

Transcript of Oral History by Bernd Geels

Interviewee/Interviewer: Bernd Geels

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Abstract: In this monologue, Bernd Geels discusses how the COVID-19 pandemic affected his life in terms of employment. He shares how his diagnosis with fibromyalgia has caused him to switch careers into an online environment in order to mitigate his risk to the virus.

Bernd Geels 0:02

Good evening. My name is Bernd Geels. I am speaking to you on Tuesday, October 6. This is the second contribution that I'm making to the COVID-19 Oral History Project. It is Tuesday, October 6 at approximately 9:40 in the evening, and in this particular content, I'm going to be speaking in response to questions focused on the issue of employment. The first question noted in the COVID-19 Oral History Project website under this topic is how has COVID-19 affected your job, and in what ways? So COVID-19 has led me to reassess what is realistic for me to do with my own future career. The reason for that, in part, is because I have some preexisting health concerns that lead me to some anxiety about the potential for becoming sick with COVID and how that could potentially impact me, should I become sick with this particular illness. One major concern that I have is that as I have read more and more about the symptoms that some people have, who are- what are called COVID long haulers, it sounds to me, like some of those symptoms that these individuals have are very reminiscent of some of the symptoms that are often frequently associated with fibromyalgia. I was diagnosed with fibromyalgia earlier in my life, and I am concerned that there's a very real possibility that these COVID-19 long haulers may, in fact, be developing some sort of syndrome, or health condition that very much mirrors that of fibromyalgia and in fact, perhaps that is what they actually are going to be later diagnosed with, I don't know. So, I am doing the best to protect myself from the potential of becoming sick with COVID. And at the same time, recognize that, obviously, I need to be working and have my own income. And so I need to find some sort of employment that will allow me to live through this time, and protect myself at the same time. And so what I have opted to do, which I alluded to in the first content that I provided for the History Project is I have offered to work in the field of education remotely, using my laptop at home, so that I can record educational videos that will be of value to students who are seeking to continue their education from home. So my employment has been quite profoundly impacted by COVID-19. And the pandemic also inspired me, among other things, to start my own YouTube channel back in this past summer, I decided to start the channel because I have long enjoyed public radio and broadcasting. I am an avid singer. I have sung in a number of choruses here in the United States of America. And I wanted to continue to offer my skill and enthusiasm to the world at large, even while going through a very difficult time of social distancing and keeping my interactions with other people to a minimum as necessitated during this difficult time. So that is one way that my employment life has been impacted by COVID. The next question is, is how has COVID-19 changed your employment status, in what ways? Well, it changed my employment status by leading me to decide that I needed to get involved in other kinds of work. So as I just said, I am no longer really working in fields that necessarily placed me at great risk, though I am working now part time on a part time basis to support a testing site for COVID in a nearby community close to me here in the metro

Boston area. And you may ask, well, why are you doing that if you are concerned about contracting it and making an existing health condition worse? The reason I am taking that risk is because fundamentally, I believe someone needs to do it. And I have the skills and the intelligence and the commitment and the sense of purpose to be able to do that. So I opted to choose a different path and work in this current position which is not, to my knowledge, a dedicated long term position, as well as do educational work via my computer like I just mentioned. So that is how COVID-19 has changed my employment status. Next question here listed on the Oral History Project website is what concerns do you have about the effects of COVID-19 on your employment and the economy more broadly? So, one of my concerns is that this pandemic is going to continue to decimate the economy potentially, and make it less likely that I'm going to be able to find a job and the type of arena that I would like to find, namely, a job that you did my research and policy analysis skills. I have a very extensive past employment history. And I'm looking to get back into a field where I can use my research and policy analysis and writing skills. And it seems quite likely that the pandemic is going to reshape our priorities for a period of time to come. How long that will be remains to be seen. And because that amount of time is very unclear, it's impacting my perceptions regarding what types of longer-term career possibilities I should be open to pursuing. So for me personally, in terms of employment, the pandemic has created a lot of confusion for me regarding what I should attempt to do. The fourth and final question listed here on the History Project website is has the COVID-19 pandemic affected the employment of people you know, in what ways? I do know that some people have become very stressed by the demands of their jobs because they are either doing more work, because the pandemic has made their industries more stressed, or perhaps they are taking on the responsibilities of other people who are currently out of the office because they became sick as well. So I don't know a lot about that, but that is what I speculate is probably happened. So that is the last answer to the series of questions focused on employment. And I will return again in a future recording to speak more about my experience of COVID and detail more about my life right now. Thank you for listening. This is Bernd Christian Geels, and I'm signing off now on Tuesday, October 6 at 9:49 evening night. Thank you.