**Transcript of Interview with Anonymous by Lyn LR:**

**Interviewee/Narrator:** Anonymous, AG

**Interviewer:** Lyn Ribisi

**Date:** 07/07/2020 8:55am

**Location Narrator:** California

**Location Interviewer**: Glendale, California

**Transcriber:** Lyn (LR)

**Abstract:**

AG is a young mother who lives in the San Francisco Bay area. She discusses her living situation and the fact that people don’t always understand that she is being safe by refusing invitations that others accept. Additionally, she is an educator and is very concerned about the danger of going back into the classroom before the Coronavirus is contained. On the other hand, she worries about the effect the virus and its restrictions is having on her children and children in general.

She discusses the recent Black Lives Matter protests and how the media is offering conflicting information. She sometimes feels overwhelmed with the data overload, the stress, trying to take care of her family, and keep everyone safe. She understands that others can’t keep the quarantine and just “have to get out of the house.”

She also discusses the efficacy of a vaccine and worries about the risks it might contain.

AG has seen relationships change and tensions grow as people respond to the pandemic in different ways. She would like others to be mindful, considerate, and kind to others when interacting in person or on social media.

Lastly, AG expresses concern for the businesses that have to close, but feels that the closures allow for safety, which should be the top priority in the community.

**LR:** Okay. I would like to talk to you a little bit about your experiences with the recent COVID-19 pandemic. If you're willing to contribute to the archive projects that we're both working on, would that be all right with you?

**AG:** That would be great. Yes.

**LR:** Okay, great. And then you will remain anonymous. And so if you can just give me the date and the time. We'll start with that. Today's date is July 7, and the time is 8:56am.1

I have just a couple of background questions. And then we have a few sections, I'd like to talk about. And we'll just keep this to 30 minutes so we'll end off around 930.

**AG:** Okay. All right.

**LR:** Where do you live?

**AG:** I live in the San Francisco Bay area so I live in the East Bay and a suburb of San Francisco.1

**LR:** Okay. And how has COVID-19 affected your area, your community, your area, your neighbors and things like that?2

**AG:** Yeah, so, because the San Francisco Bay Area is really dense we went on lockdown pretty much immediately, and we've been in some sort of quarantine, shelter in place since March 13, and only in the past three weeks, have we really started to see a little bit of an opening. Outdoor dining is allowed now. But even then, you know, we had a whole schedule of how we're supposed to reopen, and that's been halted because again of the density of the area, and the second, they started loosening, we started to see cases spike again and so they had to halt all of those plans. And so, yeah I mean it's been it's been pretty crazy because although I don't live in San Francisco, I still am on their emergency text threads and every weekend I'm getting a text that just says, “Please stay at home.” So even though there are some businesses that are open, and the big message here is just please stay at home and stop the spread as much as, as possible, and everyone in the Bay Area has been impacted by it. I don't think there's a town or city a community that hasn't felt the realities of the strictness of the shelter in place in this region.1

