

**Transcript of Interview with Oreoluwapo Omotayo-Benson and Christopher Combs by  
Each Other**

**Interviewee/Interviewee:** Oreoluwapo Omotayo-Benson

**Interviewee/Interviewee:** Christopher Combs

**Date:** 09/12/2021

**Location (Interviewee/Interviewee):**

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**Abstract:** This interview contains two personal accounts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The questions discussed cover multiple aspects of the pandemic, and how it has shaped our lives as high school/college students.

**Oreoluwapo Omotayo-Benson 0:02**

Hi, my name is Ore Benson, and I'm here with Chris Combs to interview him for the- his pandemic experience. Do you consent to being interviewed?

**Christopher Combs 0:10**

Yes, I consent to being interviewed for the COVID-19 Archive Project.

**Oreoluwapo Omotayo-Benson 0:13**

That is great. Can you also confirm the date and time of this interview?

**Christopher Combs 0:18**

The current date is September 12, 2021, and the time is 7:33pm.

**Oreoluwapo Omotayo-Benson 0:24**

Okay, right into the questions. How did you feel when you heard that school was let out for two weeks? How did that change when you learned we would be off for an indefinite amount of time?

**Christopher Combs 0:35**

Yeah, being someone who always prepares for the worst, I was extremely worried when I received the message that schools were going to be shut down for two weeks back in March 2020. At the time, I'd begun reading the data regarding COVID-19 presented by the health workers at UDub, and I learned about how it's spreading around the world. Given the projections made by epidemiologists, I knew that it was very likely that the two week break from school was going to turn into a full on quarantine. That said, the news of permanent school shutdown still came as somewhat of a shock to me and my family. My sister, who at the time was a senior in high school, took this news very hard as she was going to be missing the rest of her senior year and graduation. For me personally, I didn't fully grasp the idea that school-e school wouldn't be returning until multiple weeks after the announcement at which point I started to feeling socially isolated during quarantine.

**Oreoluwapo Omotayo-Benson 1:26**

That's great. What is a new skill that you learned due to being stuck at home during quarantine?

**Christopher Combs 1:31**

One new skill that I developed during quarantine was cooking. My mother has always been an avid chef in the house. And while being stuck at home with my parents, I took it upon myself to pursue the culinary arts. What started as my mom showing me how to cook basic dishes like pasta and eggs quickly progressed into me preparing dinners for my family and friends, and as I gained more cooking knowledge, I began to seek outside sources to perfect my craft. Someone who really inspired my cooking journey is J Kenji Lopez-Alt and his book called *The Food Lab*. Using the different techniques that I learned from my parents, as well as these outside sources, I learned a lot about cooking during quarantine, and I've even prepared meals- meals for birthdays, my parents' anniversary, and other special occasions as well.

**Oreoluwapo Omotayo-Benson 2:13**

That is amazing. What are two things that you took for granted prior to the pandemic that you now have a greater appreciation for.

**Christopher Combs 2:21**

Two things that I took for granted prior to the pandemic are social contact and school. When I refer to social contact, I'm not just talking about hanging out with friends, although I missed that during quarantine, for sure. What I really mean by social contact is just the act of seeing and talking to people, whether they're a stranger at the supermarket or a neighbor that I see walking down my street. I really missed all those small interactions once the lockdown orders were put into place. Along with that, I realized how much I took school for granted once things were shut down. Not only did I miss seeing people at school, but I really missed learning during COVID. The fulfillment of picking up a new skill at school was really missing for me. And I've definitely gained a new respect for the knowledge that I get through my school classes. Moving into this first semester of college, I'm definitely excited to begin my learning journey.

**Oreoluwapo Omotayo-Benson 3:04**

Wow. How was your experience and perception of the pandemic changed as it has progressed over the past year and a half?

