

Interview with Anthony Wallace by Cullin Peterson

Interviewer: Cullin Peterson

Interviewee: Anthony Wallace

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Abstract:

In this interview, Anthony Wallace talks about his experience with COVID-19, as a college student and a retail worker who puts in forty-hours a week. Anthony working a full forty-hours a week and being a college student gives him a unique experience on the ways that students and essential workers are dealing with the pandemic and what they deal with on a daily basis. Anthony goes into detail on the effects he has experienced at Target and how his daily interactions with individuals have changed. He also delves into how the pandemic has given him a better understanding of the individuals around him by watching the ways that they interact with the pandemic. Anthony shares his concerns with the pandemic and how other individuals interact with during the pandemic especially at work, which is seen as he says, “But at the same time, like as an employee, it's kind of frustrating because it's like, you're kind of putting your health out there on the line. And there are some people who just don't really feel as if it's as important or feel that it's as important as you do.”

Cullin Peterson (CP): All right, the date is December 3rd, 2020. And the time is five 5:54pm. I want to start with just saying who you are and um giving some demographic information such as your race, ethnicity, gender, age, stuff like that.

Anthony Wallace (AW): So, my name is Anthony Wallace. I'm a junior at the University of Wisconsin Eau Claire. Um, I've been living in Eau Claire for about like a year and a half now. I'm African American, more specifically, Caribbean American, both my parents immigrated from here. And I identify with he him pronouns.

CP: Alright, and then I'd like this, where do you live and what is it like living there, in Eau Claire?

AW: So, I'm living on First and Lake, um, it's been like a pretty nice experience living in our Claire. Originally out of high school, I kind of want to go to the U of M, Twin Cities. And I think that Eau Claire has really been a perfect fit, like size wise, like a good combination of size and still having that downtown feel. So, I've gotten really comfortable living here of like, the past year and a half or so.

CP: And then can you go over some of your hobbies or what consists of your day, or what does your day consist of activity wise or work, um, just kind of give us a run through with that?

AW: A lot of it right now is work, um. I work at Target over here, like on South Hastings way. And like on any given week, I like to put a lot of hours in so working like between 30 and 40 hours is like my preference. So, doing that a lot. In my spare time. I kind of just enjoy reading, writing, hanging out with friends hanging out with my girlfriend, stuff like that.

CP: So, I guess when COVID, when you first heard about COVID-19, what were your initial thoughts, and have those thoughts changed since March until now?

AW: Well, I just remember that, in March, just how quickly everything escalated. Like I think I remember being in like the black Cultural Center and like Centennial, and it was like, on Monday, it was kind of just like a joke where people were like spreading rumors that like people in like certain halls had it and that halls had to lock down. And there was like a lot of just like chaos more on a social level because of that. Then throughout the week, it's like one person started wearing a mask, and then more people did and it's like, nobody was really paying attention. Because like by Wednesday, we were all focusing on the weekend. And then all of a sudden, everything that was planned kind of collapse, and then the semester just rapidly started to change.

CP: So, looking back at it now like, like, how did you think... Did you think it would come to it is how it is now?

AW: No, I don't think really a lot of people did. I think in some ways, like I tried to just paint the optimistic view and kind of like more paint a naive view just because I wasn't informed or I was just like, you know, maybe by late April, we would be back like they said, or at the very least like things would be back to normal by summer. And then really, like I kind of started to notice that things weren't going to change when like, people weren't making adjustments and like the way that they were living and especially like working as regularly as I did just seeing people not really adapting to like mass policies until like, mid-July probably, it kind of you kind of got the feel that like this is probably gonna be a new normal for a while.

CP: Yeah. So um, with all that going on, what do you think was your biggest concern, or what is your biggest concern right now, regarding COVID-19?

AW: Well, I think for me personally, like one of the biggest concerns is just like I'm was I'm just currently like uninsured right now. And it was kind of just like a snafu. Like with organization, my family after my parents separated. That kind of left me uninsured for this year. And it kind of just became the least ideal time to not have health insurance. And I think I'm lucky but like, I'm in a low-risk group for covid, and I don't have to worry about stuff like that as much. But I mean, you never know how your body's going to react to anything. So, I think that, even though it seems kind of, like contradictory, like that made me work a lot more. And I think that obviously like the con of that is like putting yourself at risk for being exposed to the virus like working in a place like Target where you sometimes can be working really intimately with people in the public and not really have a lot of safe, like a lot of safety there because it took a while for like any like PPE even get in a target where we were regularly wearing masks or regularly disinfecting stuff. But at the same time, it was like, in the event that something serious does happen like I need to have money just because I...

