

Deon Canon COVID-19 Oral History Interview

Interviewer: Meagan Ginnaty-Moore

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Meagan Ginnaty-Moore: Okay, so when do you first remember hearing about COVID-19 and what did you think about how it might affect you?

Deon Canon: [Short laugh] The first time I heard about it was probably around the end of last year, so around December into early January, and my first thought was like “Oh this is just like a pandemic – sorry, this is something that is happening in China, China issue, you know – probably have it under wraps and it shouldn’t be nothing to worry about, is what my first thoughts was.

MG: Yeah, and based on everything that’s happened, what do you say to your past self?

DC: Yeah, you’re completely wrong [intermittent laughter]. China doesn’t know what they’re doing because nobody else does either.

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MG: Yeah, definitely. What have been the biggest changes that you’ve had to deal with?

DC: Biggest changes is probably attending classes online but also for a brief three-to-five-week stint, my timing is a little off, I had to do my Student Body President responsibilities from Milwaukee so that was also a huge shift and responsibility and like just trying to stay focused. On college, where I’m also at home where the environment isn’t the best to learning.

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MG: Are you surprised by anything about how people have responded or about how life has changed?

DC: I think I’m mostly surprised by the lack of care that people and higher ups in like the United States government showed at the beginning. So I would say I started taking it, the pandemic – I mean sorry, COVID-19 more seriously probably around February to March is when I was the Memorial Student Center Building Manager and I just noticed, I seen the news keeping getting worse and worse, and I was like it’s going to head to Milwaukee – Milwaukee, it’s going to head to the United States [embarrassed laughter]. I was like “I should change the way I do things, I should –“. So, I remember one of my shifts, I started wiping down all of the MSC [Memorial Student Center] furniture for alcohol and I probably did it for the next two shifts as well until we left campus. I was like “Oh I need to take this more seriously” but I’m looking at the United States government and I’m hearing him like “Oh there’s nothing to worry about” and I was like

“Okay, don’t know what you all doing but we probably should be taking this more seriously.” And then the second part of your question was how things have changed, correct?

MG: Yes, yeah.

DC: I would say there’s a mix. There’s definitely change. There’s going to be change where we see people with masks on and social distancing as a lot of their main focus. We also see more businesses banning the use of cash and valuing more digital currency so like the digital currency – digital means or less contact means of currency exchange. You also see even some of the protests that’s also really different as well. You see some of them encouraging being together but also social distancing, but we also see people who disregard a lot of that at the same time, who doesn’t wear masks and who just go about their day as normal. It’s definitely a shift over the majority of the country, but we still have some few stragglers.

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MG: Yeah, absolutely. It’s been interesting to see everyone’s reaction to all the different changes. So, what are you doing to remain connected to friends and loved ones?

DC: So, I would say, I still visit people but I always have my mask and so I usually forget my keys and things like that but now I go outside and I’m like “oh crap, I forgot my mask” and I’ll have to run back upstairs to get my mask. So that’s been a change, but I still contact them, I still visit a lot of my family. I hand sanitize almost immediately or wash my hands before I touch anything in the house though, but I still try to be mindful. So, like if I even see that I’m sneezing, because I usually have allergies in the morning, so I’m like hesitant to like – “is this the Coronavirus or is this just my allergies acting up?” So even then I wait it out and like make sure like “is this my allergies or should I pretty much quarantine for the next two weeks. But other than that, I talk on the phone and do Messenger or do video chat with friends who are further distance to stay in touch.

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MG: Great, that all sounds really nice. What kinds of things have you done to stay healthy or protect your mental health?

DC: I guess one of the main factors – so I participate in one of the protests here in Milwaukee and one of the – even going to the protests I had anxiety. I was like “oh my god what if Coronavirus” because I live with my grandparents. I’m like “oh I don’t want them to catch it. How can I quarantine myself for two weeks if I live with them” and things like that. So, I pay especially close attention to like what I touch and wash my hands almost immediately when I return home, or going to anybody’s house, or get out the Uber and things like that. So I guess being extra mindful of my hygiene – yeah it’s still hygiene. Being extra mindful of hygiene like just making sure I do that extra step to wash my hands when I would normally don’t need to wash my hands just because I leave the Uber. So like that’s probably one of the most important things to make sure I don’t infect anybody else. It’s because I don’t want nobody else life I risk and the second thing is always talking with friends and family about just anything. It’s definitely been a hard thing, especially since the lockdown – and since the lockdown is slowly being lifted, just feeling that connection and feeling like “oh, is this ever going to get better?” It’s probably

one of the main things I try to tell myself is that it should get better. We're slowly going into a new direction, but every time I see the news – I think today, I think Florida had like four thousand cases and I was like “ahh this isn't good [laughter].” So, I disconnect myself from the news as well probably for a couple days so I can like “okay I need something more than just negative news, I need something positive” and just having a good balance of that.

