

Transcript of Interview with Auri Rahimzadeh by Glenda McGann

Interviewee: Auri Rahimzadeh

Interviewer: Glenda McGann

Date: 05/12/2020

Location (Interviewee):

Location (Interviewer):

Transcriber: This transcript has been provided by Otter.AI with a 2nd pass for accuracy provided by Bryan Paintiff, HST580 intern, at ASU.

Abstract: Auri Rahimzadeh is a software engineer living in Indiana. Auri describes how he had a hard time initially getting information about covid as the federal government was saying everything was fine and the scientists were saying the opposite. During the pandemic Auri wrote an app for his local town that tied online covid assessments to physical tests. Auri then talks about how his job didn't change at all as he was a remote employee before the pandemic, but he did get to coach other people at his company how to remote work effectively. Additionally, Auri describes using technologies such as zoom, google meet, facetime, uber conference to stay in touch with friends and family. He also discusses ways that the pandemic lockdown has and will affect small businesses and the economy as a whole, stating that it will have long-lasting repercussions. Additionally, he brings up the affects that the pandemic is having on physical and mental health, especially issues with anxiety. Along those lines Auri also discusses if suicide rates have increased and that he believes that domestic violence rates have also increased during the pandemic. Auri then talks about how he feels that his local government and state government did a good job handling the pandemic response, even though they did not initially have a plan. He further describes how the federal government would get in the way of vital information release as they were concerned with how information would impact their reelection chances. Ends with how the US should have been more prepared for this and even though they weren't we shouldn't have downplayed it and played the blame game as this did not help solve anything. Additionally, Auri was baffled at how the US did so bad as everyone else was using our technology, our scientists, and we had the same resources but the US had 25% of covid cases.

Auri Rahimzadeh 00:00

surfaces awesome surfaces the best.

Glenda McGann 00:04

Well, thank you. Auri, we're rolling now. And would you tell me what the date and the time is?

Auri Rahimzadeh 00:14

Sure. May 12 2020 5:41pm.

Glenda McGann 00:20

Very good. And you have read the informed consent and signed it?

Auri Rahimzadeh 00:25

Yeah, the one that you sent me through email. Yeah, we'll send that along.

Glenda McGann 00:28

Yes. Thank you so much.

Auri Rahimzadeh 00:29

Right, am I suddenly blue?

Glenda McGann 00:31

I do see a blue tint on the on the screen there.

Auri Rahimzadeh 00:35

I don't know how I did that. I wonder if that's because I like disconnected my keyboard and added it back. Who knows? Smile and nod.

Glenda McGann 00:43

It's very film noir.

Auri Rahimzadeh 00:46

Film filter. I don't know what turned on the filter. This is weird. Did I did I do it? Here I'll stop my video. And start it again.

Glenda McGann 01:01

There, that's better.

Auri Rahimzadeh 01:03

Technology man.

Glenda McGann 01:04

That's better. I just found out I was palm swiping my phone for years. I've got a note eight, I didn't know what was causing it, so there's always room to grow, I guess. So, Auri, will you tell me your full name, please?

Auri Rahimzadeh 01:20

Yeah. Auri Rahimzadeh

Glenda McGann 01:22

And what are the primary things you do on a day to day basis? For example, in your job, your extracurricular activities?

Auri Rahimzadeh 01:32

Sure. So by day, I'm a software engineer by night. I am a software engineer.

Glenda McGann 01:39

And where do you live?

Auri Rahimzadeh 01:40

I live in Fishers Indiana.

Glenda McGann 01:43

Very good. What's it like to live there?

Auri Rahimzadeh 01:46

It's wonderful. It's one of the top 10 places to live in the United to raise a family in the United States. According to Money Magazine. That's kind of neat. Who would think a small town in, well now it's a city. You know, we have almost 100,000 people [inaudible] and I grew up here. It's like, all of this. What? Yeah, it's super modern. And it's like a great school system. And it's so quiet. It's, there's all these things to do. And it's really neat. And it's just, I used to live in Los Gatos, California. And this reminds me of Los Gatos, just without the weather. And without the, you know, the the beaches being about, you know, 20-30 minutes away, which would have been cool, but yeah, whatever. I didn't go the beaches that much when I was in Los Gatos, either, so.

Glenda McGann 02:39

When he first learned about COVID-19, what were your thoughts about it?

Auri Rahimzadeh 02:43

I wasn't sure what to think. I mean, it sounded like something that was spreading. I'm like, Well, eventually, this is going to come over here. What, I don't know if we're doing anything about it, but we've got smart people. So I, I thought we would be prepared for it. You know, the stay at home orders and everything made sense. Like when I was trying to hear about that overseas, I'm like, well, that's probably gonna come over here. But yeah, I wouldn't listen anything the President said. The different lie every time so.

Glenda McGann 03:28

well, have your that's a segue into the next question. Have your thoughts changed since then?

Auri Rahimzadeh 03:34

About what?

