

Transcript of Interview with AW Walker by Cody Brown

Interviewee: Alexis Walker

Interviewer: Cody Brown

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Location (Interviewee): Fayetteville, NC

Location (Interviewer): Logan, IA

Abstract:

Alexis Walker grew up in Southern California but is currently living in Fayetteville, NC while her husband is stationed at Fort Bragg. Alexis is currently a full-time mom and a full-time graduate student in Arizona State University's online History M.A. program. Alexis's day-to-day life is mostly centered around her family and the social life of the family is heavily centered around the military community of Fort Bragg. In this interview Alexis reflects on her experiences as a mother during the COVID-19 pandemic and how that has affected the way she cares for her children. Alexis also provides a unique insight to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the lives of military members, their families, and the military community as a whole. With the stop movement order issued by the military, the lives of Alexis and her family have essentially been put on hold until the military decides to relax this movement and travel restriction. Finally, Alexis reflects on the varying responses to the pandemic within a community made up of great diversity due to the varying cultural backgrounds of military families.

Cody Brown: [\(00:01\)](#):

Current date and time. It is July 7th, 2020. And it is currently 6:07 PM central time. And you're Eastern daylight time? Correct? So it's seven Oh seven there?

Alexis Walker: Yep.

CB: Okay. And what is your name?

AW: Alexis Walker

CB: And what are the primary things you do on a day to day basis? What does your life look on a typical day?

AW: [\(00:29\)](#):

Well, I have three kids, so typically I get up, I change my daughters; I feed everybody breakfast, get everybody dressed, everybody ready, and pretty much take care of my kids and clean my house. And I do schoolwork cause I'm in a master's program, a lot of reading and working a lot during the day. So, I'm just kind of all day long cleaning, taking care of babies and doing schoolwork.

CB [\(00:53\)](#):

And where do you live right now? What is it like to live there?

AW [\(00:58\)](#):

Right now? I currently live in North Carolina. I live in Fayetteville next to Fort Bragg where my husband's stationed. And there's a lot of southerners who are against the whole pandemic and they're not really taking too many precautions and there's a lot of right now repeating. He just put out like a mass [inaudible]. So they're kind of like going back and forth cause it's part of the South. So they're trying to open everything back up, but also they're trying to be cautious because they've been having a lot of high numbers spikes lately. So I mean, it's kind of like a middle ground, I think not as opening up as quickly as some of the other Southern States, but right now you get see it spreading faster than a lot of other States are. So it's kind of just a weird time to be in here everywhere, all around the state. You go and there's people not really social distancing, but then you've also all the employees are, you know, everything's shut down, still see people who have to wear a mask if you're working [inaudible].

CB (02:04):

When you first learned about COVID-19, what were your thoughts about it and how have your thoughts changed since then?

AW (02:14):

Well, initially I didn't really think it was a big deal. It was kind of described as a flu, like a bad flu. I've had the flu before, it wasn't a big deal. And when they first told us about it, they were saying it really only affected the elderly, and me and my husband are young. Our kids are young and I really wasn't worried about it since they were saying it didn't really hurt children. And that would have been my primary concern because I'm nervous about the flu because I have babies. So, the fact that it wasn't really hurting children, they weren't really getting affected by it as badly as adults. And then as the pandemic numbers started rising and it started getting crazier and crazier and everything started to shut down. I started taking it a lot more seriously once we started having sort of death rate kind of skyrocketed and the amount of people skyrocketed. And then they started coming out with more information about how it can do irreparable damage to people's lungs and breathing and how it wasn't just the cold that you get. And then you get over it [inaudible] and healthy people and it really hit home. And they started having kids today, especially like in my state, some kids died, and they were close to my kids' age. So that really made me ramp up my belief in it a lot. So then like I went from not really caring, thinking it was being blown over to completely terrified in my household, locked down on quarantine. So, I mean it's changed a lot.