MG: Absolutely, you got to try to keep a positive mindset because otherwise it'll drive you crazy.

DC: [Laughter] Yeah.

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MG: It's good that you're able to stay in touch with people and are mindful of everything you touch. What has been challenging about learning and keeping in touch online?

DC: Yeah, so the most challenging for me especially – so I took online classes, I really don't learn that much, and I learned even through this past semester that I still don't learn that much through online classes, but I can do good in them, so thankful for that. But my environment at home in Milwaukee, so not my family environment but the city environment is not the best idea. So, I noticed I was doing homework one night, I was doing a podcast for one of my class projects and I was hearing gunshots in my neighborhood, and I was like “oh snap.” One, I dropped down to the floor but then I remembered I was still in the podcast at the same time [laughter], so – little awkward, so I had to scrap that part of the podcast completely and redo it. But it was super stressful. I remember two – it's been like three to four weeks since the incident happened, one of the reported, I think it was here in Milwaukee – yeah it was here in Milwaukee, a student who was doing online classes, just like me, was struck by a stray bullet and died. And I was like “this pretty much can happen to me; we live in the same exact environment.” I don't remember where the individual lived but I was like pretty much everything that happened in her shoes is what can happen to me, so like I'm super nervous so like I don't do homework by windows after a certain time period and like I try to stay away but it's super hard to focus I guess just because Stout [University of Wisconsin-Stout] created this environment where I can learn and be with my peers but here, not only am I thinking about how do I get through this class period and get through this but also thinking about how I don't want to get killed because unfortunate incidents that happen and so maintain that balance. I remember probably two weeks after March – sorry, two weeks after class began, I had like a slight depression because I was like “I don't see the point of me being in classes anymore and I'm struggling with my environment and like I really can't focus.” So, like when I'm being in classes like my head, where my mind is onto something else. I'm like “Ahh, I just don't want to do anything and like how is college relevant to my current life?” And so, it was really like, just pushing myself out of it I guess and trying to figure it out but it's just been super difficult but luckily I made it through and I'm still taking summer classes [unclear]. A lot of my same practices are still manifesting right now.

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MG: Yeah, absolutely. That sounds really scary and I'm glad that you figured out a way to cope with that but has there been anything that's worked well about learning online or keeping in touch online?

DC: I first – I’ll just touch the learning online since I was kind of already on that note. I think one of the most important things is looking at the bigger picture because that’s pretty much what got me through with – just still doing the homework and assignments and like “this social science class is super relevant, but this is irrelevant to my current living condition at the same time.” But realizing like “hey I still need to get things done and like I still need to get that degree at the end of the day. So, just keep pushing forward and that things will get better. And at that time, I was like “oh it’s only like three more weeks or something like that, so like I could just push through it and then I won’t ever have to think about it. And then I signed up for summer classes [laughter] so I immediately thought about it again. But I think just looking at the bigger picture and then realizing you’re not alone as well. There’s millions, probably billions, of students in similar situations as you who - having to cope online and having to learn and sharing in your experience as well so this isn’t something individualistic to you. And so, like I was reaching out to friends seeing and talking with them and just knowing that like I’m not like the only one dealing with this situation. It was beneficial for learning. And then the second part was – the second part was keeping in touch, right? Sorry, I forgot the second part of the question [laughter].

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MG: Yeah, the second part was like, what has worked well with keeping in touch online?

DC: Yeah, so working well in keeping in touch. Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Messenger, and all of those have been a godsend with keeping in touch. I think we’re definitely lucky to have the internet and having to go through the pandemic at the same time because this would probably be ten times worse if we had to – we didn’t have the internet and we were going through it where we couldn’t actually talk to friends or see people’s faces and things like that. So the internet has truly probably made the pandemic bearable for a lot of us. And just utilizing those tools to like – I remember we had a, this kind of goes to both of your questions, we had a homework party on – I think this was through Hangout, when we were trying to hang out at that time – but we had a homework party where we just all were video chatting, and we did homework together and we can still see each other. Obviously, we didn’t have the full in person thing but it kind of replicated as much as possible. So being creative with that was super useful and just seeing other people’s faces, so video chatting is immensely valuable and not just hearing them through audio.