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CP: I'm sorry, Anthony, I think uh, on my screen your screen froze up here. I'm not sure if you can still hear me. Oh, there we go.

AW: Yeah, there we go.

CP: Yep. Um, I'm sorry, what was that last part you said about uh Target and how things were working with your financial situation, and um...

AW: But yeah, I think like the biggest part was just like trying to work as much as possible. So, I had like a safety net, because obviously, like, I still have expenses every single month, like rent to pay stuff like that. But at the same time, it's like in the event that something does happen, like I'm wanting to have some cash to fall back on if for whatever reason, I had to take an extended amount of time off whether it was like quarantining or isolating stuff like that.

CP: So, do you think Target responded to COVID-19, how you would have wanted them to later in the year or later in the pandemic?

AW: You're kind of cutting in and out a little bit.

CP: Yeah, once in a while, or you're freezing up here once in a while. I think we're back now. Or at least you're back on my screen.

AW: Yeah. Try. But yeah, your question was just about like COVID or if Target responded? Well?

CP: Yeah, do you think that's how you responded while the COVID-19 even though it may have taken some time to develop? Um, how do you feel about their policy and regulations now?

AW: I don't know, I think one of the hardest things with Target now where it was like it took a while to like, get them at like the whole mess thing going, where we were actually like protecting ourselves and getting like hand sanitizer and stuff throughout the store. So, I mean I think those things progressed as reasonably as you could expect them to. But I think there's kind of just like this feeling like amongst, like my coworkers, they're even just people who work in like, retail right now, in general, where it's like, it's almost more beneficial to have COVID in a lot of ways as far as like an employee benefits standpoint, because like, if you're out quarantining, for example, like unless you come back positive, and having had it, like that time off isn't paid for, even if like that exposure times at work. And I think that, like, I got lucky that when I did have COVID, like, I got the test results back pretty quick. And I could like contact pay in benefits, and then get paid for that time off and get compensated for it. But at the same time, like people who were working, like close by me, had to quarantine and then when it turned out, they didn't have it. And they still had to wait. Like the remainder of the 14 days, they had a quarantine, it was

like, you're kind of just out of luck for any money during that period, even though that exposure happened at work.

CP: So, you were uh, you were able to access unemployment correct.

AW: It wasn't even like unemployment, like just at the time, like I didn't get like furloughed.

CP: Okay.

AW: So, the way that works is like I just ended up basically going on leave, like from work and I leave was paid because I tested positive. But for those of like my coworkers who worked like in me and my department, who were like, exposed to me and had to quarantine as a result of that, because they didn't test positive specifically, like they didn't get compensated at all.

CP: So, would you say that your coworkers shared many of the same concerns you had, or were there other concerns with different employees? Um, how did like, Target, uh, console to those or comfort you guys, or was there any assure, reassurance from the company?

AW: I mean, I think like overall, just like talking with the management better, like they kind of share the same sentiment about being frustrated that like people are forced, like take this time out time off without knowing for certain whether or not they're going to be compensated for it. Like even now a target, like if you get tested, you can't come in until those results come back. And then like on top of having to say, like, "Isolate for 10 days after you get that result back." Like if you're just quarantining it, you get tested, then all of that time off is on isn't paid for. And it puts you in a weird position where it's like, it's kind of hard to file for unemployment during that time, because you still are employed, you just aren't able to go back to work. And I think that, in general, like a lot of people will share those same fears. Or it's just like, at this point, it's almost better to happen. Because it's like from what I got, when I tested positive and like early September, like I was advised, like not to retest for like three months, because there's a chance that it could still come back as a false positive. And I think that like some people see that as like, almost a safety net, like the people who are in the low-risk category where it's just like, if you are exposed, you don't risk having to lose out on like huge periods of work when you kind of depend on it, especially when things are a little bit more... straining financially for a lot of people during the pandemic.

CP: Did you see a lot of shift in people's hours or how did anyone's hours get affected by the pandemic?

