

Interview with Joseph Joseph

Ashley Tibollo 0:05

Today is July 24th 2021, it is 6:50pm My name is Ashley Tibollo and I am in interviewing Joseph Joseph. We are at Sweet Jenny's in Williamsville enjoying some ice cream and now doing this interview. Joseph, this oral history is being recorded and will be included in a publicly accessible database. Is that okay?

Joseph D. Joseph 0:39

Yes.

Ashley Tibollo 0:42

Okay, so what is your name? And what are the primary things you do on a day to day like your job, extracurricular activities, etc.

Joseph D. Joseph 0:53

My name is Joseph Daniel Joseph. I am a martial arts instructor. And spend most of my days training, cleaning up my school preparing for teaching classes at night and relaxing at home, I guess.

Ashley Tibollo 1:12

K, okay. And do you have any extracurricular activities or hobbies outside of your job?

Joseph D. Joseph 1:20

I do. I play board games on weekends. And I have a hobby of 3d printing and painting models that I've read.

Ashley Tibollo 1:31

Hey, and when you first learned about COVID-19, what were your thoughts about it? And how have your thoughts changed since then,

Joseph D. Joseph 1:41

I was actually the beginning of the pandemic in Thailand. And I came home and then two weeks later, the airport shut down. So I've missed much of the initial kind of hype, I just kind of had the kind of the fear of, oh, gosh, I was in an airport when this all went down. So I guess there's there's a bit of panic of my own personal safety for my sister safety for my family. For my students, because I came right back what went back to work didn't think much of it learned about the pandemic, and COVID, a couple days after I got back from Thailand. So there's definitely was a bit of fear from there and that preparation, I guess, I was prepared to do whatever I had to do.

Ashley Tibollo 2:33

And if your thoughts sort of changed since that initial panic, um,

Joseph D. Joseph 2:41

no, I concern myself quite a bit with well being of others and my students and my family. So I don't wanna say that I'm on the edge or living in fear or anything like that. But I've definitely been careful. I've only very, very recently begun to like, step away from mask wearing and public or anything like that when I'm outside. So I think for the most part, I've remained careful and concerned with other people's safety in regards to my own actions. I don't want to endanger someone else because I'm being foolish.

Ashley Tibollo 3:17

And, presumably, COVID-19 affected your job. If so, in what ways?

Joseph D. Joseph 3:25

it's probably the worst year for my job period ever. Since I teach martial arts, and that's a hand to hand, close range, fighting sport, a lot of what I did had to be radically, radically changed. We started teaching virtually, which was a challenge for everyone involved. I can't even say I had it harder than the students being on the other side of it, it also is just painful to try and learn something through a screen. So my job definitely has been changed. Even now that restrictions are lifted, we're training back in person, only very recently to return to what is like a sense of normalcy a year and a half later, really. So a lot of things have drastically changed.

Ashley Tibollo 4:18

Um, did COVID-19 change your employment status at all during that time?

Joseph D. Joseph 4:23

I, I was unemployed for a while legally, but in order to keep my students I continued to volunteer my time and teach at the school. Because at the end of it all, I wanted to come back to a school I didn't want to come back to an empty place. So it didn't really effect the fact I stopped working. Just the fact that I stopped receiving the benefits of my job.

Ashley Tibollo 4:56

And what concerns you about the effects of night COVID-19 on your employment or the economy more broadly,

Joseph D. Joseph 5:06

the economy is a little bit more scary than my employment. If anything, it's made my employment feel more secure. Because I've learned that teaching online and learning online is not great for martial arts in general. So I feel a lot more secure about my job not being taken away by, you know, people trying to learn things on YouTube, or people trying to learn things through like an audio book or a program and sold online that I feel a lot safer about my job. Economically, though, I see, you know, I'm currently trying to buy a house, the market is completely backwards because of it. I like to do woodworking projects, and I can't justify going out and buying wood right now. So I think COVID-19 has scared me in the sense of like, how fragile everything is with shipping or things like that. Just the economy's a mess right now, I think.

Ashley Tibollo 5:57

Yeah, for sure. And has the covid 19 pandemic affected the employment of people, you know, and if so, in what ways?