Glenda McGann 03:36

COVID-19

Auri Rahimzadeh 03:39

Yeah, well, I don't know if my thoughts have changed other than my awareness has, you know, my thoughts about are not a medical doctor. So if this is going to come over here, it's gonna come over here. How contagious it was, I was certainly curious about that. Reporting seemed relatively consistent. So how it infected people, the respiratory issues, etc. Who was at risk and so forth. That all made sense for the most part, that was a consistent message. And I have family that's immunocompromised. So I was certainly concerned about it. And from the the beginning, like in March, you know, when they started talking about social distancing being a thing. I did it. Yeah. And I have masks at home. I didn't buy into any of the like the run on toilet paper. I ran a bunch of jokes about that, like I put toilet paper in my refrigerator. I took photos of this is what's for dinner. Yeah, I showed how I had your like, cut up, you know, pieces of toilet paper, you know, and then I should have put like, sauce on it and everything and maybe some pasta you know cause it would have been funny, but a lot of people thought it was cute. And I'm like, Yeah, but yeah, we still have to take this really seriously. Just the scary the other scary part is just I've got a lot of involvement with public safety. And I feared for them just where they are on the frontlines of all this, they got just imagine a police officer that has to pull people over all day. You don't know if they have something. I haven't had my own concerns. Cause I like Asian food. You know, and here I'm hearing about all this stuff about it started in Wuhan, etc. And I know that people travel all the time back and forth between China and Japan, and Vietnam and Korea, etc. And I shop at all those grocery stores. So I was curious, like, if I, if I had like a sore throat, did I have COVID? So I had like a fever one day. And it ended up going down. but it wasn't, it wasn't COVID. I was at like, 99 or something. But finding information was very hard, especially locally, because the the the message you would hear from the federal government because the state's hadn't really gotten involved yet. It is back in mid March. I thought I had it. Yeah. Like, oh, no, I have a fever. Therefore, I might have it because I went shopping at an Asian grocery and who knows who I was exposed to, if that's where the majority of it comes from? And I was like, Ah, shit, what do I do? And I could not get an answer. Like, yeah, the government was saying, hey, just call your doctor, you can get a test. So I call my doctor, they're like, No, we can't help you. Here call this 800 number. And I was I was on the phone for like an hour with the 800 number for ascension health. And all they're doing is advertising that you can go sign up for a reduced fee to get a doctor's visit online. And it was just like, I was so confused. And the federal messaging is still like bonkers. You know, you don't you don't know, there's no federal response, I could go to a site and go, here's how you get tested. Here's how you protect your loved ones. Nothing like that. It's just no no no, everything's good. On one side through press conferences, and then whoa whoa whoa, don't open yet, from the scientists in the room, which as an engineer throws me off tremendously. So our

city actually took the lead on all this stuff. And in Fishers, every resident can get tested for free, whether you have symptoms or not. And all you do is go online, take an assessment. And that's all you do. Yeah. And you go get tested, and no charge. And so I ended up getting involved with that, actually. So the app that they use to scan the patients and assign the tests, you know, the survey here and the test here, I wrote the app that ties those two together. So we have zero issues tying people to their tests. It's awesome. I think we've got what over 1200 tests already already been taken. Yeah, that's pretty neat.

Glenda McGann 08:19

What issues have most concerned you about the COVID 19 pandemic?

Auri Rahimzadeh 08:33

I think primarily, what happens if my family gets it? and what happens if I get it? And I can infect someone? And not know, I think that's the scariest stuff.

Glenda McGann 08:47

How has COVID-19 affected your job?

Auri Rahimzadeh 08:51

So I'm already a remote employee. So this didn't really change much for me. The weird thing, though, is that when, at the end of the day, I want to go out because I've been home all day. And now I can't go out. Yeah, it's not like prison or anything and I've got plenty of entertainment and plenty of bourbon, right. But the, I have, there's two companies I have a full time operation that I worked for and then I have my side business where all my intellectual property stuff goes through. So the company I work for, has, they brought everyone to be remote. So I actually got to coach people on being remote. Which was cool, you know, like how to avoid distractions, etc. you know. But then it didn't really affecting a lot my regular intellectual property business, just because that was just consulting anyway. You know. Now to be fair, I'm a software engineer. I can do my job anywhere. I don't have to be on site. I Will revisit though that now that I have seasonal allergies, I keep wondering, are my allergies, allergies? Or are they COVID? Or are they something else? And that's, that's a little scary. Like, I don't know, maybe not scary like it doesn't keep me up at night. But knowing there isn't a cure, or a vaccine certainly bothers me because then I wonder, okay, if my nose is running, and, you know, my family wants to do something, should I go do it? Yeah. Is that the responsible thing to do? But, you know, we've been making do.

Glenda McGann 10:42

How has COVID-19 changed your employment status?

Auri Rahimzadeh 10:46

Not at all.

Glenda McGann 10:49

And what concerns do you have about the effects of COVID-19 on your employment and more broadly, on the economy?