AW: Um, a lot. I think that like one of the biggest things is like on my ends, like after having it in like September and like not really necessarily having a quarantine, like after certain exposures for like X amount of time there was like, as everybody else was calling in, like there was just this period where we just had an influx of available hours, just as people called and over and over and run like mandatory leaves because of quarantine. And it was just like, some people saw this huge boost in pay, because like, overtime became available, because we were understaffed, but at the same time, it's like people didn't have access to those opportunities, for the very reason that

those opportunities became available because they had to quarantine them because they just couldn't come to work.

CP: How do you think that, um, affected your mental health or other people on their employees mental health? Um, was there an added stress to it all? I'm assuming there is, but could you show like ways that employees worried about this?

AW: Um, I mean it's just like a hugely concerning thing, because I think that like in my department, like I work back in electronics at Target is like, we have like, a really diverse group of people as far as like, where they're at, like life wise, and things that they're doing in their lives, where we have some people who are like, recently married, like new homeowners, some people who live alone, but have like other medical needs, they need to tend to some people who like aren't in school. And I really just, like feeling this like as a career and trying to build like the job applications. And it's like, everybody needs like a consistent source of income, I don't think whether it's like us, certain people being in like a transitional period in their lives, or needing that money for medical reasons, or like the new homeowner, it's like, we all kind of rely on having that like steady source of income. And then when it's put in jeopardy, for like a very serious reason. Even though like you want to take that like reason serious, it's hard not to worry about the money. And I think another big part of it, too, is like working back in electronics like that's like our hub for like cell phone activations. And one of the one of like, the carriers that's extremely popular is like Consumer Cellular. And they really cater only to like the elderly. And it's like a hard situation, because it's like, you'll have these people being really upset at you, when the people who activate phones aren't in, but it's like, at the same time, they're the ones who were extremely high risk. And it's like, you can't really sacrifice somebody's privacy and what they're going through medically, to tell these people the reason why they're not there, and that is probably for their own benefit that they're not there. And it's like, I don't know, it just kind of breeds a scenario where it's like really hard to communicate about certain things, or you're communicating like about very intimate things. And I think it's helped strengthen our department. But obviously, there's that strain where it's stressful, and it's really hard to communicate at times.

CP: So, with working with, or working with customers on a daily basis, how have you dealt with customers who didn't follow regulations or store policies? Um, how is that relationship to the customer and, um, employee relationship damaged during the pandemic or strengthened?

AW: I, I just think it's kind of hard, because there's just some things where it's like, policies change really rapidly, and people have a hard time adjusting. And it's like, you can almost see that friction of people trying to adjust to a new normal, like, in real time, as you tell them that like x thing isn't available, or like you can't use the fitting rooms anymore. Or it's as simple as like, I just need you to take like a couple steps back, just because it's probably not best that we're as close to each other is like we might have been able to be like literally seven months ago. And I think that a lot of it is just, really trying to like empathize while still prioritizing safety. And I think it's like an extremely hard thing to do. But, yeah, I don't know, it's, it's been a real struggle, like at times too. Because I mean, there's, there's some guests who will, like readily comply, and will wear their masks and like follow social distancing in the store. And at the same time, there's other people where they just choose not to. And I think especially like, as a store where it's like,

you can't really fund like all of these like, like people to just go and play the security role and like, escort people out. It's like, you know, you don't want to treat your guests poorly. And we still try to offer like options for people who don't want to wear masks like some contactless shopping, like doing drive ups and having stuff put like directly in your car. But at the same time, like as an employee, it's kind of frustrating because it's like, you're kind of putting your health out there on the line. And there are some people who just don't really feel as if it's as important or feel that it's as important as you do. And like it's a frustrating thing, but at the same time, like there's not much you can really do about it.

CP: Do many of your fellow employees, um, share the same frustration and do they believe, have the same beliefs as you for or regarding COVID-19?

AW: Um, it's kind of weird because like, I think that like all of like our management is like, very, like, very empathetic with like people and like, they really do want people to just take the time that they need to be safe. And it's like, obviously, like, there's moments of frustration because people are human. And that's like, I'm sure, as a manager, when you're already understaffed, you don't want to hear somebody calling in. But at the same time, like, during that period, where you're on leave, or on quarantine, it's never like, you feel pressured to come back to work, because of like the managers at Target, I think they've been really good at behaving in like a really professional way where it's like, it really puts them in a hard position. But I think at times, they're compromising, like, how they might feel about like the workload, to kind of like prioritize how employees feel. But like, at the same time, it's like, there's some, like we work with, like some contractors, and some vendors, and some of those people just really don't care. And it's kind of a frustrating thing, when it's like, you kind of feel like you're building an environment where it's like, professional and courteous to the pandemic, but at the same time, they're like these people who just come into the store, like via third parties who just don't feel that same way. But I think it is, like a pretty shared sentiment that people want to prioritize safety in general.