Joseph D. Joseph 6:06

Um, yes, I don't have a ton of social friends who are really hit hard by the pandemic, a lot of people that I know, were either martial artists and they were in the same boat that I was in, or they were in jobs, they work from home. It wasn't wasn't too devastating. My father, however, works in catering. And I know that he has, and he still has a very hard time getting employees. So I do see the negative side effects of COVID? Maybe not just COVID? Maybe the unemployment benefits as well, were not helpful. But COVID in general, is not helped my father, with his catering business at all.

Ashley Tibollo 6:42

Yeah, I would imagine that since so many events were canceled. There wasn't a lot to cater during that time.

Joseph D. Joseph 6:47

It's not just that it's people panicked. And they pull their money out, and they ask for refunds and the deposit. So my dad nearly went bankrupt in the middle of the pandemic, because he had to shell out 1000s and 1000s of dollars for down payments for parties. And even now, you know, we're in what's today, July 27th? 28th?

Ashley Tibollo 7:08

July 24th

Joseph D. Joseph 7:09

July 24? not even close. In July 24. He still has next to no parties, even though this is the wedding season. He still has people considering pulling their deposits out for August and for September because of the potential new way. It's definitely put a lot of people on pins and needles and it's really stressed him and my family out

Ashley Tibollo 7:32

and has COVID-19 affected you or your families as day to day activities other than work.

Joseph D. Joseph 7:40

I don't live with my family anymore. I'd say My life is dramatically changed, beginning of the pandemic, my girlfriend moved in with me early on in it and our bond definitely grew a lot closer. However, we didn't really have a set plan or schedule. So everything we kind of developed, we kind of developed in quarantine. My father's schedule was dramatically changed as well since he had let go most of the staff. I know he spent a lot more time at his business back in the kitchen as opposed to his usual management desk job. So it's a big difference for him.

Ashley Tibollo 8:20

And what have you and your friends done for recreation during COVID-19?

Joseph D. Joseph 8:26

I go back to the previous question.

Ashley Tibollo 8:28

Yeah,

Joseph D. Joseph 8:28

I didn't answer all of it.

Ashley Tibollo 8:29

Sorry.

Joseph D. Joseph 8:29

I guess myself cuz I'm part of my family, I guess, you I spent I spent a lot of time I spent less time on my feet. I used to go to the school clean in the morning, train in the morning. Go teach classes and I was very active and very mobile. Before the pandemic and during the pandemic, I spent a lot more time on my computer answering emails, answering questions, watching students videos. So myself personally, I spent a lot of time sitting. And that was a huge lifestyle change for me is being more attached to my computer. And not in the fun ways just out of necessity.

Ashley Tibollo 9:11

Yeah, I think a lot of people felt that.

Joseph D. Joseph 9:15

I'm sorry, what's the next question?

Ashley Tibollo 9:16

Um, oh, what have you and your friends done for recreation during COVID-19

Joseph D. Joseph 9:22

so during the quarantine I when I was up to it because I was so sick of my computer some days. My girlfriend and I and my friends and I I can't exactly where this all sits. It's all been a blur this last year. I played a lot of video games with them. I spend time with people online for the best of my ability. I did spend a lot of time in quarantine actually in quarantine. I didn't really see a lot of people during the time when I when things got a little more relaxed or when people could trust, people who were quarantined as well for As long as I did, I still went out and played board games. And I still went out and would throw a frisbee around and be out in the sun a little bit. But for the most part, I spent a lot of this at home with my girlfriends, playing board games, play video games, get to know each other. Yeah, do a lot of cool stuff.

I was one of those people.

Ashley Tibollo 10:28

That's fine. And moving on to sort of a more community oriented line of questioning how has the COVID-19 outbreak affected your community?

Joseph D. Joseph 10:42

Are we talking about my community of martial arts, we talking about my community of like everything,

Ashley Tibollo 10:46

however you'd like to define it.

Joseph D. Joseph 10:49

I like to Section things off quite a bit. I don't talk to my neighbors, I don't live in the best part of town and my neighbors are just very different from me in general. So I didn't really see anything happening in my community. I know my Wegmans hours got changed and a lot more strict. But once the pandemic happened, I don't, I don't naturally trust people to look out for my well being. So I spent a lot of time away from people, myself personally in the area that I live in. And on the flip side, my martial art community, I think came together a lot of ways a lot of the students we kept and a lot of the people that I stayed in contact with or the pandemic are still going very strong in the school this day. So in some ways, I think it brought the community together and a lot of ways I think, it tore the community apart. Thankfully, a lot of the stuff I've seen has been positive. And I've heard of negative things through the news or different sources of information.