CB (03:37):

So basically, your view is kind of changed as more information became available.

AW (03:46):

Yes, a hundred percent. Initially they were just saying it was a cold or a really bad flu. That just was, it was affecting elderly people, but I don't, none of my family lives near me. We're military, so our family is all the way across the country. None of my elderly are near me and we don't hang out with just random people. So it wasn't something that really stuck to me initially. And then more information came out, the scarier I got, and the more, not realistic, I guess, but like it changed from Oh, this is just a cool to, *oh, this is killing a lot of people and it's not just killing the elderly*. Cause I mean the flu kills the elderly. It's kind of something that, and people with

bad immune systems get killed. It's something you think about during the flu season anyways, I'm mean kind of try not to go around anybody anyway, but like it just figured ramped up so much more and more information came out, like anybody who pays attention to information coming out realizes this isn't just a cold.

CB (04:38):

So, you kind of already addressed this, as far as what issues have you most concerned about the COVID-19 pandemic? You kind of mentioned that the safety and health of your children was a major concern for you. Would you say that's probably the biggest concern you have about the pandemic currently?

AW (05:00):

I mean, beyond like my kids, like my dad had cancer, so like he's, and he's had radiation stuff, so like he's immune compromised. So like I worry for him, but so like him and my kids are like my main concern, but even then, like, I think I'm worried for my dad more than my kids, just because of how anybody with any compromising conditions gets it has such a high death rate. I'm like, I read some articles about cancer patients or anything like cancer surviving patients who like beat their cancer, like dying at like 30% higher rate or something like astronomical, like crazy sounding to me and my dad has cancer. So like that scares me because he's retired and at home right now. But like, yeah, I don't even want to, like, if I could see him, I don't think it was one to, just because of the danger. Cause like my kids I'm scared for, obviously I'm really scared for my kids, but they're also very robust and healthy kids or, you know, I mean the only one I was be really scared for like my 1 year-old because she's a baby still, but the other ones, I think they'd be okay. I still don't want them to get it. Cause no one wants their kids to suffer if you can prevent it; washing their hands and keeping them home helps that like, I don't want that, but my dad is across the country. I can't really make him abide by the rules and I can't make him stay inside, even if I want him to. I mean, my sisters are there, so they're on it. They're not at the house, but he's also a grown man who can only stop so much. Those two are like my main concerns because everyone else in my family, they're all healthy and there's not really any problems there. I don't know my kids and my dad are like my main concern.

CB (06:30):

In your, pre-interview questions that we did, obviously, I see that you are a student and a homemaker. So is a stay at home mom or full time mom, is that your quote, unquote current employment? Would you consider that?

AW (06:47):

Yeah, I mean, taking care of three kids, as young as my kids are, it's a full time job. And then I'm also in school full time, so it's kind of difficult to juggle, but I mean, so that's my employment status, I suppose.

CB (07:03):

So, as far as employment goes, we will, I'll ask this. So, has COVID-19 affected the employment of people you know and in what ways? And I think I'll ask specifically, your husband, your husband's in the military, correct?

AW (07:20):

Yeah. So COVID, basically, we haven't really been affected by it because he's in the military and under contract and they not going to try and downsize during this, so I mean, most everyone we know is in the military [inaudible] because of the COVID. But, um, everyone, like we see on a day to day basis or we used to see on a day to day basis, um, they're all military, so they're not really affected economically, like a lot of the country is.

CB (07:48):

We're going to move on and talking about family a little bit here. So how has COVID 19 affected you and your family's day to day activities? How has, how has your activities changed or have they changed?