**LR:** Well okay. What do you see when you go out? I assume you go out a little bit.2

**AG:** Yeah, so I live with my mother and father-in-law, and then also my sister-in-law and her three girls. And I have my own family as well, so I've got three children and my husband. And, as a result, we can't really make a lot of decisions as an individual family unit—we have to make them collectively, and so we actually haven't really gone out a lot at all, and we haven't gotten to the grocery store since, I remember I went, the morning of March 12, because people did not think this was coming and I just knew in my gut, that it was, so I got up at like 4:30 [am] I went and just did a big grocery run. And then in the aftermath of that, I just worked really hard to get everything that we needed for our [home] community without having to go to the grocery store to limit our risk especially for my in-laws who aren't old by any means, but in those early days of not understanding death rates and you know that that, or even maybe not even knowing some underlying health conditions that could exist for them. We were all just so fearful that none of us even wanted to go out at all. And that coupled with my sister-in-law [who] is divorced and so their father has a legal right to see them as well. So trying to sort of figure out how we're going to limit our exposure, because our family is just so large and complicated. We haven't been doing much of anything, and no grocery stores no shopping, no dining—none of that. We love hiking as a family, so we've decided that we're going to try to get back outside and go on trails that are wide enough that we can distance that we'll all bring our masks and put them on, we'll try to go and ours in which we don't think there will be a lot of people so right when we wake up in the morning, for example, and that's been good, like we really haven't seen very many people on on the trails maybe six, at most, just sporadically and people have been pretty respectful. And I think the hardest thing is social media, even though I haven't been out there, I can see what people are doing because they're posting about it. And that's the part that can be really trying whether it's, we're just hanging out with friends or we decided to go to the park because we couldn't handle it anymore or, you know, I remember marshals opened here and the line was like, I mean, longer than Costco. It's like people couldn't wait to go shopping and home goods they just couldn't wait to get back in. And coming from a place where we don't even go to the grocery store yet. And it's just really interesting and hard to sort of manage how you feel about it because obviously you can't tell an entire story from a photo so trying to not make assumptions and keeping emotions in check, about well you know maybe those those friends are hanging out because they don't have family in the area. We're blessed enough to have family so we don't need to sort of create a different social bubble. And so to answer your question, what am I seeing when I'm going out, not really. So, it's hard. It's hard to really know, I probably wouldn't know if I wasn't seeing stuff on social media.

**LR:** Okay, thank you for sharing that. Let me ask you now, what issues are most concerned you? Let's do a little timeline from start to finish, about the COVID pandemic.

**AG:** I think, at the beginning, It was, I mean, it's always been health, that's like the biggest underlying thing is that I just don't want to know anyone that dies from this. I don't want anyone to die from it whether I know them or not, but it's really terrifying to think that somebody that we know intimately might die from it. I mean it's really scary and I know that there are tons of health issues out there and it could be anything from cancer to a heart attack. I understand that, but I think when you're seeing it tracked case by case and percentages it's just so much more in your face every day.

I think my biggest fear and concern this whole time is I don't want to be a reason that somebody in my life gets it ends up in the hospital, is on a ventilator, [or] doesn't survive it. I don't know that I could survive. Living with that knowledge**.** So, I mean not that that has driven all of our decisions throughout this, but as it’s progressed—from the beginning it was that but coupled with supplies. So how are we going to ensure that everyone we're around is healthy, but that we also have food? We don't feel comfortable going to the grocery store. But we have to eat, so now that was the early situation. We've since sorted that out and supply chain is not a major concern right now.

But now the thing that's sort of “top of mind” is school. What are we going to do when you know school hits for our children? And there are six school-aged children that we live with. And I'm a teacher, and I'm supposed to go back to teaching in August. I've been on an extended maternity leave, so I haven't been in the classroom since all of this happened, and we're still waiting to hear from our district. [They] are not scheduled to have their meeting until July 14 which only gives teachers 19 working days to figure out how to address, education, the education lost from last year when the school shut down, in addition to the plan for this year. And not at all in the background, we obviously all have health concerns. What does that mean for teachers in the classroom, when we're in the classroom, how risky is it for us? What does it mean for our children that are coming home to families that have at risk members that they're living with? So I would say those are probably like the top three things. And the other thing that that I just find really interesting, or not interesting but concerning, and is the dynamic of relationships that are shifting. As a result of how everyone's responding to the pandemic.

**LR:** Tell me a little bit about that.2

**AG**: Yeah, I'm just, if you have a you know, a family group that isn't. It's hard because obviously from everything I've said, we're taking it very seriously but if you have another family group [within the group] that believes that they're being responsible, but yet, is a lot more comfortable with social distancing hanging out or going to eat an outdoor dining, how do we kind of come together as a, as a bigger group? That can happen within families, it can happen within friendships, and I've just seen the ability or inability for people work through those dynamics.[It] can be really stressful for groups of people, and my family included, and lots of other other families that I know as well. It's just difficult to figure out you know yourself, you know how your family dynamics are in the pre COVID world, how your friendships work. But finding ways to connect with people and to ensure that everyone still feels, you know, loved and seen and valued and not judged in this world is really hard because everyone's approaching it just so differently.