Auri Rahimzadeh 10:55

On my employment, we've already had conversations, and the company's doing fine. Because we're not strongly aligned with, you know, like health care, we're not strongly aligned with healthcare, but like, you know, like event planning or anything like that, you know, we're, we do a lot of work that just simply isn't affected by this. It didn't affect my consulting really at all. Although I did have, oddly enough some event planning stuff, and that got cancelled. You know, couldn't do that work. And what was the second half of your question?

Glenda McGann 11:31

Oh, and on the economy more broadly.

Auri Rahimzadeh 11:35

I think it's, it absolutely is decimating the economy, having owned a small business, I can't imagine being closed for two months. I don't think a lot of small businesses have that kind of cash sitting around. You know, it's a, that's rough. And I don't know that the PPP or whatever will solve all that, although I've talked with some small businesses that have certainly said, it's helped them if they've gotten it. But there was a lot of confusion to get it. I've met at least one person that simply took \$30,000 from the government, but that wasn't their actual salary. So, you know, they found free money from the government and said, hey, you know, my wife did this, you know, \$15,000 a month, you know, for two months free, free and clear and I'm thinking myself, what if you get audited? they look at your salary, you know, I mean, and realize you didn't have that, you're going to have to pay that back, the 30 Grand is going to have to go somewhere. So I hope you invest in it. But from the economy side of things, I think it's gonna be horrifying, like we have, we haven't even seen how bad this is yet. The that's going to catch up 60 days from now, six months from now the number of closures, I feel that your hometown landscapes just gonna be very different, especially in poor parts of, of America. Or smaller towns, you know, like, really small. Just, you know, where you had to drive, you know, like an hour to get to work, that kind of thing, when you couldn't go to work now just dries up the tax base. So cities are going to have a lot of trouble, towns are going to have a lot of trouble, states are going to have a lot of trouble, from the lack of tax flow, you know, just this, you know, being [inaudible] Half the business has been closed for two months, affects everyone, the dollar stops flowing. So scary stuff. Really scary stuff.

Glenda McGann 13:49

How as the COVID 19 pandemic affected the employment of people that you know personally?

Auri Rahimzadeh 14:01

those that had hourly jobs in like restaurants and bars, which of course, you know, me working from home all day, I go out at night. So you meet all these people. All of them are furloughed or laid off. And

in some cases, you know, the businesses that hired them are now out of business that like they just said, Look, we're not we're not going to reopen. Because there's you got to ramp back up. You got to you know, right now you wouldn't, you'd have 50% revenue. It's tough. It's making that work as hard, your leases aren't gonna go down, your rents not gonna go down. And no one's stepping in to help on the rent side to say, look, you know, we're gonna mandate that all rent must be 50%. And the landlords, you know, aren't jerks for saying that they want to get paid. I mean, they have, they have a mortgage they have to pay. I mean, that's what you're doing. So the those I knew that had hourly jobs have not done well. And there's you know, a lot of my, you know, a lot of my friends, though, are also software engineers. They weren't affected by this. It's just work from home, and do whatever you need to do, you know, and eventually we'll go back to normal. But the more technical jobs that aren't affected by that, I think it's sometimes it can be hard to appreciate how difficult it is to, you know, to have to work on tips. If you're a bartender, you made \$60,000 a year, let's say, with your tips from a nice restaurant. Now you're at zero. You know, and you gotta go on unemployment. You got like, suddenly your health insurance isn't paid for, like you only have basic Medicaid. Yeah. Your your rent is still due your car payments are still due. If you and your you know, let's say you're married, you know, your wife, husband, whatever. Also doesn't have a job. But you got kids to feed and kids don't understand this. Oh, my gosh, you know, the, the the mental health aspects of this are just tremendous. So yeah, I, yes, it's affected the people to answer your question that I know that would normally be affected by something like this. Yeah. I'm curious if you have any questions about how students are affected by this?

Glenda McGann 16:38

Well, there, they're basically eight categories, I think. And we've gone through the background questions and the employment and the next section is family and household. Then there's community and health information and governments.

Auri Rahimzadeh 16:58

Cool. Hold on, I'm gonna grab my dog a treat.

Glenda McGann 17:00

and the future.

Auri Rahimzadeh 17:02

Give me one moment

Glenda McGann 17:03

Sure.

Auri Rahimzadeh 17:36

Oh, hello, I'm back.

Glenda McGann 17:38

Okay. So how has COVID-19 affected you and or your family's day to day activities? And, you know, there's some redundancy and overlap and these questions.