CP: Would you say that, uh, Target is, um, the company itself has tried to address these issues, or provide benefits or increase in pay for their employees who are dealing with these, uh, they're increase in the workload?

AW: Yeah, I think that like, you know, even like this past month, having a lot of overtime available, and being able to work like extended hours if you wanted to. Stuff like that is like important. And I think too, like we've received like bonuses. And for a while we had like, our, like wages and salaries increase for like, a period of time before they like officially got raised, like the \$15, like minimum benchmark. So, I think that it was like a lot of good being done. And I think that, obviously, there's some ways where it's like, I wish the response would have been better, but a lot of it, I think was handled pretty well.

CP: How do you think Target has, um, compared to other retailers, dealt with COVID-19? Do you think they've done better or worse? Or, in what ways is it different from others that you've seen?

AW: I don't know. It's hard to say, just because I think that like now, like that I'm there all the time. It's like, I don't really find myself going to a lot of stores other than Target. Just because I mean, to try to minimize going out to just like random stores, like, I can do a lot of my shopping there. So, I don't really know, like, personally, have a lot of experience with like other retail stores. But I mean, honestly, it seems like it's been like pretty uniform, like in general, like responses and standards, so, I think that, like, there's room to improve, like, I feel like almost with every place, but I think that like, at least thinking in the short term and having to like rapidly develop and construct policies and procedure for it., like, I think it's being handled, like reasonably well.

CP: Do you think that your family members and your friends have, uh, approached COVID-19 the same way, uh, that you have? Or, what differences do you see in their reactions and their response to COVID-19?

AW: I think it's all like completely different. And I think that like just being in the Midwest that's like, people like are very, like family oriented. And I think that as like somebody who's like the son of like two immigrants who doesn't have like extended family here, or like, really family outside of my immediate family here, it's like, it's been really interesting to see because I think a lot of it's really straining for people not being able to see their extended family, and not being able to see friends and all of that. And I think that that's been one of the biggest differences between like me and a lot of other people where it's like some people just actually like a college, some people really need to go home regularly.

audio cuts out and video freezes for a few seconds

CP: I'm sorry that cut out again.

AW: Not were good. But nah I was just kind of saying that. Like, I think that, especially like in college, a lot of people really do feel a need to like go home regularly and to see their parents regularly and to like have those, that intimate time with them. And I think that having that being constricted has been really hard for people and I think in a lot of ways that's one way where a lot of college students have been compromised a lot like a lot, where like a lot of people will just traveling like hours between here and home and it's like kind of a necessity now that things are constrained and that especially for students, it's a little bit more mentally taxing. But like that's just never a concern that I have to deal with because I don't really have extended family here. I don't have like those strong like familial connections, even with my immediate family. So, in some ways, like I'm pretty comfortable just staying in Eau Claire and like visiting like, occasionally, like maybe like every once every other month. But yeah, I think that's the big thing, because obviously you have people who just don't take it seriously or take it to like with varying degrees of seriousness. But I think in the ways that we're trying to cope with like, the mental strain of it, seeing the way that people like interact with other people, how they feel about social gatherings, all kinds of relates directly to how they form the relationships and how they feel about their families.

CP: So, seeing these new perspectives, and seeing how people have responded, how do you think that has... What like, what perspectives and... has that given you about someone else's life,

and what do you think that their response COVID... How do you think that shows, um, about their personal life or their, um, how they deal with society, or interact with society, and just their beliefs, I guess?

AW: Well, I just remember, like, even like pre pandemic, I like there were just some experiences that were like, just totally foreign to me. And like some social interactions that were totally foreign to me, like I remember I went with my girlfriend to go to like one of her brother's like lacrosse tournaments, and then just seeing like, how intimate like all the social relationships were even like, with her as a sister, with her brothers, teammates, parents, and all of that all those interconnections and how, like, seeing those people was like a healthy thing, and like a productive thing for her. Whereas like, that was just never something that I experienced. And then it's like, you think about it, like in the lens of the pandemic, where it's like, those things are restricted now. And you can't just go up like every weekend to like x tournament, or to see so many people. And I think that in a lot of ways, as somebody who is like a first-generation immigrant and kind of, in some ways, like informed me about a lot of people's like Midwestern experience, or a lot of people my age, at least, where it's like, those community connections I think a lot of people feel really strongly about and really depend on, just were things that were completely absent for me. And I think that seeing people kind of deal with having those things constructed has been really interesting. Just because, I don't know, it just seems like a totally different world when you step into it, and when you hear people talk about the things that they miss about it, where it's like, in a lot of ways, things haven't changed super significantly for me, where it's like, obviously, like on the weekends, you want to go out to like big social gatherings. But as somebody who's kind of like, introverted, at least as far as like social habits, and what I do on a day-to-day basis, it's like, it hasn't been an enormous change for me.