**LR:** Yes, thank you. Now as a kind of a follow up, I would like to ask you a little bit about how you get your information on the virus in the environment and so on and what's happening with it. How do you mostly get your news. During the pandemic and has that changed over time.2

**AG:** I'm trying to think back to the very beginning. Honestly, my biggest news sources are County Public Health Department and our state officials. I kind of work my way from local news up, and instead of the other way around, I guess. So I'm going to our county website we have daily. Or [the] governor give us daily briefings so I don't watch them every day, but I do like [to]. Right now for example, I will watch them because numbers are spiking in our area. And I want to know what the plan is. And I look at all the data charts that are coming out of our county. And then I look at them for other counties where I have loved ones that I'm concerned about [who have] potential risky behavior, maybe not taking it as seriously as they should. And I can't remember what the website is I think it's like COVID now.org. I'm not sure but they, actually have the whole country color coded from green [if] they're on track to contain it, to red which is where Arizona is right now, for example, and yellow and orange in between. Then you can break it down by county so I like looking at that because it gives you a rate of infection. It gives you a percentage of headcount that are being used, and percent of positive cases, and how they're doing with tracing. I like data, so that's where I turn to. And I am on Facebook and social media right now probably to my own detriment in a lot of ways. And, but because we are working on the archive and that's where a lot of information in terms of personal voices and stories are coming out so I don't really feel like I can be off of those right now. Those give me more insight into, not necessarily how we how we should or should not be behaving, but how people are behaving in the pandemic. Yeah, I try to not just turn the news on. I mean, I have really small children, too, so trying to figure out how much they should know.

**LR:** Thank you.1

Do you think there's any important issues that the media is not covering.

**AG:** It's really good question. There's so much to cover right now I think it's a really hard time to be a journalist and to be in the media. I mean just thinking about what we've experienced in the San Francisco Bay Area from COVID, to the “no justice no peace” protests which are still a daily occurrence in our area. After [the] Fourth of July, I read that our fire protection district responded to like 67 different fires in the course of 24 hours, and so I don't know if there's something that they're not covering. It just seems like there's so much to cover right now, and that it almost feels like information overload. And, I'm not saying this isn't happening, but I would love more preventative education. How do we get the correct information out to the general public so that they understand wearing masks is important, that social distancing isn't just a recommendation that we must do this if we're going to have any chance of containing it and not letting it get out of control like it did in New York. And not having that information like embedded in a four hour long press conference that no one's going to listen to because they're just trying to figure out how to work from home, get the supplies that they need to get, educate their children [while] school’s in session. I just think there needs to be some push by the government. The media [has] to get accurate information out there so that we're not fighting [so that the tensions don't continue to rise between groups of people that are interpreting information differently or hearing a clip and then just not following up on it and sort of running with that as fact for the duration of the pandemic.

**LR:** Yeah, I totally understand.1

Now, you, you mentioned, if you want to share this, that you were having some changes in relationships with your family, and maybe friends because of COVID-19, would you like to share anything about that?

**AG:** Sure. What I mean by it is just that we're, we're very social. Like we love our friends and family and just not being able to be together is really hard. [AG is crying here] We just want to do that and given the nature that our family group and [that] our social group is so large that it just almost makes it impossible to where you have decision fatigue, you know, and you don't want to judge other people's behaviors, but your health, or the health of people that you live with is connected to those behaviors. So it's really hard not to—you want to be as welcoming and as supportive as you always have been, for the people that mean the most to you. But it's challenging, you know, because you don't want to just make a mistake that could have really dire consequences. And I think I trust in my relationships enough to think to know that we will weather the storm but it doesn't mean that it's, it's easy. You know, it's difficult to have conversations you've never had to have with people before. It's just a whole new ballgame. So my hope is just that people can continue to remember that even if we can't be together that people love each other, and that we only make decisions based on what we all think is best at that moment. [tears] And we do so out of love and empathy and compassion and not out of trying to either be too extreme on either side, (like we think the restrictions are too tight so we're going to ignore them), or, we think that everyone's going to die [and] we're never going to see the light of day again. [I hope] that we can just sort of meet somewhere in the middle and respect people's decisions. During this time, knowing that, It all comes from a place of love and just trying to do our best in a, in an unprecedented time. [tears]

**LR:** Yeah, for sure. Thank you for sharing that

I'd like to just talk a little bit about the future. For the next section.