AW (08:04):

Oh, it's been affected a lot. Like my son was in preschool, he got his preschool got shut down. So his one outlet away from his two sisters got taken away. So, it's a little different too for him, he's five, he sees the news, like we don't shelter him. We tell him what's going on, he sees the news, he sees everything that's going on, but he sees it with the mental capacity of a five year-old. So he's worried and nervous, but he doesn't really understand it the way. I mean, we don't tell him straight out, but he picks up on things. He understands being like we're in a pandemic and he hates COVID-19 and he's five years old and he's scared. It's like that kind of stuff because he's gotten very anxious during this time and very worried about everything going on and worried about his family and worried about everyone being sick. And it's changed his personality made him [inaudible]. And then my daughters haven't noticed cause they're babies. So they don't really care. Right. But it's also changed our day to day life because we used to be able to go out every weekend, we take the kids out, we'd barbecue, we'd go take him to the [inaudible] take them out to eat to eat. Like we used to do a lot of things the weekend just because it's like, my husband can't spend a lot of time with the kids because he works so much. And it's really taken that away from him, you don't have any fun weekends, but we can't go out on the weekend, they're stuck in the house with me. [Inaudible]. I mean, it's kind of drastically affected them in that way where the trip to the grocery store was like the highlight of the night, I had to take them because my husband was at work. We needed to get food. But so, I mean, I think it's been very detrimental to them and especially like my oldest, cause he's old enough to understand, it's really effected how he acts and thinks.

CB (09:52):

Has COVID-19 affected the way you associate and communicate with friends and family? I know you said your family is across the country, so obviously phone communication is probably the most common method you use with them, you probably don't see them on a pretty regular basis like you would if they were living in the same town. But, has COVID-19 affected how you communicate with friends and family?

AW (10:19):

I would say it has, like my friends, we used to, like people that live near us, we used to hang out pretty much every weekend or at least every other weekend we can get together and we have barbeques, and we take the kids to the park, the park and have play dates. Now we can't do any

of that. So we're [inaudible] each other it's just not the same. And then like, it kind of slightly affected my family just because I was supposed to go home to see my family in April and me and my kids were going to go home. We were supposed to PCS, we were going to move and then stop movement orders of the military that kind of threw a monkey wrench in everything. So [inaudible] be there for her birthday. And like since then it's been six years and we haven't been able to see any of those major milestones. The pandemic kind of got in the way of me being able to be there for them and like, see them, they haven't even met my baby. So, he was gonna be able to meet my children and it was going to be nice. I mean, we still text, we call, we FaceTime. It's become more important than before because now we don't have any other options to see family. Um, this is really disappointing because even when we had that chance to finally go home and see them, you just got taken away from him.

CB (11:38):

Obviously COVID's changed your family life a little bit. Um, what have been the biggest challenges regarding family and home life with the COVID-19 outbreaks?

AW (11:54):

I think the biggest challenge is trying to take my kids like balance between getting them out of the house for their, you know, mental stability and get, letting them have, you know, like my sons, you know, they're little kids, they can't be cooped at your house all day. So taking them out and like taking them to a field where they can run around and get rid of their energy. You're taking them to try to do something fun with them but trying to also balance safety measures and keeping them away from other. And then I have a three year old and a one year old and they put everything in their mouth still. So, so it's, it's really hard to take him anywhere that any kind of public access, because they're going to put stuff in their mouth and that's dangerous for them. So, it's really impacted that because I'm just trying to balance keeping them healthy and keeping them safe while at the same time trying to keep them mentally healthy, [inaudible] having a childhood just completely put on hold because the pandemic. It's a really hard balance to maintain.

CB (12:50):

So obviously, you kind of address things you do to get them out of the house to keep them active and moving. Have you done anything at home, recreation wise, to help keep your kids busy, keep the family dynamic moving, you know, TV shows you guys got into board games, anything like that?

AW (13:15):

Oh, a hundred percent. Yes. Preschool got canceled. We started doing at home preschool. So I, you know, I got in contact with the teachers. I joined a bunch of, you know, online versions of preschool and I would, you know, print out activities for us to do and print out worksheets for us to do. Um, like we have family movie nights, we didn't really do that before. [Inaudible]. And I mean, you're trying to think of ways to be more creative, to entertain them and grow them as, as you know, a little children, give them happy memories about the same time can keep them safe at home.