Auri Rahimzadeh 17:52

It's curtailed them. You know. And I can't go out or I generally can't go do, in the beginning. So this, this has our isolation from each other has scaled back. So we were very careful in the beginning. So like, for weeks, I wouldn't go over to see my mom. I'm like, Nope, you're gonna have to wait till this is over. Until we understand this. This will be a problem, you know, for us to get together. So being Jewish, we had Passover. I don't know if you're Christian, or what have you. So Easter was probably an issue if you're Christian, or Catholic. But as a Jew, I couldn't go over to my mother's house for Passover. I couldn't do it. So virtual meetings has definitely made the difference. And then as it got warmer outside, and we go out, we could actually walk outside instead of the nice, like the cold Indiana weather. I found that, you know, hey, you know, you could practice social distancing, and be outside. So did that more and more. And I think that as more people kind of got used to that. And we started getting more information about how this transmits how you can protect yourself and the the loosening of restrictions, like travel restrictions and such. That's when we started being able to go and see each other but we would still stand distanced. Yeah, and especially with like the Fisher's tests, you know. We all got tested. So like when I found out I was negative. You know, at the time, right. I mean, there's a few days ago I was negative. Who knows now? You know, I don't know. You know, that gave me some solace. Yeah, but the cool thing is, like contact tracing going with it. Yeah.

Glenda McGann 20:02

How are you managing your day to day activities in your household?

Auri Rahimzadeh 20:08

Same as before. I think I drink more.

Glenda McGann 20:12

I've heard that I read this somewhere that alcohol sales have gone up 300% So solancha

Auri Rahimzadeh 20:22

Campie. Well, you know, that being said, I don't have anything else to do at night. You know, I don't, I don't like sitting on Xbox and playing games. I'm okay with reading. You know, I like audiobooks. Now that it's nice outside, I go on bike rides. But, you know, when it's cold outside, you can't go out anywhere. You can't drive anywhere. You couldn't go sit at Starbucks and work on something. What do you have to do at home? Eat Drink? You know, I mean. I guess I could work out but I

Glenda McGann 21:09

that is true.

Auri Rahimzadeh 21:10

I got a gym membership for that, which I can't use right now. All right.

Glenda McGann 21:14

Well, you've touched on this. You've touched on this a little bit. How has the COVID 19 outbreak affected how you interact and communicate with family and friends?

Auri Rahimzadeh 21:25

Yeah, it's gone super virtual. So you know, my, you know, my kid and I just communicate texts and phone anyway. And then, like friends, yeah, Zoom meetings. And then once zoom was no longer free. We switched to like, FaceTime and messenger and Google meet. And Uber conference, just because zoom was great till it wasn't free. You know, there's so many free alternatives. Yeah.

Glenda McGann 22:02

What have you what have been your biggest challenges that you've faced so far during the outbreak?

Auri Rahimzadeh 22:07

I don't think I've had any major challenges, at the interruption to my daily routine. Like my routine used to be, go to Starbucks, meet with friends. Go to work, then. You know, at night watch TV, maybe go out with friends. But now it's, I still do the coffee thing in the morning. But my friend and I pull up in our cars next to each other. Yeah, when it was cold, and now that it's warm outside, we meet over in the city hall area, and walk the area. So we drink coffee, we just changed the locale that worked out pretty well. Nighttime is different. I think the ability to connect with your friends, the ability to go to movies, the ability to shop if you need to. I mean, I'm almost tired of the inside of Costco. It's somewhere to it's somewhere to go. Yeah, I want to be out of the house. That's yeah. And I can't imagine the people that aren't used to working from home. Being forced to go home and just especially if you've got kids. Yeah, it's got to be great to be with your kids all day. But sometimes it's got to be good to go the office. And man you can't get away from it. So yeah, I mean, you might ask this in other questions, but the mental health issue is definitely a thing. I know people that are just going nuts because they're so stir crazy. And it weighs down on you and if you are having like relationship difficulty at this time. Oh, it's like going on a vacation that you can't fly home from until someone tells you you can it's like your own reality show. You know, you gotta wait to get booted off

Glenda McGann 24:23

what have you your family and your friends done for recreation and you've touched on this but but feel free to include detail about the shows the games any particular books.

Auri Rahimzadeh 24:33

Yeah I've caught up on more shows I haven't seen Tiger King but I've definitely caught up on more shows. I have found that you know my friends and I usually didn't play games together so that hasn't become some new pastime so it's turned into your meet socially and drink. Yeah, and have conversation, because I think what we miss the most really is just the conversation amongst friends.

Glenda McGann 25:08

How has the COVID 19 outbreak affected your community and since you touched on Fishers a little bit and the app that's been developed there, which, by the way, I hope gets a lot of replication around the country. Remember, you may be part of communities, including school, and this could touch on students club, church, job, ect. You're welcome to speak about any and all of these communities.

Auri Rahimzadeh 25:33

So what's the question? I'm not sure.

Glenda McGann 25:35

How has COVID 19 effect affected your community?