CP: Do you think that, uh, you, your friends and other people experiencing the pandemic, um, have come together on something that they're all struggling through together? And do you think that's build their relationships? Or have you had relationships become stronger now that COVID-19 has struck?

AW: Um, I think so. I mean, I think that you find people that you really rely on. And I think that during like, this whole period, it was just like, as you felt your circle, kind of like growing a little bit smaller, just because it's like, they're just some people where you really depend on like, seeing every day after class or walking like from Centennial, to just to like Davies, where it's like those interactions and like seeing those people in that way. Like reminded you of those people and like reminds you of those relationships, and like the things that you've like shared and the bonds that you guys had, well, you don't have that anymore, your circle kind of just naturally starts to get smaller. And I think that like, even though that's a bad thing with those people, we're better still, inside of that circle, you can have like those really intimate connections, because that's like, to an extent where I'll give them like a shared experience. And it's like a lot of people from different backgrounds, all of a sudden have like this one level of like commonality in their life overall experience and this one thing. And I think that obviously kind of just, it's like, some just dumb, small talk, talking points where it's like, how are you dealing with a pandemic? or How are you dealing with your mask, but I think that also allows for, like, an entry point into more intimate conversations about just how you're doing like, Are you being self-sufficient? Do you feel like things are productive now? And I think that that's allowed me to go, grow a lot

closer with like certain people, whereas like other relationships since like, honestly, almost been on pause.

CP: Do you think that as, um, COVID-19 dies down, if it dies down? It's increasing in some areas, cases are increasing. In other areas, it's declining? Do you think that those relationships will resume as they were before, or do you think that it has kind of impacted your friendships or relationships... indefinitely? I guess?

AW: No, I think like, in some ways, some of its like indefinite, and like some of it really just can't, like be brought back to the way that it was at the time just because especially if you think of like us as college students, like a lot of the relationships and ways we were trending socially, were very dependent on time. And like how much time we have available with certain people are just like, those like from March to like June, you were expecting to hang out with people who are probably not even in Eau Claire anymore, might not even be in the state of Wisconsin anymore. Like some of that time that was lost, and those relationships that you would have had time to build, but are like now gone, it's like, that's not something that you can really retain. But I think that like having this period to just reflect on those relationships has given a lot of direction, where I think in an overarching way, like relationships, like the ones that people might have had pre pandemic may resume, or relationships, like the ones that they were aspiring to build a resume. But specifically, some of those things just aren't going to be attainable, whether it's about time or place, or even just reflecting that you did that might say, whatever you want them to do wasn't really a healthy thing to do.

CP: How do you think that your relationship with your family has changed over the course of the pandemic?

AW: Oh, I think it's got brought me like a lot closer to my mom. And I think that like having... to, spend more closely with my hobbies. And I think like writing has been was one of my favorite hobbies. And I just love to write my free time. And I think being given a time to like, write and think thoughtfully and reflect on like, my relationship with my mom has been really important to me. And even though I haven't had the time to directly see her, I feel like, just in terms of our relationship, we've just made a lot of progress. And I think that we've come to terms with a lot of things almost in like an unspoken way. And I would say that that's one thing was just like, I really feel like from a family perspective on brought a lot closer to my mom. And like in in some ways it isn't as reflective, I think in some ways, like, with other relationships, like maybe with my dad, like I'm a little bit further off with my dad, then like I was like to begin with. But I don't think that that's just because like, like the relationship was like great. And like the pandemic ruined that if you know what I mean. I think it was more just like, time to think about like, what I want now as an adult and what I want from like, my relationships, my family, and then reevaluating that.

CP: How have you seen, uh, your friends react with their family members? Has there's been similar to your experience, or like, how have they varied?

