,

Dang Yang 12:56

We postponed our our April event, just a little bit beyond what we normally would have, because we usually do it the second week of the month, we are doing at the end of April. And it worked surprisingly well. I think that it gave us just enough time to figure out the roles and responsibilities of technology, how to make it work, you know, how do you manage it in such a way that's going to be accessible to the public, to the students to faculty and staff. But then also making sure that there's a level of security protocols in place. At that point. During the month of April, in 2020, we were hearing a lot of instances of zum zum disruptions, people will be going in and trolling zoom meetings, trying to do a lot of inappropriate behavior in meetings that they weren't part of, you know, there was an incident that came up in regards to I think it was in the University of California system there was the Chinese students association returns to maligns organization, they were having an event and they were zoomed bomb. This particular instance, you know, this person came in and they were expressing racial comments, inappropriate statements, you know, showing swastikas and inappropriate, completely racist, xenophobic, and, you know, horrible, horrible things. And, and so we were really concerned about what do we need to do to make sure that that doesn't happen? Because we were opening up this particular event for the public. And we were committed to that. I think that was really important that we didn't want those incidences to minimize and limit the type of access and we want students to faculty staff and to the public about these really important topics and that that topic ended up being, you know, understanding Coronavirus, and the racism and xenophobia that came out of the Coronavirus against Asian American populations community reached across the US, and particularly here in Wisconsin and in our community. And so that turned out really well, we had a group of about 50 different individuals that span faculty, staff and students and community members who came to that particular events, listen to the panel members, and we had individuals different areas of expertise regarding their immediate understanding of what was happening with Asian American communities and populations and racism, xenophobia and type of bias and hate instances that were happening across the nation across our region. And so I think that I think that it is absolutely unfortunate. But I am finding that there are a lot of examples of exceptionally wonderful things that are happening, people rising to the occasion, to help their neighbors and help each other out throughout these difficult times in this unprecedented time. And then there are examples of people who are going the complete opposite route where like the worst possible behaviors coming out, and it's not just racial slurs, and it's not just like bias. It's not just like microaggressions, it's violence against these populations, too, as well. There's, you know, in San Francisco, there are instances in in throughout California incidences of like violence perpetrated against individuals of patient dissent. And those are the things that worried me the most of the specific violence and even if isn't violent, trauma that can occur for different populations. And, you know, those are things I worry about whether or not our students will experience that. And we just happen we I happen to be part of the bias incidents Response Team. And as of today, we've had three formal BIRT incident reports that came through specifically about that, you know.

Abigail Jurusik 16:55

Can Can you repeat that? I wasn't able to pick it up. Yeah,

Dang Yang 16:58

my apologies. You know, I happen to be on the bias incidents reporting team. And as a member, I see all the BIRT reports that come through. So the BIRT bi RT is an acronym for bias incident reporting team. And in those reports, like what we saw is that, as of today's date, since the beginning of the pandemic, we've seen three formal reports, bias incidents that can do that directly related to bias discrimination and or hate against Asian American community members and public relations students. That's related to the COVID-19. And so those are things that we continue to see. And, you know, it's my understanding that, you know, across the nation, a number of different organizations are trying to track those things. You know, there's one specific organization known as the Asian Pacific Policy Planning Council based out of California. And I think that as of last week, they saw reports of people between 70 100 Day reports, so far within a six week period, of discrimination of hate of violence against Asian American communities and populations because of that. And in the state of Wisconsin, you know, there are at least Sunday known cases of bias incidences. In the in Ohio community, there's at least seven, seven to 10 known cases that I'm aware of, you know, there was one specific situation that was really close to home to as well, one of my neighbors, actually, who is Vietnamese, he came to me about two weeks ago, and he told me that he was at the local Walmart, on the south side of Eau Claire, and he told me that someone approached him and started yelling at him, you know, start telling him to go back to China. He's Vietnamese, he's not Chinese. And he kept telling the person I'm not Chinese, then it continued to escalate and start to get violent at that particular point of Crockett start gathering. And forcefully, you know, violence didn't occur. You know, he was, it was lucky that other individuals intervene on his behalf and assisted him and get him out of situation. And, you know, that individual had left for law enforcement or other individuals or security was able to attribute it to as well. So these things are happening. And those things are very real incidents that are not just happening across the nation, but also within our own community, those things that we worry about, specifically, if it's happening to my own neighbors and my own community members, and I'm worried about how, how that impacts our students too, as well here.

Abigail Jurusik 19:39

Right. Yeah, I was actually. I also was looking at the API report or the API report, the one I was looking at, which was the march 19 to April, march 19, April 15, where they had 1497 reports and 69 point In a percent of those were verbal harassment. And I was wondering if you could share your thoughts on why you think people are like, what's inciting this, like, racism and discrimination against Asian Americans?

Dang Yang 20:13

Yeah, absolutely. So the, that report just got updated, I think. So, that press release from April showed almost 1004 97. And then just recently, they, I think it was May 13, when the press release came out, reporting increased up to about 1700. So far. So your question about why do I what do I think is inciting this type of behavior? I think that there's two parts to this, I think the first part is that it in this particular situation exacerbates existing systems of oppression that are already in place. And so the underlying systems of racism, xenophobia, homophobia, anti blackness, anti Brown, sentiments, those are all bubbling to the surface, so to speak, in this situation, we see this as kind of a pattern during economic downturns during significant national crises. When there is when when there are situations of fear within the narrative of the nation where within the region, oftentimes, these types of sentiments come

out biases, you know, racism, homophobia, those types of different types of things. And so I think that the first part of the answer really is why this is happening is that it's simply revealing what's already there. You know, the type of biases that we have, are simply being exacerbated. You know, oftentimes we say that no, in when we aren't utilizing our critical thinking skills, our instincts kick in. Oftentimes, our instincts are based on our biases and our preconceived ideas and stereotypes. And so because we operate in like these systems in these, these moments of fear, our instincts really want us to be very defensive and defensiveness, like causes our biases to be exacerbated. And so this is part of the reason why when we do a lot of campus climate things, we talk a lot about our personal biases, we ask you to examine your personal biases, because oftentimes, the weirdness of it helps us to understand why we're feeling these ways. So we can address them address the biases to minimize them. And so that I think that's the first part of the answer. The second part of the answer, I think, really, is that there is the dominant narrative about the fact that the that it's understanding that the Coronavirus that we see today COVID-19 originated from Wuhan, China. At least that's that's the narrative right now. And that's the the dominant theory behind where that originated from. And so that exacerbates the situation to as well regarding the racism towards Asian American populations. And so there is this idea that anyone who looks Asian must be representative of that particular nation, that nationality. And that is because of these attributions, and the economic systems within China, specifically the wet markets that, you know, exacerbate and created this. And so it's so easy to scapegoat that particular population, that particular nation in a way that takes a lot of responsibility away from them. And so I think that hasn't left you with it, too. So I think that those are two big things as to why I think that we're seeing love is happening.