Ashley Tibollo 11:49

Can you talk a little bit more about how you see people flowing together? And also how where you see them tearing apart?

Joseph D. Joseph 11:57

Oh, boy.

I think it all turns on personal beliefs. You know, there are definitely, you know, some issues I've had with management in my association and my even my employers where they don't necessarily agree with how serious that I think the pandemic is, early on in the pandemic, I lost a family member, a great aunt, who was going strong, and then was just one day gone. And I lost, a couple of close friends, they lost a couple people. So it kind of gave me a little a little shell shock, I guess. So when I you know initially met with people who had differing opinions, I was one of the ones that just I didn't want to put up with it. I didn't want to deal with it. And I saw that happening quite a bit of people who didn't believe in the virus believed it was a hoax, believe that the mass weren't important. The vaccines weren't important, whatever I see that was tearing people apart. But at the same time, a lot of you know positive things as well of people doing things together providing relief. As I said, I was in the 3d printing community. And during the beginning of the pandemic, even though you know, the supply chain was all messed up. A lot of

people went out of their way to buy extra filaments to produce things for hospital workers, to produce masks, not mass, but the face shields to produce mask extenders to give people a break on their ears instead of just having strings in the ears all day. There's, you know, communities and people who cheaply produced parts for last words here an intubater, not an intubater, what's it called?

Ashley Tibollo 13:43
The ventilator?

Joseph D. Joseph 13:44
Yeah, people were producing parts for the ventilators. So that was really cool to see worldwide, at least in the 3d, 3d printing community sense, chipping in and sending things to the hospitals and supporting our hospital workers during that time. That was cool to see.

Ashley Tibollo 14:00
So were these people in this 3d printing community? Were they like specialized individuals making these parts are they just like normal people who got the plans and use their printers

Joseph D. Joseph 14:09
totally random tangent then 3d printing community has definitely grown because you know, 3d printing is becoming more accessible to people in general households, because it's cheaper. A lot of people including myself, I got into this chain for a little bit. We would download a plan from online and then print the plan and then take it to a hospital. That was the end of it. We didn't have to design anything I wasn't spec,. I'm not specialized in 3d printing whatsoever. I know enough to follow instructions. I guess it's much smarter people than I produced the plan in the best ways they could and the cheapest ways they could and the quickest ways. the most Resource wise, I guess. I uh resource

Ashley Tibollo 14:10
efficient?

Joseph D. Joseph 14:13
that's the correct words. It's clearly part of the community that did something like that. I felt like, you know, in the middle of something where I was pretty much powerless or then staying home, I could at least help people that are out there dealing with it. That's really cool. It was really?

Ashley Tibollo 15:13
In what ways do you think COVID-19 is affecting people's mental and or physical health?

Joseph D. Joseph 15:22
I know working with kids a lot, working with adults a lot. Talking to a lot of people, as is my job. You know, I saw, you know, kids, definitely there was a rise in depression and anxiety and loneliness, a lot of kids, I used to have kids who would try and stay on line with me after classes for 15, 20, 30 minutes to talk. Because otherwise, they didn't really have a lot to talk to. So I

definitely think I definitely think there was a big rise in mental I don't wanna say problems. That's not the right word here, but just just issues for people. You know, we are social creatures by nature. And when you remove everything like that, I think it hurts even introverts. Sometimes it's completely removed.

Ashley Tibollo 16:14

I'm sorry. Just to be clear, what are the ages primarily of the children that you said adults to but other children that you are dealing?