Auri Rahimzadeh 25:40

Oh, well. From a few different perspectives, I mean, from a government perspective, it's cut government revenue. But it's also freed up the ability to clean up the roads, you know, like they can do road projects right now and not really worry about closing the roads. It's kind of a good thing is I'll bet they, I bet a lot of government projects end up catching up. When there's no traffic, at least public works projects. I mentor a lot of kids. And this is hard on them. Yeah, they, you know, they're cool with being at home. But you know, like the whole school situation is, is weird. Like you have school really three days of the week and then assignments. And then it gets a, you had to turn them in by Monday. Like, I don't even fully understand it. I'm like, Okay, well, as long as it works for you. I'm super fearful for the kids don't have internet at home. What about all the kids that don't have internet? They can't do e-learning. What do you do? I mean do you fail? You can't go to a library, those are closed. You can't go to Starbucks or anywhere that has free Wi Fi those are closed. Comcast goes and says, Hey, you know, if you're in a neighborhood with Comcast, you're going to have free internet, because we're going to open up all the XFINITY hotspots, well XFINITY hotspots aren't in the poor parts of town. So you're disadvantaged even during the pandemic, because none of the free services going to the nicer communities nicer being relative, or subjective. You don't get any of those benefits, and you're still stuck at home with the kids. You can't get them fed. Because, you know, maybe if they were on free or reduced meals, how do you feed your kids, you have the same lack of money and and resources that you had before. But now you have hungry mouths that want to be fed, and they don't understand what a pandemic means. So I'm surprised that the crime rate has been as low as it has been. Yeah, just. Yeah, I don't know. Or maybe we just don't see it. Yeah. I'm surprised that the shootings didn't go down in Indiana, like the shootings downtown. So I guess drug dealers still have their same issues. So yeah, it's hard on the kids. It's really hard on the kids. There's, you know, the seniors that don't get to go to a graduation, you know, not just

in high school, but in college. Yeah, it's really rough. And it's really I know, from a city government perspective, they've been firing on all cylinders to try figuring out how they're going to. How do you help the local businesses? Yeah. Because I mean, they're, they're part of your life blood not just your tax base as the citizenry but the the, all those businesses bring in revenue that you know, pays for everything in the various municipalities we've got. And you know, I just can't speak higher than you know what, what Fishers is doing. It's definitely talked with some of them. You're talking like Scott Fadness and Steve Russa about the about their approaches. It's been really interesting.

Glenda McGann 29:17

What has been your direct experience meaning you or anyone you know, with the COVID 19 outbreak sickness?

Auri Rahimzadeh 29:28

I've had one family member get it twice. The doctor an unrelated family member. So like an uncle of an uncle that isn't related to me by blood or a brother of an uncle not related to me by blood. So in the family, but not you know, blood related in any way. He died of COVID complications from it on top of everything else. At work, had one of our you know, at least one of our employees. His father passed away from it. So it's definitely affecting people. I mean, that I know. And some friends of mine have had it. I just had a social with one of them. I didn't know they didn't. I just like found out. Oh, yeah, I had I had it. It was terrible. You're like what? Yeah, I mean, it's not like it's killed everyone. You know, I mean, the majority of people live. But that doesn't make the other deaths. Better in any way.

Glenda McGann 30:45

You touched on this, but is there anything that you'd like to add about the way COVID-19 is affecting people's mental health? or physical health?

Auri Rahimzadeh 30:54

Well, it's certainly affecting physical health, because you can't go out and work. If you can't go out and work out. You can't go out and work out. Yeah. You could stay active at home, but I don't think everyone has the means to where they understand how to do that, you know. It depends. But mental health? Absolutely. Yeah. Oh, but anxiety is huge. I have a number of friends that have an anxiety issues right now. Anxiety is, I don't have, like I, I'd be curious. And I'm gonna sound like I have a lack of empathy. But I'm curious what the numbers are around the suicide rate, you know, in the past two months, you know, that people think this, you know, hey if this is gonna kill me, I'm gonna go out on my own terms or something. You know, and I think any bad news is amplified in an environment like this, because not only am I locked up in my fucking house, you know, this happened. You know, and I know, I've heard that domestic violence incidents have gone up. Which it all makes sense. I mean, you're around someone that you have issues with. You can't go anywhere else to let out your anger. That's, that's rough. But yeah, that. I know, in Fishers they've had some mental health, some emails about like what to do, or at least one email. And I've seen, like on Facebook, they have a whole COVID-19 area

you can go that I think has resources for this sort of stuff. So that's good. But you have to you have to with mental health, you have to want help.

Glenda McGann 32:42

Switching gears now, what has been your primary source of news during the pandemic?

Auri Rahimzadeh 32:51

I know I watched a lot of CNN. I read a lot of Drudge Report. MSN news. So like every time I open up, my browser shows me like what's going on. I would watch some of those press conferences with Trump. But like, as long as he wasn't on it was it seemed informative. Every time he was on it was just like, dude, whoa. Yeah. And then a few weeks into it, they just started turning into campaign rallies. Like it was just it was really nasty. Just the way he was treating the reporters, you know, they're just they're do their job. And yeah, I think if he wasn't on TV, it'd be a lot easier to think that we have something good going on. But news wise, I read whatever articles there were I read about 19, Yeah, like the comparisons to the 1918, the Spanish flu was that 18 or 17, 18 Right?

Glenda McGann 33:57

Actually, it spanned multiple years, it really spanned three years began 17 But 18 is the predominant year of that pandemic.

Auri Rahimzadeh 34:06

Okay, so like 17 through 20, 17 Through 19. Okay.

Glenda McGann 34:10

17 through 19.

