

Transcript of Interview with Jayce, Tonia, and Keiwan by Juliee Decker

Interviewee(s): Jayce, Tonia, Keiwan

Interviewer(s): Juliee Decker

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Location (Interviewees): African American Museum of Nassau County, Hempstead, New York

Location (Interviewer):

Abstract: Jayce, Tonia, and Keiwan tell their COVID stories as part of the Long Island Stories collection being done at the African American Museum of Nassau County.

Juliee Decker 01:06

Hi friend. Okay, so my first question for you is, what is your name? ...you just told me.

Jayce 01:12

Jayce. [unintelligible]

Juliee Decker 01:13

So how, do you know how to spell your first name?

Jayce 01:19

Yeah.

Juliee Decker 01:19

How you spell it?

Jayce 01:22

J-a-y-c-e.

Juliee Decker 01:24

Okay, because I want to make sure I have it right on my piece of paper. So I'm gonna go off script here for a second. Is, so which means I'm not going to follow my questions. So the question for you, Jayce is, [phone rings] is Nana the best Nana ever?

Jayce 01:40

Yes.

Juliee Decker 01:43

And why would that be?

Jayce 01:45

I don't know.

Juilee Decker 01:47

You don't know why she is?

Jayce 01:48

[unintelligible] She gives me banana bread.

Juilee Decker 01:52

Oh, banana bread. Oh, she would be my favorite Nana, too, if she gave me banana bread. Okay, so Jayce, I'm going to ask you questions about how things are going with this whole COVID thing. And if you answer, if you know how to answer it, great. If not, Nana can help. Or we can just, you know, spread it around, pass the mic, as they say, which means have other people answer. So my first question for you is, so we have this thing called COVID. And how's that going for you?

Jayce 02:24

Bad.

Juilee Decker 02:25

How, how so, what makes it bad?

Jayce 02:28

Because I can't go nowhere.

Juilee Decker 02:31

So what are you doing during the day? Wh-, are you, where are you hanging out? How's that going? If you can't go anywhere, what's your day look like?

Jayce 02:37

Stomach ache.

Juilee Decker 02:39

Oh, you have a stomachache?

Jayce 02:41

Yes.

Juilee Decker 02:43

Oh, that's no fun. How, why is that? Is it, why do you have a stomach ache?

Jayce 02:47

Because I ate food that it hurts my stomach. I was crying, and it hurt.

Juilee Decker 02:55

Yeah, you know, one of the little kiddos that I was just talking to said he spends most of his day, I don't know how old those kids were, I think he was about nine, he was about nine years old. But he said he spends most of his day playing games and eating and staying inside. Does that sound about the same for you?

Jayce 03:15

Um. Meh.

Joysetta Pearse 03:16

Do you visit any friends of yours? Do you have friends that you can still see?

Jayce 03:21

No.

Joysetta Pearse 03:21

You do. Where do you go when you go out with your daddy? He takes you to see some friends right?

Jayce 03:26

Yes.

Joysetta Pearse 03:27

Where do you go?

Jayce 03:28

He goes to take me to the park.

Juilee Decker 03:32

Oh. That's fun. That's fun because you get to be outside. That's good.

Jayce 03:36

I have a two wheeler.

Juilee Decker 03:38

Oh a two wheeler. Well, that makes it even more fun, goodness. So you have, do you have one friend that you hang out with? Or do you have more than one friend that you hang out with?

Jayce 03:47

I got 8.

Juilee Decker 03:50

You have 8 friends? Well Jayce you are Mr. Popular. That's awesome. So okay, so you hang out, so you, you eat snacks, you eat Nana's banana bread when she makes it for you. You hang out with your friends at the park when you go down to the park. And so overall like are things going good for you? Is this, is this going okay or what would you change if you could change something what would you change?

Jayce 04:18

Um. I'm good or bad.

Joysetta Pearse 04:21

No. No. What, what would you change about Carona? You know a Corona is. What is it?

Jayce 04:26

Coronavirus.