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MG: Yeah, definitely. That sounds like a great to kind of have like a little study group and get a little bit of that social aspect back when you have that. So has there been any silver linings for you in the crisis?

DC: Silver linings [short pause] I would say [short pause] that I got interested in the [head in hands] what is it called? Oh [head returns to neutral] I got interested in doing more Excel stuff and just learning more about Excel. So [laughter] at the time it was going really well, but then classes came back up and I slowly went away from it but I was able to learn a lot more and even utilize some of those Excel things into my classes almost immediately. I guess the other silver lining is that it was a good – It was good, it was a reevaluation period of what I wanted to do with my life because one of my friends who graduated this semester is entering the job market,

and the job market is terrible right now [laughter]. And I'm noticing how much she's struggling because she wanted to be in politics, similar to what I wanted to be in and we were just talking about how does politics work now? How does being involved with canvassing and being out in the field work if we can't actually be with each other? This was at the time of the lockdown; we didn't know how long it was going to last or if it would last a lot longer than what it was but we was like "is this the right career path for us" and things like that. So, it was a lot of like reflection period that I had to deal with. It was treated like "is this what I really want to do, and if so, how can I do it the best and most safest way possible?" So, I guess a lot of just thinking about life, [laughter] when you are by yourself in the house is probably one of the best silver linings of all of this.

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MG: Yeah, absolutely. This is definitely a good time to be thinking about life and how any perspective career path is even going to work after everything is cleared up, especially when you have to canvas. So, what have you done to stay busy? Have you taken up any new hobbies or gone back to things you haven't had time for?

DC: So, for me, I [lip smack] – so I first – so it was like three different phases of keeping myself busy. The first phase was doing the Excel stuff and that slowly, slowly faded away. And then the second one was playing video games and reading books. It was something that I wasn't able to do a lot often during the school year, but I was able to do both of those and it was something I really enjoyed doing so I was able to get more of that and having fun doing that. And then the third one is – I'm getting ready to move to Minnesota to do an internship because – luckily they just pushed it back a month, so I only have a month in this internship now. But I'm getting ready to move there so I've been trying find a house – well not a house, apartment and figuring out how [laughter] can I move in the middle of a pandemic. Luckily things cleared up a little bit where they're not like stopping people at the border of the states and like "hey, you can't come here." So, that's been busy, especially – it's been good since everything's been lifted, so I've been just getting ready to move. I move in three weeks – no, sorry, it's not that far anymore. I move in like a week and a half so that's pretty much been my time consuming for the pandemic.

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MG: Yeah, definitely and congratulations on your internship –

DC: [Laughter] Thank you.

MG: - That's awesome. So, what are some of the things that worry you about how people are responding or what the effects might be?

DC: Yeah, so one of the most worrying things that kind of already happened and I briefly touched on this when I was talking about the Administration and their concern – their lack of doing things, was the death toll. We're currently at 120 thousand, I believe. And just thinking about how many lives have been lost, when, for the most part, a lot of the deaths were preventable if we would have took it seriously a little bit before. And then even think doing some more prevention methods and things like that in the past. I think that's probably one of the most frustrating part is that this isn't something that was like, we had to deal with – or we had to deal