CB (14:02):

You did say you live in a military town, essentially. How has COVID-19 affected your community? Not just your town but communities you're involved in maybe church, any organizations you're involved in. How, how has the COVID-19 outbreak affected that?

AW (14:25):

It's affected it a lot like the churches closed down in like March, so they switched to online churches. I mean the military, they have a stop order movement. Like I said, so everyone, I think it was in March, maybe the beginning of April, everyone got told like you're not going to be moving anymore. You can't leave. They put down a [inaudible] 50 miles away from the base they were stationed at. The whole town, like I said our governor for the state, he put down ordinances on like, you have to wear a face mask in public, you have to keep six feet apart; there's signs everywhere to like tell people that. I do think it's affected the community kind of positively when it comes to exercise. Cause while we were on the stay at home order, in the spring, a lot of people started going outside more and you'd see the neighbors. They haven't, I mean, we've lived here two years, we've never seen anybody [inaudible] doing jobs. [Inaudible], but it's affected the whole community. Like entirely everything's gotten changed because of the pandemic.

CB (15:30):

You kind of already addressed this one, um, but we're going to go over it anyway. How are people around you responding to COVID-19 pandemic? You said a lot of southerners are kind of in denial or resistant to news about the pandemic. Is that pretty much the norm or are there people that are responding the way that's expected from the CDC and other groups?

AW (15:54):

I think it's pretty split. Um, I think where I'm at specifically is a little bit different because we are right next to a military base, right next to Fort Bragg. And that's one of the largest bases in the whole country. So military bases tend to have different kinds of people. It's not all southerners at the base on base. I think they're taking it, the civilians at least, are taking it pretty severely. Everyone 6 feet apart everyone's abiding by washing their hands and keeping face masks on. I think in the city itself though, that's more predominantly Southern, it's kind of split. Like a lot of people are wearing masks and all people trying to keep apart, but then there's also people just blatantly disregarding it. They're not wearing the masks, or if they are, they're not wearing the mask properly. Like they'll have it pulled down, which is next to useless. And if people, you know, still going to the beaches, our beaches are open here and people are going to the beaches still, they're going out of town still, and they're still having gatherings. I mean, as much as the governors try to like limit people, being able to expose themselves, there's still people disregarding it.

CB (16:56):

One of the big calls during a pandemic is self-isolation and flattening the curve. Have you, friends, family, people, you know, or in the community, how have they responded to the request to self-isolate and flatten the curve?

AW (17:13):

I mean, I think for the most part everyone's pretty much gone by it, like there we've got a few like took out the stay at home order, we've had a couple of gatherings of like a few people. Not as much as like usually like military people when they have a barbecue, it's like 50 people, like everybody comes the soldiers all come especially the single soldiers, because they have nothing else to do; and everyone comes and it's a community. Like everyone comes, they're eating, they're drinking, they're hanging out, having a good time and that hasn't happened. But there has been like, we've had a couple where they didn't bring their kids. There's like five people at the house or something like that. Like simple things. But it's like maybe once a month, which is not the normal. But other than that, I think [inaudible] is trying to flatten the curve. And most of the time if you have any option, you're not taking your kids out like, you're leaving your kids at home. [inaudible]

CB (18:14):

Have you or anybody, you know, gotten sick during the COVID-19 outbreak and what has been your experience in responding to that?

AW (18:25):

So, I only know one person who's gotten sick and um, unfortunately it was my husband's boss though. So that was not fun because then he had a quarantine for two weeks. [inaudible] when he was sick. I just know he got sick and I've met him before. But beyond that, we don't really know. I mean, we've heard of people getting sick, but nobody like personally, like in my family or like in my friend circle that I associated with has gotten sick.

CB (18:52):

In what ways do you think the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting people's mental or physical health beyond getting sick?