Joysetta Pearse 04:28

What is it good?

Jayce 04:29

And he died. No, it's not good for me.

Joysetta Pearse 04:32

Okay.

Juilee Decker 04:34

So that's why we have to wear our masks and everything. What do you think about the whole mask and all of that?

Jayce 04:39

And we need to gloves.

Juilee Decker 04:41

Yes we do. We do need gloves, and we need to keep our hands really clean. So what do you think about that? Is that hard to remember? Is that easy to remember?

Jayce 04:49

Good

Joysetta Pearse 04:52

Easy or hard?

Jayce 04:54

Easy.

Joysetta Pearse 04:54

Yeah.

Juilee Decker 04:55

It's hard for me to remember my mask. That's the thing I always have a hard time with because when I'm at home, I don't need it. But as soon as I leave the house, I have to get my mask. And that makes, that's hard for me to remember all the time. So what would you say if you had something that you were really looking forward to when Coronavirus is over what would that be?

Joysetta Pearse 05:17

What about school?

Jayce 05:23

I go to kindergarten, and I see all my friends. And I don't need nothing. My teacher said [unintelligible] My school is in kindergarten.

Juilee Decker 05:37

So wait, so are you in kindergarten right now?

Jayce 05:40

Yes.

Juilee Decker 05:41

Okay, so-

Jayce 05:42

I'm using my iPad.

Juilee Decker 05:44

That's what I was just going to ask you. How are you getting on kindergarten? So you're using an iPad?

Jayce 05:49

Yes.

Juilee Decker 05:49

Do you like it?

Jayce 05:51

Yes. My mom bought it.

Juilee Decker 05:54

Well do you like doing kindergarten like that? Like, do you like going on-, the you know, online with your iPad? How does that, how does that work?

Jayce 06:01

You charge it with an iPhone charger. And you put it on [unintelligible] and the teacher calls.

Juilee Decker 06:11

Oh, okay. So does she call you or do you like you like who, who's on the screen? Is it your whole class is on the screen?

Jayce 06:19

Yes.

Juilee Decker 06:20

Oh my gosh. That's, that's kind of, that's just like what we do in college. So I teach at college and that's exactly what we're doing in college. So you're basically like a college student now in kindergarten. That's pretty cool. That's really cool. And so do you, have you seen your teacher though like in real life? Have you seen her since COVID started?

Joysetta Pearse 06:38

Yes she came to your house, right?

Jayce 06:41

No, she. I went to a party with all my friends.

Juilee Decker 06:45

Oh, well, that, that's kind of fun if you got to see her there. That's good that you got to see her. My goodness. That's great.

Joysetta Pearse 06:45

No you didn't.

Joysetta Pearse 06:56

Didn't she come to see you? You took a picture with her sitting on the lawn. [background talking] Mr. [unintelligible] Okay. It was a different-, he had another teacher. [background talking] Oh, that was his pre-K teacher.

Juilee Decker 07:11

Oh, goodness. Oh, so okay. I won't tell anyone this, but do you like your pre-K teacher better or your kindergarten teacher better?

Joysetta Pearse 07:17

Uh oh.

Jayce 07:19

Um. Both of them.

Juilee Decker 07:21

I was just gonna say or is it both? Because that's hard when you had pre-K, when you had a good pre-K teacher and you also have a good kindergarten teacher. So, so do you like actually do it-, because since you were in pre-K, so you know what it's like to go to school like actually go there. So do you like going to school? Or do you like the way you do it in COVID where you're on your iPad?

Jayce 07:41

No, I don't like school.

Juilee Decker 07:44

Don't like school. What do you not like about it, Jayce?

Jayce 07:48

Because it's crazy. Everybody acts crazy.

Juilee Decker 07:53

In real life school or in COVID school, or both?

Joysetta Pearse 07:57

"That's because I'm the smartest one around, you know." Yeah okay.

Juilee Decker 08:02

I forgot to ask Jayce, how old are you?

Jayce 08:04

I'm five.