with it but we didn't have to accept that so many people have died and would continue to die. As a result, a lot of this stuff was preventable if we just took it a little bit seriously and I remember one of my main concerns with the United States government specifically, was that they – I forgot how many politicians it was, I think it was like three or four, but they were selling stocks [laughter] via the information they got from the COVID-19 briefing. And one of them for sure was mentioning how we shouldn't be afraid of the Coronavirus, but at the same time he was mass selling. He was just selling his stocks. I'm like "so you're not worried but you're selling your stocks" and this was a couple weeks before it plummeted. So, it was like you're telling us not to worry but at the same time you're having your own back and doing things that doesn't exactly reflect on the words that coming out of your mouth. So that's been frustrating. And then I guess the final thing is that I see in states – I think it was Florida, don't quote me on this, but I think it's Florida that was one of the states that didn't do any lockdown measures – no, they did. It was brief, actually, but I'm pretty sure they did. But it was a brief lockdown measure. Actually, I'm going to do more general, that way I don't have to quote a specific state. But some of the states didn't take it seriously and they didn't enforce any lockdown measurements or any safety measurements, they kind of went on as status quo. And now we see in these specific states that they have a significant rise. So, the hotspot is no longer in New York City anymore. It's spreading through Florida; I think Atlanta is also a really big hotspot right now. But seeing them not take it seriously, even though we see – we all watched what happened in New York. We watched what happened in Italy. And these places and how significant the death toll became as a result of just not doing enough and these specific states decide "yeah, we're just not going to do anything at all or we're just going to do the bare minimum." And we see the repercussions of this. I think it's just a simple fact that lives is at stake, This isn't like financial, you won't just lose money – well we've already lost a lot of money but just the fact that certain people inactions or certain people perspective on this issue is costing people lives. And that's one of the frustrating things is that if this was just like job loss or something smaller scale, okay. That's a difference of opinion but when you start playing with people's lives, I think that's when I start getting more frustrated because you should be going above and beyond. You should be looking back ten years from now and be like "oh we really overdid that, we didn't need to do as much" rather than looking back and like "We had 120 thousand people die, and counting, and we should have did more to lessen that number." So, yeah that's [laughter] probably my frustration.

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MG: Yeah, absolutely. I remember when I heard about those Congress people, or senators or whatever they were, sell those stocks and I just remember being so frustrated with it. And, you know – I think it's even today, when the governor of Florida is like "oh yeah, we're flattening the curve." Meanwhile, they have a huge spike of cases down there and it's just - what does a human life cost [laughter].

DC: [Laughter] Yeah.

MG: It's really frustrating but is there anything you're hopeful about? Because like if we just focus on the bad, you can go crazy. So, what are you hopeful about?

DC: I'm hopeful that it pushes this country in a different direction. I think the civil unrest we have right now and then on top of the pandemic issues we're facing, this is a key turning point in

the United States history, and obviously the history of the world, of how we want to live the next decade, the next century. I remember – so I’m taking this contagious disease class right now [laughter], I only took it because of the Coronavirus, and it was requirement for me to graduate. So, but I think it was smallpox or [short pause] – I can’t remember the disease anymore but I’m pretty sure it was either measles or smallpox, I don’t remember- but one of the disease, they just recently celebrated the World Health Organization [?] about the eradication of it. And it sparked a lot of similarities to the Coronavirus and how it was a group effort to fix this issue and so like they had like a ten year campaign on vaccinations and like getting the entire world on board with doing initiatives to keep it safe and it was successful and this is something we need to do as well. We see what happens during that time period where we was able to fix this disease – fix this disease? We was able to jointly stop the disease from causing so much harm to our society just by working together. It was like a significant accomplishment. I think another – and I’m trying to find this because I really – this is why I don’t take online classes because I don’t remember everything I learn from it. But the other thing is that there is a lot of opportunities for growth as a result of this current pandemic and this is what we can do with our science and technology and things like that. We see more push for online and changing how online works whether that’s at work or at colleges, as we’re currently in. We see – I forgot when computers were first created, but I remember looking at the history of it, computers are supposed to make our lives easier, but prior to this pandemic, it just made us do more work. But now we see what computers are really supposed to help us do is give us the ability to work from home, give us the ability to work less hours, and things like that. And I think it was Twitter, or maybe it was Facebook, one of the social media companies officially allowed all of their employees just to work from home, if they so choose and they could come back if they want to. But that allows for tremendous job opportunities for people where they now can work at home from a job if they really wanted and they don’t have to completely relocate. I think that push came faster slowly because of the pandemic. I don’t think companies would have allowed people to do that near as much as they currently do, or that companies would make the decision to completely allow it. So that’s like, a lot of positive where you can still be in a place, in your small town, but you can be working for Apple, or you can be working for these big-name companies. And so, I think that’s super exciting for me, especially because I’m getting ready to go into the job market pretty soon, so I [unclear] opportunities is grateful. I think the other one is the push for social change. And I think we see this rapidly approaching where they’re recognizing Black Lives Matter, the injustices that happen. We have just seen recently, the Supreme Court [United States Supreme Court] allowed DACA [Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals] recipients – ruled against Trump and his Administration, [laughter] that’s what they did and allowed DACA to continue. So, we see a lot of that is happening. This is just an amazing turning point that would dictate if the United States would continue to be such a leader that we want us to be. And a lot of these initiatives where we fall behind and be like a lot of other empires in history where the empires fall. A lot of them actually fell to diseases [laughter], surprisingly enough. Will we fall or will we continue to thrive as a world power and things like that. We have a lot of positives and I’m hopeful that we’ll be going to the positive route, instead of going negatively.