Abigail Jurusik 23:50

So you mentioned what happened to your neighbor at your local Walmart. How else has COVID 19 outbreak affected your community?

Dang Yang 24:00

That's a great question. I think that there. No, I want to go back to the fact that what I said before about how it impacts my community, it really is indicative of what I said before, too, as well my previous answer in that COVID-19, this global pandemic has exacerbated so many of our institutions and our vulnerabilities that are part of our institutions and our social systems. Like for example, what we're seeing is a is that black and brown communities are have disproportionately negative impact in regards to health disparities ovulated to COVID-19. us in the state of Wisconsin, the numbers that insists he articulated about the number of cases that we see in Wisconsin, a huge proportion that is in Washington County, southern Wisconsin, southeast Wisconsin area. Green Bay is another huge area too as well. And those happen to be the Fox Valley area has a big population of not just Asian Your knees but also when extreme refers to as well. And so a lot of our African American community members are walking in that particular area. And then taking into consideration the fact that in the walk is one of the most segregated places in the United States. That is one of the biggest concerns their access to affordable health care, their access to medical care, their access to emergency care, their access to preventative. So those health disparities are exacerbated in this situation, too, as well. And so the number of individuals who are taking care of our food, those individuals, the documented and undocumented workers, who work on farms, of the migrant workers, you know, oftentimes they're the ones who have are essential workers, so they have to continue working. We're seeing that this on. So we've seen this, this, the systems of oppression from the lens of race as one particular piece, we also

see it as through the lens of class two as well, you know, the the areas in which we see a lot of economic components where we deem essential workers, grocery store workers, retail workers, farm workers, they're, you know, oftentimes lower class, family members, individuals from lower socioeconomic status, families that are working these essential jobs, and they're being asked to continue working, you know, and in some cases, they're they're working in conditions that are not safe. They're working without personal protective equipment, to some extent, too, as well, at least at at first, when it was really difficult to get a hold of life personal protective equipment. And so asking those individuals, essential workers to continue working, when I myself as a white collar employee am able to work from home with my own internet access, because I work in office and then working translated to do work at at home. We even see it at UW Eau Claire, too, as well. You know, like we had we our institution looked at how do we support the budget crisis on campus. And one way to do that was to furlough staff. Part of the decision making process was to look at our staff members able to do work from home. Now, a disproportionate number of those staff members who are furloughed are in facilities there. Are there our custodial staff, those individuals who work in facilities at UW Eau Claire, those are the people who are disproportionately asked to be furloughed. And they're already the ones who have the least paid to some extent, on campus. And so we see this disproportionate impact, not just from a racial lens, but also from a class lens. And so those are the things I see, you know, we also look at different vulnerable populations, too, as well, you know, within different counties, like the different jails are seeing that COVID-19 is spreading, spreading really quickly through the jail population too, as well. And that's a significant concern that I continue to have many other many other individuals, who as well, individuals who I've worked with, such as Susan Wolfram, Dr. Susan Wolfram, and David Carlson, and Francis, other individuals who have been like sounding the alarm for like weeks and for months about the possibility that this is going to be problematic. And the fact that there wasn't any good data that came out until very recently, about the outbreaks within the jail systems is really problematic. The unavailability of personal protective equipment and the inability to keep social distancing, those very confined areas has been a significant concern. And yes, not just the concern isn't just about those individuals who are imprisoned in, in the county in the state jails, but also the corrections workers too, as well. Those individuals are disproportionately impacted, as well. And so, you know, I really worry about those vulnerable populations. And those individuals work really closely with vulnerable populations. And so those are other ways in which COVID-19 has impact my community and the work that I do and like the sphere of influence and sphere of colleagues that I have and the work that they do.

Abigail Jurusik 29:06

Right. Yeah. And then alongside that, being that these people who are in these lower socio economic positions, like they're now deemed essential workers, but if they're at like health at risk, you know, then they may not want to go into work, but then that would mean losing their job.

Dang Yang 29:26

Yeah, yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. And so it's, it's a cyclical system. And it is problematic. And I think that really, what I'm hoping that we are able to do is that when we come out of this, that we have an opportunity to examine the social systems that are in place with the practice that we have, you know, understanding that any at any particular point, not just this pandemic or any other future crisis that comes up whether it's regional crisis or its national crisis, or the global crisis, that we're going to

continue to see the observation of these systems of oppression, regardless of what lens, you look through it or my class, nationality, race, gender identity, sexual orientation, what have you, you know, those things are deemed to be exacerbated. And I think part of the work that my staff does in the Office of Multicultural Affairs and work that I do, the things that I'm really passionate about is making sure that we're aware of what those look like. And then putting strategies in place through policy through systemic changes. So that it minimizes those things, while times are good or decent, relatively speaking, so that when we have crisis, that doesn't exacerbate ways, you know, we also see the different resources that are available for students to as well know, like, when when we look at other populations, we're looking at rural versus urban hometowns, I work with a lot of students from rural home columns. And you know, across the campus, we just have quite a few, quite a high proportion of students who come from the rural communities regardless of regardless of race, regardless of background. And oftentimes, they have the least amount of access to high high speed internet, broadband access. And so that's another population that we're about from a student's perspective, helping them get their pregnant ology. And being is one thing, but if the infrastructure isn't there, it's really difficult. I had a student who was who had to go, who had to stand outside his neighbor's house, in order for him to use his neighbor's Wi Fi. And he had to do that for about four weeks. And his neighbor was really generous, and, you know, trying to make sure that it was he was as comfortable as possible, and definitely want to help out. So, you know, it's not that, that people were vindictive, and didn't want to do it, they were still trying to practice social distancing. But still being able to provide the access to that those services, that type of infrastructure as much as possible. And so those are some of the situations things that we've been working with some of our students, and we're very fortunate that we were able to get that student connected with some of the emergency funding that's available through UW Eau Claire Foundation office and through the federal Cares Act, in order to get the appropriate technology to make sure that they could actually get access after those four weeks now. Now, we're on finals week. Yeah, so yeah, but I'm thinking kind of long term. But those are, those are some very real concerns that we have some decisions that we make, about what we're going to do to minimize that the impact and the disproportionate impact that has on populations of students and community members moving forward.

