

Transcript of Interview with Sydney Champagne and Juliana Marston by Juliana Marston and Sydney Champagne

Interviewer: Juliana Marston, Sydney Champagne

Interviewee: Sydney Champagne, Juliana Marston

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Abstract: Juliana Marston and Sydney Champagne interview each other about the COVID-19 pandemic and the connections they see with past pandemics they have studied.

Juliana Marston 00:03

Hello, my name is Juliana Marston and I will be interviewing Sydney Champagne. Do you consent to the interview?

Sydney Champagne 00:09

I do.

Juliana Marston 00:10

Please state the date and time.

Sydney Champagne 00:12

It's December 3 at 6:30pm My name is Sydney Champagne and I will be interviewing Juliana Marston. Do you consent to the interview?

Juliana Marston 00:20

Yes I do.

Sydney Champagne 00:22

Please state the date and time.

Juliana Marston 00:23

It is December 3 at 6:30pm.

Sydney Champagne 00:27

All right.

Juliana Marston 00:30

So for my questions for Sydney: Did you notice anything similar between the COVID 19 pandemic and the major four pandemics of the last few centuries bubonic plague, smallpox, cholera, and influenza?

Sydney Champagne 00:43

I did. After learning about the four major pandemics, I noticed that the reactions to the diseases were very similar. As the uncertainty overcame society's panic and confusion arose. With all the confusion and suffering around people wanted an explanation, so blame was thrown, thrown around left and right. For the Black Death, the Catholics blamed anyone who did not conform to their religion, for this was an act of God attempting to punish those who had sinned. This is exemplified in the movement of the flatulence during the black plague, the flatulence wanted to atone for their sins, so they would hurt themselves and ask God for forgiveness. They would also inspire persecution against the Jews and other religions at the time because they believed that they had sinned in caused the plague. This response was similar to that of the pandemic today, although it wasn't religious blame, it was blame on countries, politicians, and certain people. For the influenza pandemic of 1980 in the Spanish were blamed for the disease, that's the reference to the Spanish flu. Whenever there is uncertainty in the origins, or circumstances, blame is thrown around for better understanding.

Juliana Marston 01:52

Yeah, you've made some really great points. Moving on to the next question. Do you think there will ever be a point where humanity is no longer threatened by pandemics? Or do you think that humanity will just always have to coexist with pandemics?

Sydney Champagne 02:06

Throughout history humans have always coexisted with pandemics, and I'm sure we always will. It is constantly thought that we are beyond such large-scale diseases until another one hits like the COVID 19 pandemic. Despite the major advancements in science that are constantly being made, I'm sure that large scale infectious diseases will always be present. I'm incapable of believing that there will be a medical advancement or governmental action that could result in the end of pandemics. Also, the way in which our global societies are interconnected has caused the spread of disease to be far easier. In past pandemics, there were far less efficient ways of travel, and thus disease was more concentrated in single societies and dense populations. As there began to be more contact with other societies, the spread of disease increased and the spread to other countries was much faster. During the influenza pandemic of 1918, for example, American soldiers traveled to Europe where they were fighting alongside English and French, who then were infected and took the disease back to their countries. Although humans have come very far in the understanding of sanitation and hygiene, the interconnectivity still progresses the

spread of disease. So that's pinned pan-pandemics will always be a possibility. For my questions for Juliana, um, after learning about the response, the responses to the past pandemics, and after living through the COVID 19 pandemic, and observing how it was dealt with, do you have any opinions on how future pandemics should be handled? Is there anything that should not be done again?

Juliana Marston 03:41

So in learning about various past pandemics, namely the we want to plague, smallpox, cholera in 1918, influenza pandemics, something I noticed to be pretty universal among them is the way people react to them. In all of these cases, we see people exhibiting a sort of fight or flight response when pandemics arise. When an outbreak starts, those capable of doing so tend to move away from cities in densely populated areas in order to protect themselves, which is essentially a flight response. At the same time, unfortunately, we see a lot of scapegoating when it comes to pandemics. As you referenced before, during the bubonic plague pandemics, Jews and other minorities were heavily persecuted. This fight response also relates to opposition to public health measures, from quarantining to wearing masks, something that was especially protested during the 1918 influenza pandemic. These responses are not just common to pandemics of the past though, we saw these exact same responses during the COVID 19 pandemic. At the end of the day, the only way that we can successfully get through future pandemics is if everyone decides to follow public health measures properly. Additionally, we as a society need to learn to come together, instead of resorting to scapegoating and Division during disasters like pandemics we as people should be trying to protect our neighbors even if it just means wearing a mask.

Sydney Champagne 05:01

I completely agree. For my next question, after learning about how other pandemics affected societies and families has it changed your perspective on the severity or experience of the current pandemic?

Juliana Marston 05:14

So, when learning about major pandemics of the past and how they affected societies and families, especially going back to the Middle Ages with the black plague, the poor sanitation and working conditions of the past were a huge factor in the spread of illness. While the COVID 19 pandemic was devastating, it was definitely not to the same scale as other pandemics from the past. Part of the reason for this is the vast improvements in sanitation, medicine and public health that we've cultivated today. While we still have room for improvement, these advancements have undoubtedly allowed for people to have a much better quality of life today. Learning about past pandemics made me more aware of the advancements society has made in these areas, and definitely put the scale of the current pandemic into perspective for me, at least in comparison to the major pandemics of the past and how they came to be so devastating. All right, everyone, thank you for listening.

Sydney Champagne 06:12

This has been our take on pandemics as a whole after living through the COVID-19 pandemic and learning about pandemics of the past.