AW: Um, I feel like a lot of people have probably gotten closer with their family. But it was just because like, I didn't really go home, like at all like from when, like the pandemic started. And

like, people were kind of leaving the dorms and everything or leaving, like their houses. Like they're off campus housing. Like I literally stayed like throughout that whole time. Like I didn't leave like when even they started consolidating people like I just moved from, like Towers to like, living in, um, what's the new hall? That's the hall that kind of sucks now? It's the new one that they just build.

CP: The Suites.

AW: Yeah, the Suites when I moved to the Suites, it's not great, side note, it's really not right. I don't like the Suites at all. But no, like when I like when I moved there, it was just like, still staying in Eau Claire. And then when she June hit was like moving into the house that I plan to live in off campus. And I, I think that like for a lot of people who went home, it was probably like, really, I mean, for some people, I'm sure it was really tedious to move back home and live their family again. But at the same time, I think it gave people a lot of time to just share with the people that they really care about, and the people that are important to them. Either way, it's like, you have that route, or I think that I know a lot of people who like have been dating for like multiple years now, like spending that close amount of time together with like their significant other, or like that has been really important and like even like forming a new family. So, I think that, in general, I'm sure for a lot of people that's been positive. Like obviously, there's those unavoidable, like circumstances where some people just don't have a safe living environment at home, and it probably was really detrimental to them to have to move back. But at the same time, I think a lot of people probably had a positive experience with their family because of it.

CP: So, you mentioned earlier that you had COVID-19 in early September, I believe, um, What was your experience with that? Like, what were your symptoms? How did you feel? Mentally how did you feel and what were your interactions like on a day-to-day basis?

AW: Honestly, I think especially I'm sure a lot of people like the low-risk category can kind of just like assent to this, it was just boring. Like I was asymptomatic for almost all of it. And like living in a house with like six other roommates. It was just me having to stay in my room just to make sure that even though they're at high risk because we share similar living spaces, that like they don't like that we try to like, minimize, like potential risk of infection for them. So, it was really just staying in my room the whole time for just 10 days. And I mean, I don't know, like me, there were some shortness of breath and stuff. But I just think like all in all, obviously, it was inconvenient, but it was like, manageable. Like, there was never a time when I just thought it was just so insufferable having to be by myself, but I think I was just lucky enough to not have to deal with any serious symptoms during the time.

CP: What were your roommates concerns? Like, like, did they worry more, err, worry greatly about it? Or, um, were they just kind of understanding and knew that they were in a low-risk category? Um, what did that look like?

AW: Well, I think that it was like, understandable concern about it, because like, at that time, almost every single one of them was working. And kind of going back to like, the conversation we were having earlier about, like essential workers was just like, nobody's ever really in the mood to take two weeks off of work. Like when they kind of are relying on like the paycheck to

pay for certain things. And I think that like, in the long term, it was just like, concern putting them in a position like an unfair position where like, they may have like, infected others, like without knowing, just because of like my infection. And I think that like, the stress of that, like, I'm sure was something that like weighed on them, that was really hard. And like, obviously, like, I like brought on like feelings for a lot of guilt, like for me, but it was like probably nothing compared to like the inconvenience that it actually brought them. Because like, at the time, it was up in the air and like with all of them work in different places. like you'd never know, like the policies for compensation that they have, like at different stores where it was like, I was lucky enough to have tested positive and being paid for like being paid for my time off. So, it really wasn't a huge deal as much as it was inconvenient for me socially. But at the same time, it's like their lives were kind of just put in limbo during that whole period.

CP: So, when you were sick with COVID, did you think that... did you feel not resentment? But did you feel that your roommates thought of you differently, in any way?

AW: Oh, I mean, honestly, it's like, I think that's something where it's like you always have an anxiety about it, where I think they all handled it in like a pretty positive way where I never really felt like there was any, like, over resentment or anything, but it's like, obviously, you worry. And it's like, obviously, a really, it'd be a human reaction for them to like, be resentful of having to like to alter their lives in a certain way where they can't leave, and they have to stay at home. So, I mean, I think it's obviously something that like I was anxious about during the time, but I don't know, I think I live with a lot of really good people. And I'm really happy with who I live with. And I think that... honestly, like, first, they were like, as empathetic as anybody could be in a situation where you really have free rein to not be empathetic, considering how like it affected their lives. Like I think I'm just lucky to live with good people where it was only something, I had to be anxious about and not have to, like, consciously navigate like overt resentment from them.