Abigail Jurusik 32:40

All right. So using your position does help build an infrastructure to so that like, when so if anything like this, or, like happens again, like you'll be able to help students out? Is that kind of what you're trying to do right now?

Dang Yang 32:55

Yeah, absolutely. In fact, that's what we've been doing within the Office of Multicultural Affairs, you know, and in my, in my role, specifically to as well, identifying what those barriers happen to be and create intentional system structures that will be long term, and sustainable. And it just so happens, and we're applying it in this capacity during this particular time, too, as well. And so admittedly, I see this situation through that social justice lens, you know, understanding the disproportionate impact of this on different populations, especially vulnerable populations, or traditionally underserved populations. And that that term of the vulnerable populations may shift from situation to situation. But, you know, it really is something that is important to me, it's the way that I see the world. So when I see this is the way that

I interpret how this pandemic is impacting myself, impacting my staff and students impacting unity and impacting the CLO. And so so that's just how I see things.

Abigail Jurusik 34:00

Right? So how have the people around you and within your community, how have you been seeing them responding to the COVID 19 pandemic?

Dang Yang 34:11

In various that's a great question. You know, I've seen some some people kind of frozen in place to some extent, but they just unsure what to do so they just can't do anything, or don't do anything. And that's kind of it's it's a it's that fight or flight or freeze response, really is part of it, you know, that may be born out of historical trauma or other other reasons too, as well. But even so, I've seen that the the the anxiety lead to just a frozen state, unsure what to do, and so they just disconnect disengage completely. I've seen individuals who have like really risen above and beyond any anyone's expectations have proactively reached out to the neighbors You know, and work really closely with different organizations to, to try to find ways to get different populations, different vulnerable populations connected. You know, I know of one particular person who I worked with prior who worked with the school district, and you know, they were seeking out information as much as possible to try to make sure that, you know, the school meals, were still accessible for a lot of students and their families. And so, you know, that's one way. And those are some examples that I've seen community responding to that, you know, I've seen different businesses, and different nonprofit organizations, you know, intentionally raising money for different causes, especially for two populations that are being disproportionately impacted by the pandemic too, as well. And so those are some examples that I've seen. And of course, the racism, xenophobia, the bias, the hate incidents of discrimination, all those are responses to as well to this kind of part of that fight portion of it. And I think that the fight side, you know, some of it is, is displayed as racism, that that really negative extreme to the extreme positive were part of their, their instinct to fight this is to do as much good as possible in the world. And so I've seen a lot of examples of those pieces, I know that some of the, some of the day to day, things that I see are people figuring out how to be how to play multiple roles that they didn't have to before. Like, I know that there are a number of individuals who have to be not just employees working, regular full time shift, but they have been teachers and to educate their kids. And then they're also caretakers, maybe there's taking care of like elderly family members, or, or other individuals who are who were particularly vulnerable to the pandemic to the COVID-19. And so they have to play kind of like a health care provider, right provider. And so, I think that it, I've seen a wide variety of responses from different people, and different members of the media community here in the triple Valley. You know, I what I see is that, you know, what I'm really proud of too, as well is how a lot of our nonprofit organizations like Pablo center and their foundations have really stepped up to try to provide resources and try to do things that would take people's minds off of the pandemic, I remember right away, a lot of the need response was to give things for people to do, I remember, on social media, there were a lot of random challenges for people to do. And people would kind of like, try to do that just to try to catch the time, try to take their minds off of the negativity surrounding the pandemic, trying to build a sense of community. And then now, the trend that I'm seeing right now is a lot of foundations are actively trying to gather that resource and try and actively support, you know, the businesses and small, small town businesses, you know, they're actually trying to provide grants and resources for farmers are actively trying to get

connected farmers with, with people, and so that the food doesn't go to waste, because like the supply chains is, you know, I'm seeing some stresses. And so I'm just seeing a wide variety of responses.

Abigail Jurusik 38:28

So how would you say COVID-19 has changed your relationship with your community?

Dang Yang 38:34

That's a good question. I haven't had a lot of time to think about that. Because I feel that my relationship with the community has, it's always been a place of trying to try to address inequities in on campus. And, you know, in order to do that, it requires you to already be knowledgeable and connected with other stakeholders who are doing those things, other community members, other agencies who are doing that. So work closely with nonprofit organizations already in working closely with different institutional departments on campus and off campus. And so I think that what it has done, if anything, is that it's strengthened, the need and the understanding that collaborative work is absolutely vital in order to do this work. And I think that all those stakeholders who've worked with those vulnerable populations and those different populations of individuals, whether working with homeless individuals, or whether working with people of color or the working, you know, with people from low income families, I think that the realization now is that more so now than than ever before. It requires a concerted coordinated effort from multiple directions in order to address those issues and addressing the pandemic of this scale requires a coordinated effort to as well and so I don't know if it's changed the types of relations shift ever had. But I think that what it's done, it's really reinforced. The fact that these collaborative relationships are really important, because you can't address poverty without addressing racism you can't address recently, with addressing homophobia, you can address homophobia without addressing homelessness, you know, you can address those things. They're all intersectional, to some extent. And so it requires kinda like that really big picture thinking about like, how will these issues all kind of impact each other?