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MG: Yeah, absolutely. I mean, I’m finding it very helpful both the DACA ruling with the Supreme Court, the anti-discrimination ruling that went through, like all these things. So what do you think will change after the pandemic is over, if anything?

DC: [Long pause] First, I actually did find it, it was smallpox [laughter]. So I just want to comment on that, it was smallpox, was what I thinking of. But what do I think would realistically change? I think the push for work from home would be tremendously more available to their workers. I think that's probably the one that we're, almost one hundred percent sure will change compared to pre-pandemic. We'll see more people allowed to work from home and more companies advocating for this type of work as well. Another thing I think, fifty percent chance, public health and figuring out vaccinations and getting more on top of that because I - reading in this class, I just came to a period where we talked about vaccinations and how history has - not history, how some people have fought against vaccinations. I think the World Health Organization, the United States, and the other countries need to figure out a way to become more - to make their message a lot more clearer and more transparent to people so they can understand why they need to vaccinate, why we need to social distance, and things like that. Because it is, a lot of this is a public safety and this isn't going to be the last pandemic that we face and so we need to get better. One, prepared for pandemics but we also need to figure out how we can best convince people to do more of the right thing and not just let that slip that in more selfishly where I only care about my life or my freedom so I'm going to do what I want but instead "okay, even I don't like masks and I really hate masks because it's hard for me to breathe sometimes but I know it's not just for myself. It's for other people who can be susceptible." So, pushing for a more caring nation would be tremendous and then we can push that globally as well. And then [short pause] this is something that I'm hopeful of, but this is probably like one of the things I'm like, I don't think will happen but the fact that we push for more Wi-Fi and availability of the internet to everyone. [Long pause] Sorry, we always knew the internet isn't a luxury anymore, that it's pretty much a necessity. We do it for jobs, we do it for colleges, we do it for everything. We see that had a huge gap. We see it at Stout, we see it across the nation where students and people just don't have access to the internet and if they do have access to the internet, it's not internet that can simply run a video. I think the United States in particular needs to do a better job of this, pushing and allowing more people to have internet access and getting the infrastructure. We have the 5G stuff and they're building towers, but we also need to be building these towers in places like Menomonie and other places where the private sector may not want to do it because they don't see the benefits because we see the internet as super important. If a pandemic were to happen again, we'd be utilizing internet. We shouldn't be having to send students - I'm just talking Stout, we shouldn't be having to send students - I think they sent like Galaxies or something like that to my friend, but hot spots. We should be able to have internet for everybody so they can do the things that are necessary. I think this push - this will be a push, I just don't know how long it will take where we have better internet where we can watch videos but also it can cover everywhere because it's just super important and we just - I think before we neglected, we still viewed it as "oh this is something that's nice to have" but we see now it's super important to have internet and so now everybody needs access to it, access to reliable internet.

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MG: Yeah, absolutely. The pandemic has exacerbated a lot of issues, but internet is definitely one thing that tugs at my heart strings even - because kids can't get the education that they need. So yeah, definitely. So, what kinds of technology are you using to communicate with others, to stay busy, or entertained?



DC: Yeah, so I use, obviously, my Stout Laptop. Best thing that happened [Laughter] is choosing Stout, who's a laptop campus. Probably my number one tool. I use it to video chat, I use it to do meetings, I use it to do my homework, obviously, and things like that. So, this has been the most tremendous thing I could have had. My cell phone is probably the second, just because the laptop isn't always the most convenient to use. So that's probably the second thing. The last is my gaming system. A lot of my friends play video games, so using that as a tool to connect with them has been important as well.

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MG: Yeah, definitely. So, what items or services have you had a harder time purchasing or obtaining?