Auri Rahimzadeh 34:12

So, it's been interesting to learn about this. So there's been the news, but also the kind of fact checking it all. So also hitting like, PolitiFact. You know, because there's been a lot of politics around this. Attempting to read the bill, like the stimulus bill. When news coverage would come out, I tried to hit a few different sites to see if I can find the text of the bill for the stimulus package because hey, that's, that's a lot. It feels good to say. Three, four hundred billion. That's a lot of money. It's got to come from someone. You know. That's, that's rough.

Glenda McGann 34:56

Yeah. So you eluded there to sort of how your news consumption has evolved during this. Would you, is there anything else that's changed about it during the pandemic?

Auri Rahimzadeh 35:14

Um, I think recently, I've watched less of it. I read more of watch less. Just to get more information. Yeah.

Glenda McGann 35:32

Do you think there are important issues that the media is not covering?

Auri Rahimzadeh 35:41

Oh, sure. Yeah. Like the whole pan, you know, the, all the pandemic stuff. I think they're covering in earnest. Yeah. I used to be in the press, you know, years ago, not like this not political press, but technology press, and asking people questions is part of your job. So I'd rather read like the written up version of things, because you've thought about it more. But the ad hoc interaction is always interesting to me, because that's when you get to see how people lie. Because you can polish the facts and your statements, you know, when it's being written later. But yeah, that's why the the press conference, from the very beginning of the White House, were just, were horrifying. But well, I'm spacing on the what the original question.

Glenda McGann 36:44

I'm sorry that. I thought my

Auri Rahimzadeh 36:47

It's okay. Happens.

Glenda McGann 36:49

Thought my hubby would pick up there.

Auri Rahimzadeh 36:52

What was the question again, though?

Glenda McGann 36:54

Oh, how has your news sourcing Oh, no, I'm sorry.

Auri Rahimzadeh 37:00

No it was the one after

Glenda McGann 37:01

What do you think are important issues that the media may or may not be covering?

Auri Rahimzadeh 37:06

So I think the problem is, is that this covers a lot of this obscures a whole bunch of stuff, you know, like, look at the all the regulations that you have, just from a government perspective, like all the regulations

that were being passed, or rescinded under the cover of this, you know, the that's scary. Like the the political campaigns have been really interesting. It's, it's funny how, like, politically charged, I've been during this administration, like, I rarely get that way. And this one just has me, I'm like, Man, gosh, we gotta we gotta vote. You know, the social security changes, like all this stuff coming out of Congress, were good bills from both sides of the house, are coming into the Senate and just dying. Because that is, you know, where the majority, we're not going to pass it until the status quo changes. Whoa, but no one's covering that, right. Because everyone's fearing for their lives. The the people not getting food right now. I don't feel that's being covered in earnest. bringing light to all this food waste that we've got right now. How could you get that food into people's hands to help them? Now, it turns into, unfortunately, the Trump show, because he's always in the, he, you know, his his overall fears of becoming irrelevant. So just simply saying something stupid, or just saying anything at all, gets his headlines. And that detracts from all the other things, you know, like, here's where we could we could have all these. What could media do to help with mental health? Like, we'll do a whole townhall once a week on mental health and how you can help yourself, you know. But that being said, yeah, there's a lot of stuff that's getting covered, not covered up, but you know, just, you know, it's lost in the noise. And that's kind of been the way it is this entire administration. Because it's always like, Trump said this. Kushner did that, you know, it's like, Yeah, but what about all the other stuff, you know, that's happening in all the other states and, you know, just locally, you know, good things that are happening, bad things are happening, everything in between, you know, interesting acquisitions, you know, new technologies that are saving lives. Yeah, it's a lot of Yeah. It's just it's too much. But aside from all of that, like if you ignore the news, if you don't, don't tune into effectively what's now entertainment. You'll find that our communities have really come together. Yeah. If, if you look past all the negativity. Yeah, I found that yeah, that communities have definitely done what they can, especially local governments to try making things work. And, you know, helping helping their constituents. I'm thankful to see that, because I, I was almost convinced that that was gone. In this country. It was sad.

Glenda McGann 40:22

Well, I appreciate you hanging in with me. We've got about five more questions.

Auri Rahimzadeh 40:26

sure.

Glenda McGann 40:28

And this is another segue that just worked out really well, when you're speaking of local government, where the rubber literally hits the road. How many municipal leaders and government officials in your community responded to the outbreak? And how did they respond?

Auri Rahimzadeh 40:46

I think I've already answered that.

Glenda McGann 40:48

Yeah?

Auri Rahimzadeh 40:49

Yeah.

Glenda McGann 40:50

I know, you spoke earlier with Fishers and specific names. So we'll cover that we'll consider that covered. Do you have any thoughts on the differences in response among local state and federal levels? To the crisis?