Abigail Jurusik 40:31

Right, right. It's kind of like COVID has been, like, just like, shone a giant spotlight on all of our problems. And it's like, never, like, a few, like a good majority of us are home now. And it's like, so like having the time now to reflect? Do you like what kind of where do you think your community will be going after? Like, what changes do you think, can be made?

Dang Yang 40:57

That's a good question. And it goes to something that I've been thinking a lot about. To best answer that question. I think that I think first I have to say that, you know, there's a lot of talk about going back to normal, and I don't think we can go back to normal, it was normal. There was already the systems of oppression in place. And I think that to answer your question about where do I think that we need to go or where I think that we're going to go? No, you're absolutely right, that this is this pandemic has shined a light on glaringly, so, the holes and the gaps that we have in our systems, we've always had them there. And this is the systems and the holes within the systems are nothing new. What I'm hoping that we'll be able to do is moving forward, at the very least, we'll be able to gain more allies. In this particular work. Primarily, the raising the awareness and of itself, at minimum is really helpful, where we can

reference this particular situation and articulate that this is one example, in this pandemic of how a systemic issue negatively impacted a population of individuals through no fault of their own. And so I think that's what I'm hoping to do is at minimum that this pandemic raises awareness of houses with repression operates, and how it how the consequences of these systems of oppression, whether well intentioned or not, when they were created, are disproportionately spread through different populations. And then I think that beyond that, what I'm hoping to do is that once that level of awareness increases, that there are individuals in like a positions in positions of power positions of influence, who can leave the appropriate changes, to help address these issues on that larger scale, because supporting one person through a racist incident is another. But breaking down those systemic issues and policies and practices and stereotypes. So that a larger group of people don't have to deal with the consequences of those stereotypes, is really the end goal of what it is that we're trying to do what at least what I'm trying to do in the work that we do with the multiple partners that we have, we will address different types of oppression, different types of inequities. And I honestly, I'm still trying to figure that out myself too, as well. But how? I think there are some strategies that we utilize such as training, you know, awareness raising, you know, campaigning for specific policies and addressing health different policies in different populations, coming up with new ideas about how to how to how to address those policies, how to change those policies, how to change those practices. No, it really is what I'm hoping a cultural shift that we're looking at, I'm really hoping is that we create new traditions, new ideas, new norms about what is normal and natural. And I'm hoping that those things will lead to the minimization and elimination of stereotypes and systemic issues that kind of like are born out of those. Right.

Abigail Jurusik 44:00

So how have you discipline leaders and government officials in your community responded to the outbreak?

Dang Yang 44:14

In in the Chippewa Valley, I think that what I have been really appreciative of is that all the leaders that I have seen that have been very visible, have been really, really adamant about following following the advice of the health experts regarding how we respond, you know, how we stay safe, different types of things that we do on a day to day basis. I really appreciate that. Not just from a county standpoint, but Auclair city county health department, but also within the region and to some extent within the state. And on campus, too, as well. You know, I have those conversations a lot with my team, my staff about how do we, how do we eventually go back to work You're on campus in a safe way. And we're looking at CDC guidelines, you know, the institution looking at CDC guidelines, the counties looking at CDC guidelines. And I think that looking at expert advice is kind of part of what we do at institutions of higher education. I think that that's something that we look for, you know, we identify who those individuals are, who have the most experience the most knowledge, and are able to provide that level of guidance and appropriate resources to implement those guidances. And, you know, I'm really I'm really happy to see that our elected leaders in our community leaders, and even those leaders who are leaders, a part of like community agencies and nonprofit organizations, and even like businesses, you know, those those influential individuals are very closely trying to follow CDC guidelines as much as possible to try to maximize the safety. So I think that's my first impression of what I see. I think they're just like everyone else I think they're doing, we're doing the best with the limited amount of information that we have, partly because it happened relatively quickly. And looking for the proper guidelines to help inform

their decision making. And they don't have anyone else to look to in recent history about, you know, how they should respond, how they should close down businesses, how they should reopen businesses, and so on. I think that with limited amount of information, exercising those critical thinking skills, I'm glad to see that they're doing that. Right. So I don't know if that answered your question.

Abigail Jurusik 46:47

No, no, you did. You did. Yeah, and how your community government has been responding. But do you have any thoughts on how like the local state or federal leaders are responding to things like the crisis differently?

Dang Yang 47:03

I think what I am observing is that different states, different counties, different areas, different regions are doing things ever so slightly differently. And there are pros and cons to that. I think, I think that a level of understanding about what's happening on a local level is absolutely vital. But it has to be balanced out with a much more coordinated effort to as well. And I think that I think that we don't have the right balance of a wider strategy coupled with local decision making. And so I think that it continues to exacerbate the situation. And personally, it exacerbates my own anxiety about the situation too. I think that, um, I don't know, I don't know, I think that, personally, I'm disappointed to see that there isn't more of a coordinated effort. And part of that is because I see I, I tend to look at things from a systemic level. And so understanding the nuance and the need to have in the agency and individual level to make decisions and at the same time, accorded effort about what the larger and wider strategy is, is really important. And so there's some nuance to that. But yeah, I personally, I'm just disappointed to see that on a national scale. There isn't much of a have a well communicated effort. And it feels kind of like a free for all some extent, which makes it much more difficult to coordinate efforts, you know, seeing different states like for example, I know that the New England states, Maine, New York, Massachusetts, Vermont, I believe, are working together to identify like how they will coordinate together, you know, in the western states, California, Washington, Oregon, I think are kind of coordinating their efforts about how and when and under what conditions to open to as well. So there's some larger systemic things being put into place. You know, in the Midwest, we have kind of that Midwest contact and coalition too, as well, like it was Wisconsin, Michigan and soda. Illinois, I think you kind of try and work together, try to identify what those conditions are. For all of us, too, as well, or originally, we were doing that. I think that's kind of gone out the window ever since the Supreme Court struck down the super home directive from the governor. But I think that those coordinate efforts on a larger scale, the larger the scale, the coordinated effort, the better it is. And then, coupled with a level of nuance applied to agency for decision making on the local level, is helpful too. And I don't know what that balance is, you know, I don't have any expertise and in global pandemics or in government or politics But you know, like, from just a local person, it just feels it feels more chaotic than it has to be. And it adds to the anxiety that already exists.