DC: I would say [long pause] that printing is actually something that I didn't realize is super hard to have. So, I got a Foundation [University of Wisconsin-Stout Scholarship Foundation] scholarship and because of that I need to write a thank you letter, and I was like "okay, cool!" I typed up my letter and then I was like "Library's closed, where can I print?" I still haven't printed it because I still can't find a place. My friend is just about to get a printer actually, probably in a couple days, and I'm going over there to get it. But I realized there's actually no place to get printing when I need it that's super convenient for me and I was like "this is really terrible" because I've been at Stout so long whenever I actually do need printing. It just – It's important and just realizing how important libraries still are because people still don't have printing and things like that. I would say besides printing, the other is – what is it called? To pay, not paying bills, to do federally regulated things. So usually, I need to get my things from the IRS due to Financial Aid [Financial Aid Office] and luckily Stout hasn't asked for it and I'm hoping they're not going to ask for it. But getting anything from the federal government or the state government is terrible, and this issue has been exacerbated by through the pandemic because they've been even more behind, and they have been even more unreliable to get things when you need it. And so, we still been waiting for it. Stout hasn't asked for it yet, but I'm trying to get the ball rolling anyways just in case Stout does for my financial aid. But yeah, just doing anything with the federal or state government has been terrible. DMVs [Department of Motor Vehicles] also has been pretty bad because I'm trying to get my – It's not that bad for people underage because they get their driving test -road test waived. I don't know if it's just Milwaukee because Milwaukee's always had an okay, not that great DMV, but the service at the DMV – I don't know if it's because they're kind of behind or things like that, but it hasn't been great. So, like trying to do my road test hasn't been exactly easy to do, but I'm not sure if that's simply the pandemic or if that's Milwaukee's DMV to begin with so.

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MG: Yeah, definitely. It can – all those things are really frustrating, especially when you need it [laughter] –

DC: [Laughter] Yeah.

MG: - You don't need a printer until you do [laughter].

DC: [Laughter]

MG: So, how does news coverage you see differ what you personally see or experienced?

DC: I think the news coverage – so, I’m a journalist, not a journalist major but I’m in that major, so I have a lot of journalist friends and kind of understand the media a little bit more than some of my other friends and understand like what they do and things like that. But I do see a lot of negative news and I do understand that it is a time and place because we still need to be reminded of these numbers and we still need to be aware of the bad things, but I think there do need to be some type of balance of interweaving positives into the stories and looking at things that can be hopeful. Just an example, it’ll be something like things that can happen or things that people should know about post-pandemic or – not post-pandemic but afterwards like what are things that should be changed that can pretty much help our lives be better. I guess that’s not negative or a positive, kind of like a neutral type thing where people are like “okay news companies.” But interweaving more positives into the stories would be a lot more beneficial for people, especially because social media doesn’t help and we have fatigue from the 24-hour news cycle and then the constant of being on our phones and around news because we’re, for the most part, at home. I think that’s probably one of the things. And then the second is that I think – I’m going to talk about the civil unrest a little bit more than the pandemic, well it’s mixed. I think – I remember when the civil unrest first started, and the news was breaking out. I think it was like three days later because I went like four to five days after to join a protest, so maybe like three days later I was on my phone, and it was talking about the protests and how they’re not being aware of the Coronavirus. But that was completely false, at least the protest that I was at. That the organizer had hand sanitizer, they had masks, and they was encouraging social distancing, at the same time of doing their right to protest and things like that. And because I know the protest that I was at, it also happened at the protest they were covering and it was the same people, I kind of don’t believe they like would do for one protest but not the other [laughter]. So, I think that was a little interesting how they was like “oh people stop caring about the Coronavirus” but to my knowledge the protest is still interwoven with the Coronavirus. They still practiced social distancing as much as possible and encourage mask use and things like that. So, again finally I guess [short pause], continuing with the civil unrest, it’s the reality of our situations – stimulus checks, sorry that’s not civil unrest, this is stimulus checks. I forgot what news coverage it was but they was talking about how people was blowing the stimulus checks on stupid things that wasn’t essential. And I was – I don’t remember what news I was looking at, but they were like people are not using it right. Every time I see – I had to help five people in my family just to even apply to get the stimulus checks [unclear] and I still haven’t gotten a stimulus check. And I know I’ve seen news coverage of people not having a stimulus check but it’s interesting how we see people who talk about “oh people – you know, didn’t utilize these funds properly” while a lot of people didn’t even get the funds to even use it [laughter] at all and how a lot of that hasn’t been talked about as much since the stimulus checks was first passed. It kind of died out or died down a lot where people haven’t been talking about but there’s been a lot of people who didn’t have the stimulus checks and things like that and who didn’t get that assistance. And so, it’s been unfortunate to see we still, in my opinion, the news should have still talked about the federal – yeah, that’s the federal government, how the federal government failed in the roll out for these checks and giving it to these people because – I think it was the only one we did in our the history of the United States to do something like this? And how, I don’t know the exact numbers,

but that people didn't actually get the checks and how that's just adding more strain on people and now we see eviction notices when twelve hundred dollars wasn't enough to solely help with eviction because you still have to pay rent for two to three months since the stimulus came out. But how we have like the eviction notice now and people getting removed from their homes and things like that. So, yeah, I'm going to stop [laughter] because I think I'm getting a little off track [?] topic.