CP: Have other friends or family members that you've interacted with, um, have received hate or resentment while they had COVID? Or did they feel that they're estranged from their social group in any way? Or how did their relationships like that deteriorate? Or was there no deterioration at all?

AW: I mean, I don't know it for like a lot of people that I know, there was like a lot of deterioration. But I think that like... I mean, anything just like anything in handling the pandemic, I think, in some ways, it's... it's kind of like how you handled is indicative of how much you care about one dependent in general and one like other people. And I think that like when I had it, it was kind of something that like I had to come to terms with where I was just like, it's really easy when you're standing on the sidelines. And you don't have to deal with symptoms, you don't have to deal with like exposures to people, to say these things like say how much you care and say how much you're willing to do for it. But when it's like even the slightest inconvenience is put in front of you. I think everybody has that moment of contemplation where it's like, well, do I want to give on my social life for this? Or do I want to do X, Y, and Z. And I think that in those moments, you really have to be critical and be honest with yourself about how much you care about something. Because I think for a lot of people who have had it and who were like exposed to it in ways where like, they shouldn't have been doing what they were doing.

It's like, either you can take that time to reflect and change your actions because of it. Or you can just like admit that you don't care. And I think that like part of the process of educating people about it. It's like having them just like make that confession that they don't really care. And I don't know if it's as much like people being like, ostracized from like social groups as it is people just saying like, at least for the standard people that I hang around, like, I want people to be at this standard or to care this much about this. And if you don't meet that standard, then that's it. And I think it's just kind of hard for people to just say like, well, I don't really care about it, and then kind of deal with the repercussions of it, whether it's through their actions and showing they don't care about it or just actually verbalizing it.

CP: So, you talk a lot about people's empathy towards others, and how they respond with others who have COVID. Uh, what level of, or what degree of say does the government have in preventing COVID-19? Do you think that they have a strong impact, or is it up to the people?

AW: I think government does have a strong impact. Because I think that just like, I in front of fundamental standpoint of like leadership is really important, and how information is communicated is really important. Where I think that like, when you have government officials, like on an executive level, all the way like down to like a state level, just kind of minimizing like the impacts of the pandemic and the seriousness of it. Or kind of like juxtaposing, like people's health with like, the economy and like the structure of businesses when you do that. And you kind of are like a little bit ambiguous about how much you care how much people really matter to you. Or in some cases, just being really blunt and saying that, like the lives of the 1% of people who may die from it, even though that's millions of people isn't important to you, I think that like, it's extremely important for like the government to like, have a say in that and like, actually put forth the effort and the time to communicate that it is important. But at the same time, I mean, if some people don't care, like they're not gonna care, but like in the same breath, I think that like a lot of the ideas that you see swirling around people who don't care, are really just being parroted from like, just being parroted from government officials, where it's just like, some people are really just prioritizing finances is not serious, because we can't have an economy collapse, because of 1% of people dying when like, I don't know, maybe I think maybe I'm crazy, but I think even 1% of people dying might be a little bit too much if it's avoidable. You know what I mean?

CP: Yeah, I understand. So, how do you think the, uh, federal state and local governments have responded? Um, do you think they've responded well, or what do you think should change? And what do you think should have changed in the response, in the past? Or what do you think they should do in the future?

AW: I don't know. At this point, like, I just wonder if it's like, really too late, like incorporate, like, any, like major policy or any major standards or procedures for it, just because you saw all of those countries that went into like, immediate lockdowns, where testing was made, like readily available, like right away. And it was something that was like prioritized, and not kind of like, undermined by leadership. And I think that like, part of me almost wonders if it's like, more kind of point of, like, pass a point of no return, where it's just like, putting forth policy to like, mitigate, like the effects of the pandemic, but like, not really having the opportunity anymore, now that were like seven months, and to just like, nip it in the bud, like faster, or within like, a

year to two years, sometimes I wonder if it's like, this is gonna be like a three year thing where like, we're not really going to experience normal for a while.

CP: So, how do you find your sources? Or what are your sources for information on the pandemic? What do you trust? What do you not trust, and what various views have you seen, from your, where you gather your information?

