

### Collection: Retail and Restaurant Employees

- Mission: To represent those who had to continue working in public during the pandemic, due to their jobs being “essential” and not possible to do from home. Retail and restaurant employees have had to continue exposing themselves to the public every day and are often exposed to customers without masks, either because of a restaurant setting or because of noncompliance to local orders.
- Collection Scope
  - Purpose: To represent those who did not work from home during the pandemic; specifically, those who worked in the general public but who did not provide services such as medical care.
  - Goal: To collect information about the experience of working in public, including higher exposure, new or changed policies, protective procedures, etc. Even if individuals did not contract COVID-19 from their place of employment, there is also higher stress and fear regarding the virus due to a lack of protection from it.
  - Key themes/subjects: How it feels to be an “essential” employee while not necessarily providing essential services (for example, Target employees are technically essential since they work in stores that provide groceries and household goods, but customers also come to stores to go clothes and makeup shopping); public announcements by companies versus how employees are actually being helped; the balance of pleasing the public and keeping employees safe.
  - Long-term goals: To provide representation for those not working from home. There has been lots of discussion about companies migrating to WFH when possible, but there is less representation for those who had to continue working in public and exposing themselves in order to continue receiving a paycheck.
- Acquisitions
  - Action plan: Social media posts, as well as word of mouth. As someone personally working in public, as well as someone who knows many people working in public across the country, social media posts and word of mouth can be influential in encouraging people to share their experience.
  - Kinds of materials: Personal stories; images of signs, memos, posters, etc.; images of protective measures, both those provided by companies and those employees have brought themselves; social media posts about their experience; anything relating to their working experience.
- Evaluation
  - While this collection could overlap with others such as Rural Voices or Foodways, it is unique in who it targets.
  - This collection does seem to fill a silence. Those working in these jobs are often reliant on the income, so they do not have the choice of staying home and isolating. Because of the unemployment rate, there is a sense of having to be grateful for employment, but that often overshadows how these employees are not being protected by their company or treated well by customers.
  - This would add to the understanding of how the public workforce is handling the pandemic and give a more detailed view of life during COVID-19 since these stores often employ large numbers of people.