00:46:38.000

MG: No, no this is great. Like this is like – all of this is related to the pandemic because it wouldn't happen if the pandemic didn't happen. Like, yeah. Whenever I do see coverage of people not getting stimulus checks, it's always like “oh well college students didn't get it.” And it's like well no, a lot of other people didn't get it too.

DC: [Laughing] Yeah.

MG: And I don't see a lot of coverage of people getting evicted for rent because they couldn't pay or whatever and there have been a lot of landlords taking advantage of that and being like “well, then I'm just going to have to evict you and find someone else who can pay.” And yeah, it's a lot of really bad things that have been happening that need to be talked about.

DC: Yeah.

00:47:28.000

MG: So, I appreciate you mentioning it. But on a less heavy note [laughter] –

DC: [Laughter]

MG: - What are the things that you miss most about campus and the Menomonie community?

DC: I miss Acoustic Café [local coffee shop] [laughter], probably one of my favorite places to eat. I miss the connections with my professors. I definitely miss in-person learning. I probably still rather take online than my eight A.M. classes, so probably wouldn't give that up. I definitely miss in person classes and just being around other people who are in similar situations as me and like and is also striving to get a degree and learn. I think that's – I, in my opinion, looking back, this is probably one of the best choices I made by going to a four-year college – not just a four-year college, but a college that is not online and that is actually has physical. Because I see like, it's completely different, and as a first-year student at that time, don't think I could cope as well with online classes if I didn't have that experience going into college because I would have been like “oh, this is irrelevant. I should just go get a job or something like that.” So that's been tremendously important of building that connection with my college community – college campus and also talking with my professors and just being engaged with like the extracurricular activities; SSA [Stout Student Association] as I was saying and things like that. And then the final thing is 50/50, I miss the small town. And I realized the pandemic pretty much made Milwaukee a small town with not as much to do when a lot of things are closed, but I feel like there is a lot more opportunities at Stout through student organizations that – I know UW-M [University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee] has it, but I'm not connected with UW-M so I would

always know where to go at Stout if I wanted to do Bingo at the MSC or going to – it's not The Bottoms [The Bottoms Swimming Area], oh, The Devil's Punch Bowl and things like that. To just enjoy the natural beauty of Menomonie that I don't do as much in Milwaukee because it's a urban city. So, I don't know, I just think I enjoy the overall atmosphere of being in college and being around other people is something that I just can't replicate online and it's something I am looking forward to going back to see in the Fall, so.

00:50:40.000

MG: Yeah, definitely. I mean, I know lots of people miss it. I know I miss it.

DC: [Laughter]

MG: I'm looking forward to going back to that.

DC: Yup.

MG: So, if you were granted a wish for twenty-four hours with no chance for infection, how would you spend it?

DC: You say a wish?

MG: Yeah, if you were granted a wish for twenty-four hours with no chance for infection; nobody else is going to get infected, the people around you, they're not going to get infected, how would you spend it?

DC: So, [laughter and intermittent clapping] I immediately know the answer now. So, before the pandemic, I finally worked up the courage and the resolve to actually study abroad. And I did all my stuff had the funds finally to actually pay for my fee, applied for – I think it was the Gilman Scholarship [Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship], I think that's what it's called for the study abroad. Did all of that. Got accepted to my study abroad and then the Coronavirus hit. So, my wish would definitely be to go to Japan. I remember when Stout first made the decision to pull – because I was talking to Sandi [Sandi Scott, Dean of Students] how those students was feeling heartbroken and things like that because they had to go back. And one of the main reasons – It was South Korea, I think, yeah, it was South Korea was the first one they pulled. And then Japan, super close to South Korea, so I knew [laughter] that was coming, they didn't make the decision for a few months. But ultimately, I made it before they did. I would go to Japan because one I knew that, well know I know that, my city isn't as safe as Japan anyways to begin with. But I definitely would go to Japan and just spend my time there and see what it does. And then I know I can go back, go back home and not kill anybody because of my decision to go to Japan, so [laughter].

00:53:01.000

MG: Yeah, I totally get it. I was supposed to do a study abroad this summer too, so I can completely understand [laughter].