Juilee Decker 08:05

Yeah, yeah, you if you're the smartest one around, that makes it hard. That makes it real hard. And then as far as like other things going on everything else. Is there anything else that you're really excited about? Or things that you're doing now that you didn't do before? So like my friend she started doing yard like gardening and being outside more because of COVID because she couldn't go anywhere. Is there anything that you're doing that you like more now?

Jayce 08:33

I like-, I walk my dogs.

Juilee Decker 08:37

You have a dog? What kind of do?

Jayce 08:38

[unintelligible]

Juilee Decker 08:41

Wait, what kind?

Jayce 08:42

Roxy and Socks. Roxy's 6 and Socks is 12.

Juilee Decker 08:47

Wait Roxy's six and socks at 12? What is this? Wait a minute, I'm missing like the piece here.

Joysetta Pearse 08:54

We have two dogs right?

Jayce 08:55

Yes. Socks is six.

Joysetta Pearse 08:58

He's six years old.

Jayce 09:00

Oh no.

Joysetta Pearse 09:03

Roxy.

Jayce 09:04

Roxy's six and Socks is twelve.

Juilee Decker 09:07

Oh my gosh.

Jayce 09:09

He's taller than Roxy.

Juilee Decker 09:11

Wait, they're both older than you too. They're older than you.

Jayce 09:14

No.

Joysetta Pearse 09:15

Yes they are.

Juilee Decker 09:16

Yeah.

Jayce 09:18

They fight.

Juilee Decker 09:19

Oh, yeah.

Jayce 09:21

They run around, and they just jump to each other.

Juilee Decker 09:26

So when I was growing up, my sister and I had two dogs, and they fought all the time, but my dog was better. So I always just like hugged my little dog.

Jayce 09:34

Roxy licks, and Socks drools everywhere.

Joysetta Pearse 09:39

Awesome information.

Juilee Decker 09:41

I love it. No, this is the way dogs are. This is what they do. They totally do. Okay, so is there anything else you want to tell me about COVID, about how it's going?

Jayce 09:52

Corona.

Joysetta Pearse 09:54

Come on. She didn't say what's the name? What do you think um-

Jayce 10:00

You die from Corona.

Joysetta Pearse 10:02

Yeah.

Juilee Decker 10:03

It's yeah, lots, people are getting really sick still. Yeah, it's, and it's kind of, it's sad like, just how-

Jayce 10:10

I share my house [unintelligible].

Juilee Decker 10:14

Yeah, yeah.

Joysetta Pearse 10:16

Thank you very much Jayce.

Juilee Decker 10:19

Thank you for your time, Jayce. It's so nice to meet you. I really enjoyed seeing you. And you have a great smile. You totally have a great smile. It's nice to see you. Thank you. You were great. You gave me awesome answers. I appreciate it.

Jayce 10:31

Thank you.

Juilee Decker 10:32

Bye, my little friend.

Jayce 10:34

Bye.

Joysetta Pearse 10:34

We got one more.

Juilee Decker 10:35

Okay, one more. Hold on. I'm waiting.

Joysetta Pearse 10:41

Yes, you want to tell the story? His grandmother is here too, my daughter.

Juilee Decker 10:48

Oh, awesome. Okay. Come on over.

Joysetta Pearse 10:53

You want the lower chair?

Tonia 10:55

Yeah, I don't think I'll fit in here. Hello.

Juilee Decker 11:00

Hi. So I'm having everybody say their first name and spell it.

Tonia 11:05

My name is Tonia - T-o-n-i-a.

Juilee Decker 11:08

T-o-n-i-a. Got it. All right, Tonia. So I have this list of questions. So this is about people and what they're doing during COVID. So I'll ask each question. And if you want to pass on the question you can or just kind of tell me random things, but it's about like kind of the difference between then before COVID and now. So the first one is before COVID, what would you say an average day was like for you? And then like, what is it like now?

Tonia 11:36

Um, well, I-, right now I'm retired. But right now I drive school buses. So my day was getting up and doing the school runs midday. And a couple of times a week I go rollerskating. The same dogs he's talking about, I walk all the time. I'm the primary caretaker. So that's pretty much my day.