What do you what, what can you imagine your life being like in a year.2

**AG:** How I can't even imagine it. It's so hard to wrap my head around what this time next year's gonna look like. I mean I hope that we can figure it out so that even if we are social distancing and even if we don't have a vaccine yet, that people can respect boundaries so that more people can engage in activities that bring them joy. Or being with friends or family in a safe manner. That's my hope, and I could see it being very similar to what's happening right now: that we're just going to continue to have these swells and then [it] will contain and [then] will swell until a vaccine. [Pause.] And people trust the vaccine enough to get it in a way that actually is effective in terms of containing it in communities. I think families are going to have a lot to figure out. I mean I could imagine in a year that we have more single income households, whether it's by choice, or because there's not work available for both members of the household. And I could potentially see more family units like trying to live together in that situation. So maybe instead of all of us having our individual homes [we’d have] these group living situations, potentially. Again whether it's by choice [or] it's easier for us to do this because we're homeschooling. Are all of us are homeschooling our children today, or this year. for the next three years? Who knows. We're working from home and we need additional childcare support or whatever it is but I think that families are going to have to make some really big decisions in the next few months that are going to have consequences into the next year to five to ten years.

**LR:** Yeah I think so too.1

How do you feel about the vaccine? What are your thoughts about that? And do you trust it? What are your feelings at this point?

**AG:** I don't want to be the first person that gets it.2

**AG:** It's hard because you think everything that we know about science is that it's trial and error, and then it can take a really long time to get it right. I haven't read this in a while so I'm not sure where it stands now, but I know when I was reading about some of the vaccine information, I originally was like, how are they going to start from scratch and then develop this in such a quick amount of time? It takes decades to develop vaccines, only to find out that this isn't [working]. This is something that they have already been working on so that gave me a little bit of comfort. Even if it's a different strand that there has been vaccines that that are in development in some way shape or form, and they're just not starting from ground zero, so that makes me feel better. I always look to—I have like a friend that's a pediatrician—and I'm always like, would you give it to your kid? Just on a personal level and kind of follow the lead of what medical professionals are doing in their own personal lives as well. And I think personally I feel comfortable, leaving a more, I don't know what the right word is, like a more restrictive life, until I feel comfortable enough getting the vaccine and having my children get the vaccine. I think if, knowing that as far as I know I don't have any major health conditions. I'm in an age group that has been able to recover. For the most part, I would feel more comfortable getting it than I would asking my 85 year old grandmother to get it. Although she would probably need the protection more so. It's going to be again another one of those things that has a lot of heavy, heavy consequences, good and bad that I think will take a lot of research, at least on my end when it hopefully does come out.1

**LR:** Yeah, totally. Now, this will probably be one of my last questions. What changes have you observed among your family friends in the community during the course of the pandemic before, during, and after? Well, not after but during.2,

**AG:** I think at the beginning there were people that instantly took it seriously and just went on lockdown. And there were people that were like come on, we deal with the flu, just we're not taking it seriously. And I could see that kind of creates some tensions between different groups of people at the beginning friends, family, what have you. And then I think there was a period of time where everyone really took it seriously they said okay you told us to shelter in place and we are—and most people really truly were. And then, I think a lot of people just got over it, and for whatever reason. And I'm not judging those reasons like I just can't be at home with my kids anymore If I don't get them outside. We're not going to make it, you know, we've got we've got to do something because being at home all day every day isn't healthy for any of us, so we have to make some adjustments. I forget your question.1