Auri Rahimzadeh 41:07

Yeah, so local? I think it depends. Like, I think me personally, I'm spoiled because I live in a city that took initiative. I don't feel all local governments have the means that my government does my local government, or, you know, our is forward thinking, you know, it just. And that's a byproduct of not just politics, but you know, just money and tax base, etc. Ya know. So the local governments, I think, are trying to do everything they can. And they're trying to coordinate with the states. And it feels like very few people had a plan about how this was going to work, you know. So from the state level, I think, you know, the communication with the local governments has been difficult, but they're still I think they're still working towards being effective. Like, you know, they're not, you know, it's not like a massive failure across the board. And I think our federal response is, the larger version of that problem, solocal, you can control your destiny, as long as you've got some funding from the state, and, by tests, etc, set up testing centers, etc, and let that grow organically. And you can do that up to, you know, from the local level to the state level, and now you've covered your state. But every state has to do that. Kind of like a virus, you know, start small and then spreads, right, just like the pandemic, you got to do the same thing with your testing, you got to start somewhere and then let it expand. I feel that that's been delayed, partially because our federal government was absolutely unprepared. And every time they tried sending a message out, the administration got in the way going, Whoa, whoa, whoa this will affect our election chances in November, so shut up. So the people who know what they're doing and being an engineer, I can I imagine I could, I could think like a medical doctor in this case, and go, whoa, whoa, whoa, wait. I'm the doctor that's in charge of all this stuff. Let me do my job. I get that you want to look good, I get it. I can't make you look good. When people are dying. I just I can't do it. Somewhere you have to draw the line. Well, whoa, whoa, whoa, wait, we have to put the marketing spin on this. So I think that the federal government's infighting of between people who know what they're doing, and then the administration which wants to look like they're 100% in control, that was infectious. across all the states that were looking for guidance and couldn't get guidance. And so finally, I think after a few weeks of waiting for guidance, other than waiting and saying we need tests and funds, et cetera, to start our efforts went and got nothing out of it. They finally said, Screw it. And you can see the local governments got together and the state, the state governments got together. And I think, I don't know if you've seen the maps of the packs that formed like our new American colonies, you know, building out is some way we

got to save people when they die. You know, let the administration do whatever it's doing, just at this point, just ignore them. Because they're ignoring us anyway. You know, like, I'll pounce on blue states, but I'll give money to red states and I'll put someone in charge that will make sure that happens. Wait. These are politics needs to be put aside for people's lives. And that hasn't happened on the federal level. but the state level, I think the smart states have prioritized life and are doing good things. And you can see that happening. Some stragglers. But they'll come around. I mean, sometimes. You know, they might come around because enough people are dying, unfortunately. But yeah, some people don't want to learn their lesson.

Glenda McGann 45:28

Well, the final three questions have to do with the future Auri. How has your experience transformed how you think about family, friends, and community?

Auri Rahimzadeh 45:37

It hasn't changed my thought about family. I don't think it's really changed my thoughts about friends, but how we can get together. I think you know, the connectedness of friends. I think you find who wants to actually communicate with you and maintain that friendship. So that was good to see. And you say it was the third one community?

Glenda McGann 46:20

family friends community.

Auri Rahimzadeh 46:25

I was surprised to see the well that surprised. But it was, it was refreshing to see my community come together. I think people want to see good things happen. It showed me how many people in this not just like Fishers, but just everywhere. Don't give a shit. Like all the people not wearing masks. All the people going out with like their kids. And their kids are coughing over everything and screaming and touching everything. And you know, kids touch everything. And not reigning them in. So I found a lot more people like in the past couple of weeks with the death count going up so much, wearing masks now. Whereas like four weeks ago, no, no, no, people were like meah, whatever, especially younger people, meah. We don't care. You keep hearing about the teenagers getting because it wasn't the first time it seems there's been a number of incidents where kids have gone into stores and to start fake coughing on people. You know, thinking it's funny. Because, yeah, so I've found that, you know, it doesn't matter what community you're in, there's people who don't care about other people. But I have found other people going, why aren't you wearing a mask? And they'll say something, which I think is good. You know. Sometimes you need to call people out.

Glenda McGann 47:53

Knowing what you know, now, what do you think that individuals, communities or governments need to keep in mind for the future?

Auri Rahimzadeh 48:08

Have a retrospective on this and strongly document what went right and what went wrong. And make sure that that's part of a response plan. I mean, I don't know that you needed a pandemic response team, working 24/7 right around the clock prior to this happening. But we should have been prepared. We shouldn't have downplayed it. We shouldn't have played the blame game. Blame didn't solve anything. So anytime you blame, usually, you know, 99 plus percent of the time, you've got some blame yourself. And had we just taken this seriously. I think we'd be in much better shape. So now that we've gone well, and we were not through this yet, but when we have gone through it. Thankfully, we're in the age of information. Hopefully, that information is stored in such a way that we can plan this out in the future and when they model it out, you know, coming out with a better way of looking at how we could approach this using all the tools that we have at our disposal today. Because I am surprised at being in this land with all the technology that we have all the top minds around the world that we had nothing. We were the emperor has no clothes, it was we were caught naked by a robber coming out of the shower, you know, like we didn't realize we locks on the doors or something. You know, it was just like, What the heck we're, I'm embarrassed that we keep playing up that we've. The if you look at the global numbers, we're more than 25% of the cases and deaths globally. And everyone uses our technology to communicate. Our books our scientists. You know. I mean how is this us? Oh my gosh. You know. It's, it's embarrassing to be an American. Well, no, I'm not embarrassed to be an American, I'm embarrassed about our, our government. Because all they do is talk about, hey, you should give us credit for how well we've done. Why? Why, you know, if you do a really shitty job, why do you deserve credit for that? Well, you know, not as many people are dying. Oh, okay. So like, we have a control group and who got the placebo? Yeah. I never, I don't understand. I never thought it would be this high. that high of a percentage, just as an American, and just knowing what we have access to just even the data we have access to that we can, like the models have been relatively accurate. I don't know if you've looked at the models?