Juilee Decker 12:03

Yeah. And how's it different now?

Tonia 12:07

No, rollerskating!

Juilee Decker 12:09

Yeah. yeah, I'm a bowler so no bowling. So yeah.

Tonia 12:13

They actually wrote, um, opened up the skating rink. They built the floor outside the rink. So we went last Saturday, Jayce and I, we had some fun. That was interesting.

Juilee Decker 12:23

Oh, wow. That's awesome. Okay, so then, in terms of a COVID story, what have you been doing to pass the time or to help other people or like, what have you been doing during this time that's like different than what you might have been doing otherwise?

Tonia 12:41

Oh, boy. Is it not going to work is the biggest change.

Juliee Decker 12:50

Yeah.

Tonia 12:52

I looked into working on some things, I had some projects that I had started before. I had taken some courses before, so I looked into those. I ordered some more courses, online courses that I take. I took up knitting again, so [unintelligible] often.

Juliee Decker 13:12

That's awesome.

Tonia 13:14

Again, spending a lot of time entertaining the dogs because we are pretty much confined right now, because my house is elevated, so they don't have a lot of room to move around. So I kind of have to, in a, in a small outside space, I have to really tend to them instead of just letting them run like they used to. So they take a lot more my time too.

Juilee Decker 13:35

Yeah, yeah. I'm always amazed by all these people who have all these projects that they've accomplished. And I'm sitting here going, "I haven't really done those." I've cleaned out some cupboards and like, gotten rid of some things to Salvation Army, like clothes and stuff. But I haven't done anything miraculous, like a lot.

Tonia 13:56

[unintelligible] Just take, like I said, it's just passing time.

Juliee Decker 13:59

Yeah.

Tonia 14:01

I found a few more things interesting to do-

Juliee Decker 14:04

Yeah.

Tonia 14:04

-that I wasn't doing before because I like I said, in my living situation, like my cable access is very limited. So my, I've watched a lot of CNN. Because I can't get any more channels like, you get CNN and TNT.

Juliee Decker 14:23

So, so those have become your best friends. I get it. I totally get it. That's funny.

Tonia 14:28

More than ambient sound, just have something in the room you know.

Juliee Decker 14:33

That's right. And then as far as like groups you're apart of, so question four is like, how's the pandemic affected the groups that you're apart of? So definitely the rollerskating if you had a group for that, but any other groups that you're a part of that like this has changed a little bit?

Tonia 14:47

Um, not so much. I'm not a very-, I'm a house mouse. I like to stay in the house. So that part didn't really affect me that much. It's just, you know, I found different things to do because I didn't have to leave to go to work.

Juliee Decker 14:59

Right, right.

Tonia 15:00

I'm one if I didn't ever have to come out of the house, I wouldn't. I spent 20 years in the police department and when I retired from there, I don't think I came out of my house for six months. The groceries delivered with Peapod. I didn't come out of the house at all. So I've grown some over these years, but now I'm more social than I was before.

Juilee Decker 15:19

Yeah, yeah. It's interesting how you get into your environment. And it's like, "okay, this, this is my space." And, and my husband, on the other hand is like, a social butterfly, this whole COVID thing was cramping his style, because he couldn't make his rounds at work and like stopping at everybody's desk, whereas I'm like, "Ah, there's no one stopping at my desk, and I'm liking it." I get it, I get it. Tonia, I totally hear what you're saying. So what word would you use to describe the way you felt at the beginning of the pandemic and then the way you feel now?

Tonia 15:53

Well, the the worst part of it, to me is like the paranoia aspect of it, because you can't see this thing, you don't know who has it, you don't know who does; some people may have it not have any symptoms. So this, I'm a hugger. So that's a big problem for me, I can't go hugging people like I would normally do. You know, and so that's the big, the aspect of or trying to keep it, you know, protective. I'm around my mom all the time. She's, you know, of age that that becomes an underlying condition. And my father, you know, so I have a lot of people around me who are susceptible to, or have what they call these underlying conditions. So it makes it kind of difficult in that respect. So we're not doing you know, a lot of things that we did, as a family, we're not doing. You know the biggest concern is who you are around to make sure you're not bringing anything home.

