

## **Transcript of Interview with Hannah Wolfenson by Kylie L'Epplattener**

**Interviewer:** Kylie L'Epplattener

**Interviewee:** Hannah Wolfenson

**Date:** 12/04/2020

**Location (Interviewee):**

**Location (Interviewer):**

**Abstract:** In this interview, Kylie asks Hannah questions surrounding her experiences with Covid-19, as well as how a course on the history of pandemics has shifted her mindset.

**Kylie L'Epplattener 0:03**

Hello, my name is Kylie L'Epplattener, and today I will be interviewing Hannah Wolfenson for the COVID-19 archive project. Hannah, Do I have your consent to interview you for this?

**Hannah Wolfenson 0:13**

Yes, you do.

**Kylie L'Epplattener 0:15**

And then could you state the date and time for me, please?

**Hannah Wolfenson 0:18**

Yeah, it is December 3, 2020, at almost 4pm.

**Kylie L'Epplattener 0:23**

Okay, so we spoke several months ago about your experiences with the current ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Since then, has anything changed in your personal life or about your thoughts about the pandemic?

**Hannah Wolfenson 0:36**

Um, I would say that the only thing that has changed has been, it has become more real over the past couple of months. I feel like before, you know, especially when we were in quarantine, back in March, you know, and the summer, it seems like something that was pretty far away from affecting anyone that I know. And now, as we've kind of seen, it really has kind of- has trickled into our community more in Boston, especially. And I know people that have had it. And I know people that have had to quarantine for two weeks because they've been in contact. So I think that the main thing that has changed has- is that it has become more real and more of a real fear in my brain that I'm going to have it, and you know, as I was preparing to go home for Thanksgiving, it was a real fear that I was going to bring it home to my parents and get them sick. And who knows what would happen from that- from there. So definitely has become more of a real fear, as I've said many times, in- in my brain now.

**Kylie L'Epplattener 1:53**

And then now that we've come to this end of the course where we've been studying a ton of different pandemics and epidemics, from smallpox, to cholera, to the 1918 influenza; has this

knowledge you've acquired about these past pandemics, has it influenced your understanding of COVID-19? And if so, how?

**Hannah Wolfenson 2:11**

Um, yes, I would say that the main thing that I've taken from this course is, how incredibly repetitive the themes are throughout all of these pandemics and throughout COVID. You know, the way that minorities have suffered way more than the rest during these pandemics, the way that people, you know, treat politics during these pandemics; politics has always been kind of at the forefront of all these pandemic- pandemics. Um, the psychology behind it and the suffering that people have to go through and kind of how you don't necessarily [unintelligible] ... person, but the emotional aspects of the pandemics, you know, you kind of think, we're studying more like kind of the physical aspects of all the different crazy things that can happen to you with all these different diseases. But the one main theme throughout all of it is just the depression and- and horrible emotions that you have to deal with- with, you know, people that you know, dying and just kind of the suffering that's going on around you, has been a huge theme, but basically just- just kind of almost disappointment that COVID really is- falls right into that same pattern of the way that the human race has dealt with pandemics. And so it- it has definitely made me think more like, "Okay, there needs to be a very strong change in something in order to break this pattern."

**Kylie L'Epplattener 4:15**

Yeah, definitely. So you mentioned these similarities between COVID and the past pandemics. Have you noticed throughout the course any striking differences between...

**Hannah Wolfenson 4:26**

Between the different pandemics?

**Kylie L'Epplattener 4:28**

Different pandemics and COVID and maybe the response to COVID? Kind of any sphere of it.

**Hannah Wolfenson 4:34**

Yeah, I mean, um, I wouldn't say that there's been like, a ton of differences other than just the time period that we're in, you know, the- the masks and that type of stuff, I think has been even more so now, kind of a breach of our freedom that, I know we kind of have seen in the past, but I don't think as strong just because like, though the state of our country, I think, has been in more turmoil than normal in the past. And so I think kind of the idea of, you know, your freedom being in jeopardy has been more of a thing during COVID I think than the other pandemics, and I also think that it is- it is not a coincidence that there has been an entire racist or anti-racism movement during COVID that, you know, we haven't really seen in other pandemics, and I think whether Black Lives Matter, that whole movement started because of the pandemic, probably not. But I think what is majorly influenced by the pandemic, that by, you know, COVID-19, and so I think that that is another major difference from the rest of the pandemics that we've studied, especially like in our country.

**Kylie L'Epplattener 6:08**

Right. So after having studied these different pandemics, and having lived through one, are you optimistic for the immediate future?

**Hannah Wolfenson** 6:18

Um, no. [laughs] I, um, you know, like, I'm, I'm definitely optimistic that we're having a change of power come January. It'll be very interesting to see what, what Joe Biden does in terms of our cooperation with the rest of the world. And what he will do for people that are, you know, minorities right now that are suffering. But it doesn't- it definitely doesn't give me a whole lot of optimism that people aren't even able to agree on, you know, I don't know. The- the fact that people are, it's like a fight, like how is CO- I don't know, it's crazy to me that COVID-19 and the way that we deal with it is a fight because we all just want everyone to live. And so you know, when it's a fight to wear a mask, or it's a fight to have a business open or closed. I kind of feel like it's more like people just want to fight. And so that is concerning to me and does not give me an optimistic view for the mentality that humans have right now and going into the future.

**Kylie L'Epplattener** 7:49

Okay, well, that about sums it up. So thank you for this interview.

**Hannah Wolfenson** 7:53

Thank you so much.