Abigail Jurusik 50:14

Right. Right. No, that makes that makes perfect sense. So on a little bit more personal question, have you know, anyone? Wisconsin? COVID-19?

Dang Yang 50:30

Yes, I do. I do, I do. Some of them are distant friends, distant relatives. And the individuals that I do know how have recovered, there's, there's, well, mostly individuals that I know have recovered. There's one person that I know that had a really difficult time. With within, so I was put on a ventilator for quite some time, and, you know, they recovered, but still, it is just hearing about the situation, it was devastating, you know, we're happy to see that they recovered. But I think that though, you know, what we forget is that recovery from, from it is one thing, but you know, life after that can change, like this person was already was not part of a vulnerable group, but was older in age, and this particular person, you know, continues, while most of the symptoms and respiratory issues have subsided, they continue to have, like, chest pain, and have no like coughs, that continue on. After that, they're still able to function on a day to day basis, but their lives, their health is never gonna be the same. Right? put under a ventilator, according this person is really, really intrusive process. So it's my understanding from the anecdote that this person gave me, I don't know if this is kind of across the board, I've never been put on a ventilator, I've never seen it happen. I don't know anything about what that looks like. But you know, from this one unique experience, you know, it's my understanding that, you know, that particular two has to be, you know, forcibly put into their lungs, and then they have to force air into the lungs at a rate that is that allows them to get enough oxygen into the lungs, and that the forcing the air into the lungs, you know, that that can be physically traumatic to the body. And so I I don't know what's going to happen in the future for this individual, I imagined. And I hope that I hope that there's a level of recovery that will happen all the time that there have have some normalcy in regards to functionality of their lungs and their body. But I don't know. And then, you know, you hear on the news. And that can happen to anyone that I know that people heal, and recover and just fine, to some extent from this. And so it seems to be a wide spectrum of recovery for different people. So yeah, yeah. So personally, I do know, some distant relatives and some distant individuals that have been impacted by COVID-19 and have recovered. You know, I was speaking to a student, actually, the student told me that his his brother, who was a healthcare worker in a different state actually contracted coordinating to as well. And fortunately, the symptoms while they were bad symptoms, they didn't require the person to go into the hospital and be on a ventilator. But they since recovered from that, as was under quarantine, following that recovery, and so that's very fortunate to as well so our students are seeing that as well. And so I hear about those things too, as well, not just from the community, but also from our students and their experiences from their relatives or their friends or their group of, of community members.

Abigail Jurusik 54:13

Yeah. I'm sorry, I need a drink of water?

Abigail Jurusik 54:24

I don't really have a fully fledged question in my head yet, but because you mentioned earlier about how there's been a higher rate of COVID cases with people who are in where minorities and whoever are in lower socio economic sections, like so. How do you think like, so then, like, after COVID, like if they recover, like those effects, like afterwards are still going to be there? Yeah. Right. So like, what are your that's not really a question, but do you have any thoughts on that?

Dang Yang 54:59

If I'm hearing you correctly, I think what you're what I'm hearing you asking me is, what are my thoughts are in regards to what life might look like with those particular populations, communities that have been disproportionately impacted by the health outcomes of COVID-19? And you're actually like, yeah, you know, like, the, the only voices continue to show that black and brown communities are disproportionately impacted on a health basis, by COVID-19. And the has there a lot of likely reasons, you know, and a number of different theories and different touch points basically, is about their access to preventive health care services, their, you know, their access to health care in and of itself. You know, whether they have a job that that has good health care coverage, even the cost of health care coverage, even when it's covered, some sense, pseudo covered, you know, what that looks like console, access is one thing, but their ability to actually afford and utilize, some of it has to do with cultural stigma, as well as utilizing those services too, as well. I think that has less to do with the petitioner, maybe some, maybe some components with that too, as well. But I think that what I what I continue to worry about really are those long term effects that that's going to have on these communities. Because we see that under normal circumstances, you can go broke and go bankrupt from one very acute health condition, especially if it ends up leading to like chronic conditions. And that requires constant follow up and constant health, health care, maintenance. And, you know, because these populations that are being hit those individuals who are from traditionally lower socioeconomic households, and communities and communities that are black and brown and underrepresented, I think that what I'm worried about is that it's can continue to exacerbate the economic inequalities that already exist in these communities. From just from an economic standpoint, and ethical lens, and again, I don't have any expertise in economics or any of those things. But I do know that, and I do strongly suspect that because of the existing economic inequalities that already exist in these communities, and on top of that, the the disproportionate impact of the health disparities and health issues that have impacted those communities there, I don't see how we, they would not have disproportionate economic impact in those communities too, as well. And it has an ongoing cycle, you know, because the economic system is so dependent on, on on income tax collection, that has direct impact on their ability to maintain jobs, it has a direct impact on their ability to maintain different types of jobs. And then that impacts the ability for the local community to collect taxes and invest back into the community and those investments back in community because those are those are gonna be pulled maybe pulled back. You know, I worry that that may have ongoing issues with those communities. We, we have historically had what, like policies in place that separated black and brown community members, the ghettoization of the urban landscape to some extent, and this pandemic is, I'm afraid going to continue to exacerbate the inequities. You know, it's funny because like, right now, you're looking at the economic standpoint, a top 1%, top 2% of income earners have not lost a whole lot of money. In fact, because a lot of them own, like essential businesses, they continue to see the benefits of this and I don't think they're intentionally tried to benefit to it. I think that while they're providing an essential service and central business, central systems and economic infrastructure, I I can't express how frustrated I continue to be in regards to the disproportionate distribution of economic resources across those communities.

Abigail Jurusik 59:27

Right, right. It's these people are putting their lives potentially on the line or risking having like a chronic, like health problem for like, for who knows how long yet they're not being paid enough to receive treatment or they're afraid of losing their jobs. And the people at the top are are like, barely like losing

money, like you know, are not losing money but are still more focused on their profits? Well, I don't know, if they I don't want to know you disagree.