AW: I think a lot of it is just really trying to get information as far as like, whether it's like advice for like just behavior on a daily level, just for like, cleanliness, social distance, and trying to get it just directly from like the CDC, like versus just trying to, like, hear it from somebody like on Twitter, or it's just like, I think at a time like this, you really have to rely on those organizations that were put in place for these situations. And that it's not going to do much use, like listening to somebody else's opinion on when it's safe to like, come back to work or go back to this place. I mean, I think when you're hearing from like your local health officials, like even when you do have COVID, about what they want you to do, like policies as far as like isolating and going out, like just listening to it and taking it it's worth and then understanding that you're being given those instructions, whether it's from the CDC or from like local health authorities just to do those things for the benefit of others. And then it's not just about yourself. I think that really listening to those direct sources is honestly the best thing a person can do.

CP: Do you think that any of the sources you follow um... leave out topics or they don't cover certain things? And what are those topics that they leave out? Or do you think they did a pretty good job? And what do you think they covered well?

AW: Well, I think that like in grander discussion about like, like, just like just this course about the effects of the pandemic. And I think that, I mean, I think listening to both sides is important. But at the same time, I think that we kind of have like, some people just have a really narrow view, about like, what the effects of the pandemic are, when they're just really fixating on like survival rate and all of these things and not realizing that like, even as it has like a huge effect on the economy, it's just like people's personal finances are really in jeopardy just because of not being able to work and having like moratoriums on evictions, like almost being up and like, we're gonna have like a huge, like homelessness crisis, and people dealing with unemployment and being furloughed and all of these things, but I think that, like, there's just a lot of fixation on survival, right. And it's not serious, because like the mortality rate of it isn't that high. But at the same time, I think that even as people are trying to, like make these like brand appeals to like people, like in a big overarching way, whether it's like talking about the economy or talking about like individual health, I think that like, a lot of like, the narratives about how it's really affecting people, people's lives are being lost. And I think that I think it's really easy to fixate on, like those grand overarching things like mortality rate, and about like businesses closing, but not on the fact that like, you can't really Undo, like 1000s of dollars in medical debt when somebody who's uninsured has to be put on a ventilator for X amount of time. And I think that like as we get further and further away, and like, view abstractly, in terms of like economic success, you really kind of lose touch with like, the actual people that it's affecting. And I think that in some ways on both sides, and more, but I think a lot of ways more unlike people who are denying, like aspects of like the pandemic, I think they're kind of losing that focus on people.

CP: So, do you think that COVID-19, uh, will cause a drastic change in the way people look at personal hygiene or sanitation?

AW: Maybe I mean, you'd like to think so. I mean, if you really think about it, it's like, if you feel like you, whether it's like the flu, or even just like a common cold, or you just feel sick, I mean, I don't know why after this, it would be unreasonable to like expect a person like that to wear a mask, just like other people's protection. And I think sometimes you can wonder how commonplace it will be to wear a mask after this. But I think that like, in the end, like it's probably going to establish like habits that are really just going to be good. In general, whether it's like at a retail store, just regularly disinfecting stuff. And like whether it's having hand sanitizer happening, like materials to disinfect stuff available, or whether it's just like limiting direct contact, and introducing like more ways, like good goods and services in a contact was way I think that like a lot of the changes, like from like a structural standpoint, and even like all the way down to personal hygiene, I think a lot of those changes can be good.

CP: So, I have one more question here for you. Um, is there anything else that you'd like to touch on any other topics that you'd like to share? Or before I finish up here, or we finish up here?

AW: Um, no, I think we've covered like most, a lot of the bases. Yeah.

CP: Alright, so the final question I have for you here is, knowing what you know, now, after all these experiences you've had, and all the experiences that you've heard, what is one thing that you want to share with everyone else to keep in mind for the future?

AW: Man. That's a big question. I don't know. I just think it's just in general, I think it's just to not lose touch with the way that this pandemic is illuminated. Just many of like, the crises that like are facing our country right now. Whether it's from like a healthcare perspective, from a housing perspective, I think really taking the time to just notice how certain things can collapse just collapse just like that, when something unforeseen happens, and I think that really taking the time to be critical of certain aspects of our country, and certain policy, I think, is a really important thing, because even though things are like failing, obviously, and like these extenuating circumstances, some things are just failing, when things are supposed to be running like they should be, and when things are normal, and I think really viewing those things critically is going to be important in the long run. Especially to help unavoids, like avoid such a situation like this in the future.

CP: Thanks so much, Anthony. I really appreciate it. Um, time is 6:39pm. interviews over. Um, yeah, that was great. Thank you very much.

AW: Yeah.