Juilee Decker 16:51

Yeah, yeah, yeah. It was interesting that the kid-, kiddos that I was interviewing, one of them said they felt angry about the situation right now. And I thought that was interesting, because they were like, eight, nine year old kids. So that was kind of -

Tonia 17:06

[unintelligible] yeah for a little kid [unintelligible]

Juilee Decker 17:06

And then, in terms of the pandemic, in general, and COVID in general, is there anything else, this last question, is there anything else you want to say or share anything about this experience that you kind of have been thinking about or anything?

Tonia 17:23

Um, it does have some positive aspects. If you get, like I said, if you survive it, and you don't, and not to the point where I'm speaking of I know there's certain people now who have long term illnesses afterwards, but I'm saying that you get through it. For a lot of people, I think it's been eye opening in that, and people taking, you know, different kinds of look at their lives and starting to appreciate things and some people are, you know, reestablishing relationships with people who maybe they've cooled with or haven't been in touch with, a lot of people looking out for each other, neighbors looking out for each other. Things like that. And that's nice to see people riding bikes and walking for exercise. So you're seeing neighbors that you haven't seen in a long time. And everybody's "Hi, how are you? How's the family?" [phone rings] The whole nine yards.

Juliee Decker 18:15

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Tonia 18:17

That's nice to see.

Juliee Decker 18:18

Yeah, silver lining, if there is one like, that is definitely a silver lining.

Tonia 18:22

That's a plus and, like I said, you-, and, believe it or not, a lot of people can't go to church. So I do a lot of, you know, church services online. And that makes it a lot easier, I think I prefer that.

Juliee Decker 18:36

Yeah, so it's good when you can find something you like better now like the situation now. Yeah, totally.

Tonia 18:42

I like on Sunday, I spend maybe about six hours just looking at different church services, which is cool. Like [unintelligible]

Juliee Decker 18:48

That is. Yeah. Awesome. Well, thank you so much, Tonia. It was great to meet you. And I feel like if we're similar in our outlook on like, homebodies, stay at home, got it. I totally get you. So it's really nice to meet you. Thank you so much. I appreciate it.

Tonia 19:05

You're very welcome.

Juliee Decker 19:06

All right. Take care.

Tonia 19:08

Bye.

Juilee Decker 19:19

Well, hello, I've seen you from afar. And now I'm seeing you up close. So my name is Juliee. So say your, say your first name and then spell it.

Keiwan 19:28

Okay. My first name is Keiwan. K-e-i-w-a-n.

Juilee Decker 19:32

Okay, so wait. K-e-i-w-a-n?

Keiwan 19:35

Yes.

Juilee Decker 19:35

Okay, got it. Great. All right, Keiwan So what I'll do is I'll ask you the questions and then you can respond to it or you know, we can move in another direction. So, question is before COVID, what would you say an average day of life was like for you then and then now?

Keiwan 19:53

It's okay to me. I mean, everybody was bugging before. Like, everybody was going crazy before it started happening. Like wow. I just started laughing like, I don't know, it was just [unintelligible] to me. When it got serious, I don't know, it was like a normal day. I guess a normal day.

Juilee Decker 20:17

And was your normal day was it pretty much like going work, hanging out, was, is there anything that changed like once COVID happened?

Keiwan 20:25

I mean, soon when I guess, when I guess when the President got serious or whatever, i'm like "Wow." Everybody started acting crazy.

Juilee Decker 20:35

You know, I was I didn't ask this to other people. But I feel like the moment I found out about the lockdown, so I was I live in Rochester, which is way Western New York, and I was down at West Point, doing a project with the cadets on monuments and stuff. And that's when I found out about the

lockdown. And I hightailed it back up here, like driving back up here. And I feel like this is like one of those instances, the COVID thing, is where like, you remember where you were when you found out you had to do locked down. Do you feel that way too? Like you remember the moment of like, "Oh my god, this is like serious."