Dang Yang 01:00:13

It really is, I think what it is, is that the system is set up in such a way that they will benefit from this. Now, it doesn't mean that there's some evil plan from these businesses, I really don't think that that happens in the case just happens to be that they already accumulate a lot of this financial resources. And then because they're essential services, they're going to continue to benefit and Kuhn accumulate more of those resources. And we're seeing that those populations that are disproportionately impacted negatively, are continued to lose more of those resources, because they have to invest more portion of their income to support their livelihoods. You know, losing their jobs is one thing, but also having to invest in healthcare on all these different types of things. And so I don't think it comes from malice, but it's really a systemic issue, it comes from the way it's set up, to benefit them, whether they want to benefit or not, it's just the way that it's set up enforcement. And, you know, there are things that we can do from a policy standpoint, they can kind of like help with that particular picture. And I don't know what those policies would be, I have some ideas. But again, not being a politician, a lawmaker or having experience doing that, I don't know. And, yeah, and so I think it's certainly nuanced. And it's a complicated situation, but it's something that we definitely need to address. And I'm worried about how essential workers are one thing that I did appreciate, kind of at first was when essential workers were asked to continue working, you know, they got accolades, people were, were really gung ho about these social workers, you know, and we are we, we gave them a recognition that the work that they do is going to keep us alive, literally keep us alive, maintaining manufacturing, maintaining, construction, work, maintaining, like, food supply chain, those are all things that literally will keep us alive. But at the same time, there's symbolic accolades, you know, like, we give them a high five, we can begin, you know, like, a moment in spotlight. But when the spotlight fades, they're the ones who are gonna have to deal with all the negative implications and consequences that have been disproportionately thrust on their shoulders, because they're essential workers. And so, you know, there was an example that I heard of in, like, in the United Kingdom. So the United Kingdom has a national health Service's kind of like a socialized system of medicine. And, you know, doctors and nurses are paid to do that particular system. And there was one particular individual who had articulated that, at first, he was really appreciative, because like, every day at like seven or 8pm, he would stand outside of buildings, and they would clap. And this is national outpourings, this wouldn't happen on a daily basis. And at first, you know, it, he said that he didn't display to be to feel so proud and so choked up and so happy to see that type of support. But, you know, as he spoke to other health care workers in the National Health System, and again, this is in the UK, in Britain, you know, they had articulated that they were concerned about that, that was it was just symbolic accolades, symbolic support, because two or three years, actually, I think over a period of five to 10 years, there has been degrading support and degrading financial investment in the national health services in Britain. And so were some of these medical providers were saying they were was a public support, when they needed the funding to support, you know, the doctors support the technology support the hospital systems, and and now they're out there clapping, which is great, but it doesn't change the system doesn't provide the investment that's needed to do the work that you do to keep people healthy and safe. And so applying that here in in the US and specifically in jewel Valley. Yes, essential workers should be commended. essential business should be commended. By the same time, if we're going to commend them, and we're going to recognize the fact

that they are essential workers, why don't we pay them more? Why don't we give them the appropriate resource so that they can survive? And so those are the things that I that I have worked with colleagues and stakeholders and agencies across the community to at least raise a question and try to advocate for better support systems in place.

Abigail Jurusik 01:04:37

Right, yeah. See, so I hope no, no, I love I love everything. You're saying you're you've you've, you have a lot of insight. And it's being like, like, I'm just really it's like taking a moment. I'm just like, I'm to process.

Dang Yang 01:04:58

One thing that I appreciate about this, but the Historical archival project is the fact that, you know, we often say that you have to learn history so that you don't repeat it. And I fear that we continue to repeat. Repeat things because we're not learning about 1918 pandemic, we're not learning about, you know, the the systems of oppression that have been in place. And I'm really, really hoping that because this is a global, this pandemic is on a global scale that we're going to learn from this particular piece. And I'm hoping that some of the anecdotes and stories that this project captures, is going to be useful for future generations so that they understand that this is a very real, very real situation that that needs to be picked apart, and it's being interrogated. And if you really understood because I think that there are so many stories to tell, and there's so many lessons to learn from this situations global pandemic, and it's often you know, figuring out how we can apply those lessons here in the local area, I I really hope that we're going to be able to do that.

Abigail Jurusik 01:06:11

Yeah, yeah. No, me to just like, especially just because for a lot of history, what was recorded was always, like official proclamations, or, you know, just the people at the top. And when, like, people started, like keeping diaries, you know, or like, when we're able to, like recover them. Like, that's where we get so much insight of what things were actually like. And so with these oral interviews, it's kind of it's kind of, it's an or it's like a little bit of a diary, it's, or, it's just capturing, like, what this moment is, like, right now how you were seeing it. So then, like, people can hopefully look back and see all these videos and see how all these different people experienced it differently. Ya

Dang Yang 01:06:54

I know, from another one that I that I think about a lot too, as well, and from things that I'm hearing from other people. But for myself, and I don't want to be on the behalf, like I guess like on, just for myself, I think the hardest part about this particular pandemic is just not knowing if there is an end. And at that level of uncertainty, and I'm pretty sure that you've heard different versions of this, as well in different stories in different from different people. But not knowing what to what, if there is an end, there's an end time, like if the if someone said that, definitively this will be done in a month, okay? No, we can wait or definitive this will be done in five years. Okay, that's a little longer, but there's something to look forward to the fact that there's a level of hyper ambiguity and uncertainty, that adds to that level of anxiety, as well. And so I think that that's, that's, that's the hardest part to deal with. Because I have kids who have

two kids, I have a five year old and a two year old, and I, I don't always know what to tell them. They know that there's a lot of sick people, you know, we tell them that they're, that we can't go to the playground, and we can't go to school. And, you know, we got side, we have them wearing masks, they want to go to the store with Mom and Dad, what's the store, we told them, they can't go because there's a lot of sick people outside. They can't wait to go back to school, they can't like go back and play with their friends. You know, they want to see their teachers, and, you know, a single look on the faces of how bored they are. Keeping them entertained, has has exercised that particular skill set for me. And so I wonder what they're going to remember this those those kids who are, who are the ages of my children, five year olds, two year olds, you know, what will they remember? Will this be something that will be heavily influential, and I suppose that differs because my kids are very lucky, they have internet access at home, they have a plethora of videos to watch if they want to, they have educational materials that they can play with. And so I occupy very privileged positionality economically, socially and in the household. And so they in the impact that they will see may not be as negative may not be as long lasting, they may not be as traumatic as other individuals who were, whose household may have lost their jobs. You know, we have students who've both parents have lost their jobs. And so you know, just think about that and the type of ongoing trauma that's going to create within the household and within those students from within those individuals. So I don't know what my kids are going to experience. I don't know what they're going to remember and I really hope that they remember some positive things about this and they hope that they will remember that this was a time that there was a pandemic, with a lot of sick people. So yeah, I don't like I worried about my kids about what that's going to look like what the world is gonna look like for them.