AW (19:01):

I think mentally it's very detrimental. I think a lot of people are struggling mentally because of the self-isolation. I mean, I don't know if it's lucky or not, but since I'm a stay at home mom with three kids and a husband in the military, gone all the time, I kind of was used to being at home and it wasn't too hard for me initially because me and the kids don't really leave the house during the week. We stay home and on the weekends [inaudible]. And so I don't have to take them out because three kids and one mom is really hard to do. But I think a lot of people who aren't used to being alone, especially like single people, are really struggling with it with it because they went from being able to go out and see things and do whatever they need to do to being isolated at their house. I think it was a big struggle for a lot of people. I mean, eventually with the length of the pandemic, like it was a struggle for me too. I thought I was an introvert until a month without seeing anybody but my kids. And I was like no I need other people in my life. But I think it's really been detrimental to people's health. And I [inaudible], like I said, our neighborhood people started running, people started taking family walks and I think that was like a healthy change for some people. And some people started eating healthier because they were stuck at eating at home and they didn't have to go out and eat fast food five times a week. They had nothing else to do to cook dinner like that might have changed for them. And then, but then

on the other side, a lot of people were eating their emotions and baking when they didn't need to be baking and not really taking care of themselves ordering in two, three times a week. I think it's just an ugly aspect of people's lives and, and it just depends on the person. Some people are becoming more resilient because of it. And some people are, you know, breaking down because of it. I think the overall it's probably more bad than good being done to people.

CB (20:48):

During the pandemic what have been your primary sources of news?

AW (20:58):

Well, one thing that's happened during the pandemic is I didn't really pay attention to news stations anymore, but that's not really, I think that's just because they're too political. And so they're all just trying to push their narrative rather than just push the fact. I'm trying to really only watch the local news just because the [inaudible], they're less likely to lie because [inaudible] personally. And then also I had a lot of news from social media outlets. So, I scroll through Twitter, Facebook, TikToks, I have a subscription to the New York Times. I just, I try to look up, being stuck at home during this, I've been trying to follow as many different outlets as I can because, I feel like some more consistently, I'm getting the same information from different politically biased newspapers or, or any kind of information getting then that's going to tell me, okay, well, this liberal newspaper said this and conservative newspaper said this and they're both saying the same thing, maybe this is valid.

CB (22:00):

Do you think there's any important issues that the media is or is not covering properly?

AW (22:10):

Oh, a hundred percent. I think the whole civil rights movement going on, I think is being biased and weaponized to help certain political parties. And I think that's being underrated and I think they're trying to make different things. And I also think that sometimes they're ignoring the pandemic because they're talking about political issues. So instead of reporting on the fact that our numbers of coronavirus are skyrocketing with countries opening back up, they're reporting on looting. It's not really as detrimental to our country, but I mean, I think it's definitely, there's a lot of things not being reported on that should be reported on. I'll hear [inaudible], one on one, you know, on Twitter or something I'll hear about it. And then you go look it up. As in like the police station I'll have like a small report on it, but nothing was said in any of the news outlets. So I just happened to come across a random tweet that actually gave me some valid information on what's actually going on. So I don't think they're reporting on anything unbiasedly at all.

CB (23:06):

How have local leaders and government officials in your community responded to the outbreak? So, you said you're in Fayetteville. So how have the, the mayor and the council in Fayetteville responded to the pandemic?

AW (23:20):

As far as I can tell, they're looking pretty strong to the governor. Um, so I mean, I don't know if it's just like a, a Southern thing or what, but they're all kind of like as soon as the pandemic hit that it wasn't really local, um, decisions as much, as it was the governor giving orders. And I mean, they're all taking, trying to take this as seriously as possible. They've been putting out. I mean, it was really good, actually. They were talking on the news, they started putting out more testing sites and then they also do like a proactive hiring system to hire more people of color to run the sites because a lot of people were not getting tested who were in, you know, who were blacks or Hispanics and anything other than Caucasian, they weren't getting tested. And it was actually a problem that they figured out that was a problem a few months into the pandemic. And they started to take these initiatives to change it, to try to be more inclusive and also to try to help them because people, you know, anybody with the [inaudible] people.