Keiwan 21:12

Yeah.

Juliee Decker 21:14

Yeah. Yeah. Because it's been six months already like, it's been a long time.

Keiwan 21:19

Yeah. I'm waiting for this thing to get over because people acting like crazy.

Juliee Decker 21:25

Yeah, yeah.

Keiwan 21:26

They just upset me.

Juliee Decker 21:30

Yeah.

Keiwan 21:32

I don't know.

Juliee Decker 21:33

What would you say you've been doing like for your COVID story like from then till now? What have you been doing like to occupy time or things that you might have been doing that are a little bit different just to pass the time or since you can't go out with friends and stuff like that? Like, what have you been doing to pass the time?

Keiwan 21:49

I mean still going to the same things. Still going to church and watching movies and stuff like that.

Juliee Decker 21:54

Yeah.

Keiwan 21:57

Doing side jobs. My cousin called me with doing [unintelligible]. Just go over there and just work.

Juilee Decker 22:05

Yeah, yeah. So is there any part that changed just because you couldn't actually do a certain thing? Or was there any part that you felt was really weird or different?

Keiwan 22:17

Man, you can't like walk around like anymore, like you can. I'm mad because of that because I'm gonna walk around for, I don't like being in the house like that.

Keiwan 22:27

Yeah, yeah. And then what would you say about with the groups that you're a part of like cousins, family, friends, anything like that like, how has that been different or how has that changed? It's different now. But, but like, from the beginning until now?

Keiwan 22:41

Well, like, I don't really, they don't really come and see me. So I live by myself like I have my own apartment and stuff. So they don't really come see me. When I talk to them like somebody else mentioned them up, like so I say all this "da da da..." say "hello, how you doing?" And I say, "hello" [unintelligible] like that. Yeah, that's about it [unintelligible] to myself.

Juilee Decker 23:03

Yeah. And since you live by yourself, do you feel like it, it may not be very different for you than in terms of day to day, if you're by yourself?

Keiwan 23:13

Yeah, and it's, it's, I don't know, like a regular day to me.

Juilee Decker 23:18

No, I get it. I totally get it. That makes sense to me. And then what would you say your feeling was at the very beginning of COVID? Like a word to describe that and then now.

Keiwan 23:27

Like, I was scared, because I don't know because everybody was, I don't know, because my cousin, he was scared [unintelligible] feel his, like, you know, his senses and stuff like that, so like, I mean, I was scared, then. You know, you gotta be brave and stuff so...

Juilee Decker 23:46

Yeah, no, I, one of the little youngsters I just interviewed, he said he was scared, and now he feels safe. And that's about the way, I was terrified. I mean, because I was all the way down at West Point. And I was like, "Oh, my God, you know, I don't have hand sanitizer." I was like, freaking out. Like, that

wouldn't have helped me. But anyway. But yeah, I felt terrified, like scared. And now I feel much safer. I still have my mask and go, I mean, you know, I'm still very careful. But I teach, and so I normally I would see hundreds of students a day. And so it's all different now. So I feel safe, but I miss my students a lot because we just don't see them as much. And then is there anything else going on COVID wise that you're thinking about or that you want to share or anything else relative to COVID that you thought was interesting or different or important to tell anyone?

Keiwan 24:38

I mean, not really, just being safe [unintelligible] that's it.

Juilee Decker 24:47

Yeah, yeah. Being safe. I think that's an important bit of advice like, to be safe and to be careful. Awesome. Well, that was great. Thank you so much, Keiwan. I really enjoyed it. It was nice to meet you.

Keiwan 24:58

You too.

Juilee Decker 24:59

Alright, bye.

Keiwan 25:04

She coming.

Juliee Decker 25:05

Okay.

Joysetta Pearse 25:06

Thanks and thank you for- [audio stops].