**LR:** What changes have you seen in your family friends in the community?

**AG:** Okay. So, yeah, now I feel like I'm seeing people sort of rationalize behavior on either side, whether it's things are now getting out of control like I knew they would and so therefore I'm still in lockdown and will not engage with anyone. We were on lockdown and things are still out of control. So what's the point of lockdown I'm gonna go support my local businesses and go have dinner outside so that they don't go under. And I think it's just really important that we respect people's decisions as long as they're being safe, about the decisions that they are making they're masking if they're out in public, and their social distancing, and when they're out in public. Because if we don't we get into that point where it just can get really really tense really quickly. So I think that's sort of how I've seen the, the relationship dynamics change. What I hope is that people can respect each other enough to not put pressure on people that are staying at home to go out in public if they don't feel comfortable doing that yet. Or the other way. The thing that I think is happening a lot, especially because of social media is that you kind of mentioned this earlier you don't see the whole picture of what's going on, you might see a group of three people really close together out in public without masks and instantly it's like, what are you doing?2

Maybe they took their masks off for the picture and they're 20 feet away from someone. Maybe their masks are on when they're closer, and we don't know the whole story. So, I think, be mindful of what everyone's going through. And I do think being mindful on social media trying to understand how is this impacting the people that you love and that are your friends that are following you and want to support you, but maybe aren't doing the same thing as you? And how does this make them feel when they see it? I think there's always that element to social media of not knowing the full story or maybe showing a part of your life that's not the full picture of your life but I think it's more intensified now. I think it can have stronger consequences in regards to the relationships that people have with each other as a result.1

**LR:** Yeah, thank you.

And then I'm going to ask you this last question and then ask if there's anything else that you'd like to say. What concerns, do you have about the effects of COVID-19 on your employment and the economy more broadly?

**AG:** I think as a teacher I know my job. The nature of my job is changing—will change. I'm not quite sure how I could be teaching completely remotely next year. I could be asked to come in a couple of days for a couple of hours and do the rest at home. And so I know the nature of my specific job is going to change. I'm not worried about having a job because education has to be there in some way shape or form, and I've been teaching long enough that I don't think that I would be on the bottom of the group that—hopefully no one has to be laid off—but I know for me personally I think I'm in the safe zone. At this point, and I do see there being pay cuts. They've not been announced in our district or in our area yet, but that would not be surprising to me which is unfortunate. I mean we're already as educators, especially in this area, way underpaid for the cost of living here. So it's definitely not ideal, but I think [it’s] better than tons of people losing their jobs. And so hopefully people can see it that way. And, at least in the short term, I have a lot more concerns about what the overall economy looks like in our region or state or country. There's no way that these businesses can continue to survive if they're just deferring rent. If there's not a way that people are able to shop at their businesses anymore, or use the services anymore, I don't know what it looks like. But I'm certainly nervous, I don't know that we can as a society, pivot into a new business model fast enough to save all of these companies and services. And I think the ones that unfortunately are going to be hit the hardest are those that require in person, patronage in order to survive. Gyms, massages aren't allowed here, and our hair salons aren't open yet. And you have to physically be close to someone for these services as you know. I really feel for them on a personal level because this has got to be a really really trying time.1

**LR:** Yes, that's for sure.

Thank you so much for sharing that. And all of your answers have been really interesting and very valuable, and they'll be a very important contribution to the archive for sure.

**AG**: Yeah, you're welcome.

**LR:** Is there anything else that you'd like to say about our current situation? The time, the time that we're living through?

**AG:** I just really hope that people can look outside of themselves. [crying] Sorry I keep getting emotional, I just really think about the common good, and community and how we can help everybody just survive what we're going through. Whether it's from a health perspective or an emotional perspective or a financial perspective. And I think we're just gonna have to come together as people right now, and do what's right, not just for ourselves but for everyone. Because if we're just focused on ourselves I don't know what's going to happen. I don't know how long this will last or if we'll be able to emerge from it as unscathed as possible, so that's just my hope is that we can, we can find a way to help each other.

30:45

**LR:** Yeah. Great, thank you so much for all of this and for your time. And I understand how you feel. I just want to tell you that anyway. Thank you.