Abigail Jurusik 01:10:14

Right? Like, it's gonna be very interesting to see, like, their generation. Like, because they're at such an impressionable age, like, this is the age like when they start interacting, or like broadening with the outside world. You know, like seeing like, Pastor like, immediate family. But now, like, now they like we have to self isolate, you know, and it's, they're not getting that experience.

Dang Yang 01:10:42

Ya know, Abby, I don't know how I actually. Are you a graduate student or an undergraduate?

Abigail Jurusik 01:10:47

I'm an undergraduate. I'm actually graduating.

Dang Yang 01:10:49

Yeah. Oh, well, congratulations. And thank you. For me.

Abigail Jurusik 01:10:55

Yeah, one more final.

Dang Yang 01:10:58

And I asked that question, because, you know, I'm a millennial, I'm still in my mid 30s. I don't know if I said this in regards to my demographics. But, you know, I identify as Asian Americans, specifically Hmong, American, and I'm 36 years old. But as a millennial, you know, I heard someone say this, and

I'm gonna try to repeat some of that, but, you know, our particular generation, the millennial generation, you know, we went through, went through, we saw the, the tech bubble, explosion, in the economic standpoint, we went through the housing crisis, we went through the economic bust, in recession, the Great Recession in 2008. You know, we went through 911. And that will happen when I was in high school, we went through, we actually I remember, like, in the 90s, growing up, and like the advent of the Internet age, just starting to come out. And then now we're going through another likely recession, and we're going through this pandemic, and and then the student debt crisis, you know, I, I feel that this millennial generation is, my, my specific generation has seen such a wide variety of, of significant historical milestones. And, you know, I remember, I had a professor when I was a college student, and they would always talk about the day that John F. Kennedy died. And that was the defining moment of their particular generation. That was one very specific thing. That was just one thing. I have a feeling that when people ask me that question, it's going to be a laundry list of things that have defined my particular generation. And I am absolutely confident that this particular global pandemic is going to be on that laundry list of your generation, as well. I can't imagine what the next next years are going to bring for you

Abigail Jurusik 01:12:56

too, as well. Right, right. Yeah. No, it's just, that's another thing we're looking back. It's gonna be really interesting. Where, like, you more so than me, I think I fall into Gen Z. I think I'm not entirely sure. I'm not entirely sure, either. But like, in your adult life, you've gone through now to like, with this being the second, economic recessions, while you're still forming, your like, or cementing, like yourself, like in your own economic standpoint, if that makes sense.

Dang Yang 01:13:29

Absolutely. Absolutely.

Abigail Jurusik 01:13:31

Yeah. So yeah, I don't, I don't know. It's gonna be interesting, looking back on all this in the future years, but how do you think this is going to affect people like, mentally? Like, how is coded? Like, do you think affecting people mentally right now? And algebra?

Dang Yang 01:13:51

That's a great question. No, as a for historical context, and self disclosure, you know, I'm really comfortable sharing that. You don't I myself before the pandemic was already seen therapist. And so you know, I have my own mental health know, things that I was addressing too, as well. And, you know, I openly discuss that with others too, as well kind of like tearing down the stigma behind mental health. But an interesting phenomenon that I noticed, in myself and in others who have who share similar types of mental health, things that I see is that right away when the when the pandemic hit, there was an overwhelming sense of calm. And I think that one thing, the one way in which one of my friends described it, was that, you know, in with the mental health conditions that we deal with, this is ongoing uncertainty that we're dealing with that we're that what we're experiencing, is not the feelings that we're feeling and experience See is not validated and real. But seeing the global pandemic, it just simply completely validated like, oh, yeah, our anxiety is very normal, more so than than ever before. Now

everyone is feeling this level of anxiety. And to some extent that was, that was validating, and because like it was understand that what we're feeling is very normal. And what we're, what we're experiencing is, is, is, you know what other people will be experiencing too, as well. So there's a level of certainty that, that what we're seeing is relatively normal. So there's this interesting calm, the first couple weeks, and I noticed that pattern in myself. And my friends, who are in a similar state kind of experienced that too, as well. And then after that, it shifted into an ongoing heightened level of anxiety as as the uncertainty continued on. And I, I think that from the mental health component, it's going to have, again, disproportionate impact, depending on whether or not people have access to mental health counselors and the resources and support systems. And their ability to speak about it and their ability to put words to it. And I think that one thing that has been the most powerful thing that I've seen, not just for myself, but other individuals who are experiencing mental health crises or need mental health resources, is the fact that they're able to put language to an experience. And the ability to put language to experience makes them more real. So they can describe it taking explain it, and they can address it, and they can do something about it. I think that those individuals who have the least amount of access to mental health support systems and resources are the ones who are going to be unable to address these situations, and I unable to put words to it. And I think that the ongoing trauma that is going to cause over this, these multiple generations moving forward is going to be long lasting. And I'm afraid about that, you know, and I don't know what that's going to look like. And if we take a look at, for example, just our counseling services at UW Eau Claire, you know, we've seen, we haven't seen students not using it we actually have, it's my understanding that they've seen increases in the numbers of students, we're utilizing constant services. And you know, every single time that they add on a temporary like practitioner, they're still getting filled, you know, our Student Health Services is seeing the same type of services too, as well. And so those are some very real tangible things that happened to us well, even amongst our students. And so I have a feeling that one of the main services that's really going to be needed after this is going to be mental health services, really, because like what we're experiencing is a collective traumatic experience on a global scale. You know, and you know, and I think to some extent, trauma starts off, in shock, where you were, you had that sense of calm, and I think that's where a lot of where my sense of calm came from a level of shock, and then you start looking at, you know, the reality starts to set in. And that particular piece comes in waves of different feelings come through different ways in which we react to it. And that's, again, you know, I don't want speak on anyone else's behalf. And that's how I, myself have been reacting to this and the patterns that I've seen amongst our students, and patterns that I've seen amongst my friends and my colleagues and my, and my community, friends who were experiencing similar mental health issues too, as well, and seeking out mental health services. That's kind of thematically what I've observed myself. And I, we've already had, you know, before the pandemic, there has been an ongoing agreement that we don't have enough resources to support the mental health crisis that we are seeing now, already, and then this is just going to exacerbate that situation too, as well. You know, in a previous job before I worked here as the Director for the Office of Multicultural Affairs. I worked at Chippewa Valley Technical College as the director for the multicultural, other diversity Resources Office. And that was a very unique department because not only do they serve students of color, but they also serve international students. They serve students with disabilities and they also serve non traditional occupation students. And I was very fortunate to have a very wide experience. So with my students with disabilities, I think one of the things that I learned is that there has been a precipitous, almost exponential increase in the number of students seeking out disability services based off of mental health conditions, cognitive behavioral