CB (24:21):

Continuing on with that, do you have any thoughts about how local, state, or federal leaders are responding to the crisis differently?

AW (24:30):

Um, I think more locally they're a little bit less concerned, not less concerned but less willing to go against public views. So, the governor's pretty much like we're gonna [inaudible] and think locally there's a little bit more [inaudible] because of the fact that they're the ones getting the [inaudible] experience. Like they're more worried about people being upset at these ordinances than actually trying to keep people safe.

CB (25:00):

I'm getting into the last few questions here. Has your experience transform how you think about your friends, family, and community, or your thoughts pretty much what they were before the pandemic?

AW (25:16):

I think pandemic's really jaded me in a lot of ways because people suck and people, even if they have information, if they're inherently biased against it a lot of people aren't [inaudible], because I changed my entire view on the pandemic from the beginning to now, entirely. I think it's just getting blown up and dramatic as more information came out and I educated myself, I realized how we need to [inaudible], we really needed to try to flatten the curve, washing as much as possible and keep social distancing because a lot of people aren't and they don't care, they really don't because they don't know anybody. I just, even people I know of that don't even think the pandemic's real. They still think it's like a government conspiracy because they don't appreciate [inaudible]. Oh, it's just the flu because it was a young, healthy person with no preexisting conditions and the didn't die from it. And so I kind of feel jaded and I'm pissed off to be honest that the way people have responded to those because there's so many other countries that have done what's needed and Americans want that freedom. [inaudible].

CB (26:30):

How does the pandemic compare to other big events that happened in your lifetime?

AW (26:38):

I mean, I think it's the biggest one. I mean, other than the birth of my children, I think the pandemic's definitely one of the biggest things. Cause I mean, I was alive for 9/11, but I mean, I was really little and as a child, it isn't, you you're so flexible to change as a child it doesn't really affect you. I mean the same thing with the, whenever we had any kind of economic crisis [inaudible, full blown adult and it's affected every aspect of my life. It's definitely affected me the most compared to anything else that I've experienced.

CB (27:17):

This is a two part question. What can you imagine your life being like in a year and what do you hope your life is like in a year?

AW (27:28):

Well, I think in a year we're still going to be dealing with the actual remnants of the coronavirus. So that's still going on. Maybe not as badly as it is now, or even if it does somehow die down within a year, I think we're still going to mentally be trying to overcome it. I think it's going to be something that's going to have lasting impression on our society, especially anyone who's gone through it as an adult. Um, I would hope so that by a year from now, it's completely gone and eradicated, they found a cure, everybody in the world everyone's healthy and immune to it and they pass a law so that way everyone has to get the vaccine because there's a lot of stupid anti-vaxxers who won't do the vaccine. And I would hope that everyone gets vaccinated and no one gets the coronavirus anymore. We can go back to our day to day lives like they were before, but I highly doubt that's ever going to happen.

CB (28:19):

One last question. Knowing what you know now, what do you think that individuals, communities, or governments need to keep in mind for the future?

AW (28:29):

I think in the future, they definitely need to have plan in place for another pandemic. I think it's inevitable that something like this is going to reoccur. And I also think they need to bolster the healthcare system and make it more accessible to more people. And you need to have more preparation. So that way, if it comes in a case, they can actually not be worried about the hospitals being overflowed and people [inaudible]. I definitely think that everybody needs to stay prepared after this [inaudible] because over 100,000 deaths is too many lives to just sit back and accept and not try to ever prevent.

CB (29:11):

Well Alexis, thank you for your time. I appreciate it.

AW (29:17):

Yeah, no problem.