**Christopher Combs 3:12**

Over the past year and a half, my perception of the pandemic has shifted greatly as I've gained new experience and knowledge regarding COVID. When the pandemic initially hit, I was frightened to even leave my house. I was so scared of the disease that I totally isolated myself for weeks on end. And over time, it took a significant negative toll on my mental health and wellbeing. That said, as I learned more about COVID and became more educated, I realized that going out while maintaining social distance and massing guidelines was probably safe. This is a big shift for me, and the outdoor activities I did the friends really helped my mental state in the early stages of the pandemic. Moving into more current times, my experience and perception of the pandemic remains cautionary. I still think we should be taking COVID-19 seriously. And while the light at the end of the tunnel may be moving closer, I firmly believe we need to treat COVID-19 as a serious issue and that we should be working together to move past the pandemic rather than turning the disease into a political battlefield.

**Oreoluwapo Omotayo-Benson** 4:08

Thank you.

**Christopher Combs** 4:10

Yeah. All right. Hello, my name is Christopher Combs. And today, I'll be interviewing Ore Benson on her experience of the COVID-19 pandemic. Ore, do you consent to be interviewed for the COVID-19 Archive Project?

**Oreoluwapo Omotayo-Benson** 4:22

Yes. I consent to being interviewed for the COVID-19 Archive Project.

**Christopher Combs** 4:26

Awesome. Can you please state the date and time of this interview?

**Oreoluwapo Omotayo-Benson** 4:28

It is September 12, and it's 7:37 PM.

**Christopher Combs** 4:32

Awesome. Where were you when the stay-at-home orders were put into place?

**Oreoluwapo Omotayo-Benson** 4:36

I was at home already because my school had let us out a day early. We heard on the news on the Thursday that we were supposed to end school on Friday when I was at track practice, and my school sent an email that we should not come to school the next day.

**Christopher Combs** 4:51

All right, how did the pandemic affect your life and the lives of others in your community?

**Oreoluwapo Omotayo-Benson** 4:56

The pandemic was a roller coaster for me. When it first started, my uncle went to the hospital for COVID, and he passed away two weeks later. This took a big toll on my family. Also, I couldn't go and see my friends, and I'm a person who loves to spend time with people and make memories with them. I was inside my head a lot, because I tend to overthink and because of the pandemic, it became amplified. I couldn't believe that a pandemic this size could happen to my generation. This is stuff that you read about in history books. On the other hand, my dad could easily work from home because his job was one of the jobs that are in the new tech-technological age. Because of COVID, our bills were able to be held back for a while, and we could gather up money to be ahead. I tried new sports and new hobbies that I never would have gotten to if COVID didn't happen. And it also opened my eyes to a lot of different perspectives.

**Christopher Combs** 5:47

Wow, I'm very sorry to hear about your uncle. Moving on, were you able to maintain relationship with those around you throughout quarantine? Did you meet anyone new despite being stuck at home?

**Oreoluwapo Omotayo-Benson** 5:57

Yes. I lost a lot of friends because the phrase, “out of sight and out of mind” really kicked in during this time. It made me realize that not every friendship had to be forced. I also got closer and made new friends because this pandemic showed me a lot- that a lot of us have a lot of things in common.

**Christopher Combs 6:17**

Wow, that's great to hear that you're able to make new connections. How did you feel about the way your community responded to the COVID-19 pandemic? Along with that, how do you feel about the United States's response?

**Oreoluwapo Omotayo-Benson 6:27**

So my governor was very on top of things, and he made us wear masks very early. So I was impressed with what he did. We were able to socialize faster, and our numbers went down really quick. On the other hand, the US tried, but they were behind on a lot of things and cannot keep on top of everybody. The government kept going back and forth. So they were- so they confused all of America.

**Christopher Combs 6:51**

I definitely agree with what you said there about the United States' response. Moving on, were you able to gain anything positive from the COVID 19 pandemic that you didn't expect?

**Oreoluwapo Omotayo-Benson 7:00**

Yes. I gave more empathy for people. Learning that a lot of people died, it showed me that I'm still alive. It also showed me that people have gone through way worse than me, so I should not complain as much.

**Christopher Combs 7:12**

Thank you so much for those thoughtful responses. It was very interesting to hear about your personal experience with COVID-19. Thank you.