Glenda McGann 51:24

I've look at several they're more accurate than other sources. They're all predicated on whatever they were based on.

Auri Rahimzadeh 51:30

Yeah, they're tracking very well, I mean, horrible fine numbers. But still, you know, where were, where do we have don't we have teams of people like this, they could do something. Yeah. What the hell, but instead, what we were stuck with, for forget that they started making changes in the beginning of March. Imagine just knowing what you've seen the infighting that must have occurred in January and February. Of we have to do something No, no, no, it will make us look bad. I mean, it's clear that that was happening. I'm like, Oh, my gosh. The ego that killed so much people. It wasn't just Trump. I mean, it's just his entire administration, hiding it all. It just it's, it's sad. And people died because of it. Just unbelievable. You know. And people still die. Which I'm just thankful, like, getting back to your other

question that the, the local governments in the states are taking over and saying, You know what, let's let the kids go play. Fine, send us money. If that's what you're only good at is sending money. You're not even good at that. And you want your name on it. So you can get credit. Good, good, good for you. Good. Leave us alone. Yeah, smile and nod, you do your thing. We're gonna go and save our citizens because you you have, you're clueless. We'll listen to like the two people on your team that seem to know what they're talking about. But everybody else, just just stay away. Stay away. Stay off TV, stay away from us. You're confusing all of our citizenry. I mean, you're just absolute lack of leadership, driven by ego. And it's just, it destroys organizations, and it could destroy our country. So I'm glad that they're just mutinying. For the most part, some aren't.

Glenda McGann 53:42

final question. Are there any other thoughts you'd like to add before we close here Auri?

Auri Rahimzadeh 53:51

Not really, I think I've gone off on enough tangents. I hope you and your family are safe. That's,

Glenda McGann 53:58

Well thank you

Auri Rahimzadeh 53:58

I hope we haven't lost anyone. Knock on wood. And

Glenda McGann 54:03

thank you,

Auri Rahimzadeh 54:04

we'll get through this.

Glenda McGann 54:06

Thank you. Well, I appreciate your willingness to do this. I think the repository of stories that we have at the end of this will be very important. And one of the aims of the COVID-19 oral history project is to get the metadata. For example, this, the transcript that will come out of this interview is going to be produced by AI. You know, there are multiple universities involved in this you probably checked it out on the website. So once I get this uploaded, I'll let you know. And I'm, I'm right now I'm batching them so I haven't really done any uploads yet. So I'll probably get a couple more interviews under my belt, but I'll let you know when that's been done. And I'll keep in touch along the way. But But I hope that these kinds of thoughts really helps out policy going forward. And that project has gone international now,

Auri Rahimzadeh 54:58

Oh wonderful congrats.

Glenda McGann 54:59

So We'll, we'll see where it goes. And we will have a good record, at least from this point of view. The problem is there was a lot of documentation about 1918. But it happened 100 years ago. So what's not top of mind, and things have changed so much. This is really helpful.

Auri Rahimzadeh 55:21

Yeah I mean just thinking like you're recording this right now. And you're not even thinking about running out a tape.

Glenda McGann 55:27

Right? or transcribing.

Auri Rahimzadeh 55:30

Like, all the technology we have available today, man, and who knows? I mean, just imagine this 100 years from now. Yeah. Wow, how that's gonna. How this technology could help us. But who knows? Yeah, we'll probably ignore it. Ignore it again.

Glenda McGann 55:51

But we might figure out a way to ruin it. Being Human.

Auri Rahimzadeh 55:58

Yeah, history repeats itself, friend.

Glenda McGann 56:01

Anyway, thank you so much for your time, and I will. I will let you know when I get this uploaded into the archive.

Auri Rahimzadeh 56:10

Awesome. Thanks, Glenda, much appreciated, is that how you say your name?

Glenda McGann 56:12

Oh its Glenda that was my father's consolation prize since it wasn't a boy. And actually my daughter's last name is [inaudible]. So I imagine you're Persian somewhere in there.

Auri Rahimzadeh 56:14

Yep, yes I am.

Glenda McGann 56:29

Take care.

Auri Rahimzadeh 56:30

Have a good one.

Glenda McGann 56:32

Bye.