conditions and disabilities that impact their ability to successfully complete school. And even here at UW Eau Claire to as well our services for persons with disabilities continues to see increases in the number of students who are seeking out visas which are the Accommodation Plans for students who have documented disabilities, and those documented disabilities, the fastest growing documented disability that services are being provided for our students with cognitive and behavioral mental health needs. And so you know, I think that those but that particular theme and pattern was already happening pre pandemic, during the pandemic, we're seeing that there just isn't enough resources to support those individuals right now. And then post pandemic, I don't know, if we're gonna have the opportunity and the ability to actually provide the appropriate resources in a timely fashion that the entire nation is going to. I don't know. That's, and I worry about that too, as well.

Abigail Jurusik 01:20:25

Right. Right. Yeah. The it's like, what's going to happen afterwards? Like,

Dang Yang 01:20:36

it's yeah, it's just

Abigail Jurusik 01:20:41

I mean, it's so hard to even comprehend. Yeah. And like how things are going to have to change. Yeah, like to accommodate all this,

Dang Yang 01:20:50

though, because, because in when, when we experienced 911 3000, people approximately die, or over 3000 people die. And we had a national process to war. We had like years and years to learn that through your process, and part of the book, end of of that mourning process was rebuilding of the Twin Towers, you know, and then this pandemic within the within our country alone. What was it? How many, I mean, how many 1000s? Was it 4 million cases?

Abigail Jurusik 01:21:26

For the United States? Yeah. So it's, it's, as of today, it's 1.5 7 million different cases of

Dang Yang 01:21:34

Confirmed cases and, and 1000s of deaths, more so than I live in? What is the grieving process going to look like for that? What is how are we going to look in the mourning process? To come to terms with the situation, the reality that we lost so many lives in this one? short amount of time? Hello? Yeah, I'm sorry. I think I interrupted your next question or comment?

Abigail Jurusik 01:21:59

Oh, I don't know. It's gone now. So that's completely fine.

Dang Yang 01:22:04

Okay, that's too much your time I see that it's about five o'clock. Oh, no.

Abigail Jurusik 01:22:10

Oh, no, you're all good. I actually just have one last question for all right. So knowing what you know, now, what do you think that individuals communities or governments need to keep in mind for the future?

Dang Yang 01:22:28

I think I think the United States has to come to terms with the understanding that first and foremost, we have to be aware that we have a culture of highly individualistic traditions, you know, and that permeates through our economic system permeates through our social systems, it permeates through our educational systems, and so on, so forth. This mentality of meritocracy, where you're expected to pull yourself up by your bootstraps, and you and you suffer alone are responsible for your success and your deficiencies and your failures. I think that first of all, we have to be aware that we are a hyper individualistic culture. And there is some strength to that. And at the same time, we also have to come to terms with there are that there are some, in addition to the pros associated with that there are definitely some very significant cons to as well, you know, and I think that, as government agencies and as individuals in position that can allocate resources and make decisions for the greater good of the country of their community or their other areas of influence, I think that they have to start taking a more collaborative and collectivistic approach to as well bouncing out that need for individual agency with the collective need of the larger community, larger population. And our policies need to reflect that our, our systems of support need reflect that too, as well, we can't continue to operate in a way where your healthcare is based off on where you work, we can continue to operate in such a way that, you know, like the viability and success of one business or one company is more important than the livelihood of one or two individuals and what in their lives, we can continue to operate in such a way that's that demonizes one particular population, regardless of what that population happens to be, whether it be like by race, by socioeconomic status, or by class or nationality. And we have to put policies in place, we have to figure out a way to better integrate those systems in such a way that we have to find a way to better develop new systems to address those inequities that we have in country and I think that if we have strong systems that will support people in those capacities installed, health agencies make individual decisions As we know, then when emergencies like these things happen, global crises, community wide crises, small scales, crises, that those systems will be in place to minimize how far we fall, minimize the amount of negative impact, minimize the amount of deaths, minimize the amount of racism, xenophobia, minimize the amount of anti semitism, homophobia, sexism, and all those different types of things. That's going to be exacerbated by these situations. And I really hope that, you know, those are the outcomes. And those are the lessons that we've learned from this particular situation is I would hate to go back to normal.

Abigail Jurusik 01:25:42

Right, right. Yep. This taking this time, and is a learning moment and rebuilding

Dang Yang 01:25:50

We need to create a new normal.

Abigail Jurusik 01:25:54

Right? Yeah, no, there's yeah, as you said earlier, like there's no going back to normal because it wasn't working.

Dang Yang 01:26:01

Yeah. Yeah. Well, Abby, thank you so much for your time...

Abigail Jurusik 01:26:05

Yeah, no, thank you so much. You're like you really brought in a lot of insights that I think are going to be like really helpful and looking back on this.

Dang Yang 01:26:14

I hope so too. Thank you so much.

Abigail Jurusik 01:26:15

Thank you.

Dang Yang 01:26:16

Bye.