DC: [Laughter]

MG: Like, I would love to be in Scotland right now but here we are [laughter].

DC: [Laughter] I know.

MG: [Laughter] So, last question. What else would you like to share about your experiences during this epidemic?

DC: I guess, since I didn't talk about it as much, but my role as Student Body President and still dealing with the pandemic. I feel that – [heavy sigh] so I was President 2019-2020, ended my term in May? April? April or May, something like that. But I think that also made my life difficult, but rewarding, when I look back on it, but no less difficult when I was in it, is how to represent the students and be engaged in like higher administration conversations but at the same time being in Milwaukee and not around and things like that. So, I remember it was right before Spring Break, probably a Thursday because I think two days later, we were going on Spring Break, so it was Wednesday or Thursday. And I gathered all the executives, and we did a meeting and we invited some of the senators as well and we was talking about how can we still represent the students, because it is a paid position that we do and the students pay us, so how can we still do our responsibility but also ultimately realizing, at that time, we were supposed to come back. [laughter]. Never came back. But how can we still conduct our business? And so we did a meeting before it was in a big room in the MSC – it was probably Willow Walnut, yeah it was Willow Walnut, I'm pretty sure. Or one of the downstairs rooms in the MSC. But we was doing that and we was like "yeah, we need to do our meetings on Teams" and that – so we conducted our first ever meeting completely online whatever that Tuesday was coming back from Spring Break. We had – I think the Chancellor [Chancellor Katherine P. Frank] was there at that meeting and we did a livestreaming, we had a lot more than usual – which is probably no students at our physical meetings, but we had students tuning in and things like that. But I also was like passing conduct – go to meetings and still get student concerns, even though I was completely away from all of my students and constituents and things like that. So, I think that was probably one of the most stressful times of my life and I always felt like that – what could I have did more to represent the students and things like that. But I know at the time we were advocating for the pass/fail [Pass or Fail grading for courses]. I'm pretty sure looking back now that I didn't have any worries or shouldn't have had any worry because Stout was going to do it but at the time, I sent the email to Chancellor Frank and other people in administration talking about "yeah, we need pass or fail because" sorry, not pass/fail "credit/no credit to help protect students." And dealing with that conversation where students was like "oh, I don't like credit/no credit and – because I did so well" and I was like "I can totally understand. I was doing super well in my classes, and I still did well." But I completely made sure I wasn't selfishly thinking, but thinking what was best for everybody and ultimately Stout made the best decision by making it opt-in, which is what I was thankful for. But my time as Student Body President still conducting business, still making sure I was representing my students who voted me in and then two who also gave me a part – gave me, paid for my scholarship to do what I did was tremendously important and something I didn't really touch on as much. But the Forty-Ninth Congress – sorry, not the Forty-Ninth – Fiftieth Congress, which was mine, did tremendous work of making sure we still represent students and still, even though we wasn't in person at all so. That's probably one of the most important things that happened, one of the most important things

that happened to me during the pandemic and figuring out how to navigate those waters. Looking back, I probably would say I would rate myself a seven [laughter]. I realize now, now that I look back that I could have did a lot more things to represent the students just a little bit better but at that time, with panic and uncertainty I think we handled ourselves tremendously well and did ultimately what's best and advocated for the students and also gave them as much information sending emails whenever I had things that needed to be sent out. One of the most stressful times of my life, I wouldn't say I would do it again [laughter], given the opportunity, but it's definitely rewarding.

00:59:11.000

MG: Absolutely. It sounded like you did the best that you could, given the situation. And I mean, hindsight is always 20/20, so.

DC: [Laughter] Yep.

MG: You did a good job and I know that a lot of people, including myself, really appreciated the often –

DC: [Laughter]

MG: – Pass or fail, so thank you for that. Thank you so much for your time today and for your interview, it's been a huge help so, thank you so much.

DC: Thank you as well for doing these. It's definitely something we'll be looking back on history and be like “man, did I really look like that during the pandemic [laughter]?”

MG: [Laughter] Yeah, definitely. I'll be looking back and going “aw man, I really should have cut my own hair [laughter]” or something.

DC: [Laughter] That was me last week, man I should have just took those clippers when I had the opportunity [laughter].

MG: [Laughter] Definitely but yeah.

DC: Thank you, again.

MG: Thank you so much. Have a good day and stay safe.

DC: You as well.

MG: Thank you, bye.

DC: Bye.

01:00:16.000

END