Joseph D. Joseph 16:23

Yeah, so I typically, you know, I don't hear this in three to five year olds, three to five year olds, I don't think quite grasp the severity, sometimes of what was going on. I think they just listened what they were told. But um, older ones that definitely had more established friends, or they're used to seeing their friends and classes every day, they were the ones that are more open, to me at least, about the challenges they were facing. So ages, probably like six or seven. to maybe like 15 was usually my wheelhouse of who I talked to, with some teenagers, you know, some of my long term students who are in their 20s. They definitely as well were approaching me about this. The adults I kind of heard through the grapevine I very rarely talked to an adult about how they were doing. As I did not have a closer relationship with some of the adults that also trained in my school. But I definitely do know that 20 to like 8 range, they definitely, they had a hard time,

Ashley Tibollo 17:20

some cases was that difficult for you trying to provide them with counsel, when you're struggling with some of the same issues yourself.

Joseph D. Joseph 17:30

thankfully, you know, Janine, my girlfriend, she was around and she, if I was trapped at home alone, because I lived by myself, or just me and my very vocal cat, I would have gone slightly crazy. And she kind of kept me a little more grounded. I think in the my friends online, were definitely there to provide me with another voice other than my own. So I think I did better than some of the kids who might not have as many friends or as many of the resources that I have to reach out to people, you know, not having a phone or anything like that. But I definitely do think I definitely do think it was a bit of a challenge. I struggled. I wasn't perfect. You know, I definitely had moments a weaknesses. And there are moments where I think this is where, you know, we all tie back to like my community tying itself together again, we kind of suffered together a little bit, you know, and it definitely gave us a bonding moment. You know, we come back now we talk about these white belts or yellow belts are gonna have no idea the brand brand beginner newers they begin beginners that's the correct words. They're gonna have no idea what it's like to learn online and how much that just was terrible. It was just the worst. So it was good and bad. We definitely had somethin' to bond over.

Ashley Tibollo 18:44

You mentioned you're very vocal cat. How do you think she did during a pandemic? You said your girlfriend moved in so that was a must have a new for her.

Joseph D. Joseph 18:55

Wendy which is my cat's name, like Janine from the get go. So I never really had a problem with Janine and Wendy at the same place. Wendy got very, very comfortable having us around all the time. Which then when I went back to work, she liked less and she got more vocal and my cat is prone to anxiety. She's an old feral street cat that was in the shelter for a very, very long time went to a couple foster homes they didn't like her they send her back when I go on vacations more than three days at a time. She just has like physical like adverse effects. Or you know her eyes will swimming in water she'll have pus forming one of her eyes and would get the swell closed completely. So she got really comfortable. She just got used to me being around for almost all hours the day and I went I went back to work and I was in the school frequently. for hours and hours at a time. She definitely began to show some of those effects but for the most part, I mean Wendy's a cat. It as long as your meals got to her time she was okay

or when it should be okay.

Ashley Tibollo 20:05

Do you have any thoughts on how local state and or federal leaders have responded to the crisis?

Joseph D. Joseph 20:14

I mean, this is, this is a tough one, because you'll hear like a bajillion different news sources saying different things and claiming different things. I think things were politicized too much. I'm speaking freely. I think. I think we, you know, you should trust, trust the science, science kept people alive for a lot longer than will be around. I think. not pointing fingers there. But I think I think leaders in this country in this community could have done better supporting the doctors and scientists that came to the conclusion that we needed masks, and we needed vaccines, and we needed quarantine and social distancing.

Ashley Tibollo 21:00

Are you saying on a federal level or state level or all? Both?

Joseph D. Joseph 21:04

You see it, you see it both ways. You see it both ways. You know, obviously, we had a big, huge problem with the last presidential election and comments like that. You've seen a big huge problem with that with even things like our Gosh, knows that almost titled governor mayor, Governor

Ashley Tibollo 21:25

Cuomo?

Joseph D. Joseph 21:26

Yeah, yeah. Governor, I don't know if I'm allowed to say names here. So I'm just keeping a real kosher.

Ashley Tibollo 21:31

You are definitely allowed to say names.

Joseph D. Joseph 21:34

I think our you know, I think our governor, you know, he didn't start off the strongest. I think he had a lot of good things in the middle of it, but I don't agree with everything he did. And unfortunately, as a quarter quoting, finger quotes here, leader in my small little school, I'm a big believer in leading by example, and a big believer, like, if you're gonna ask them to do it, do it yourself. And I don't think that was really well done by political figures. At this point time.

did that answer the question?

Ashley Tibollo 22:08

It did answer the question,

Joseph D. Joseph 22:09

let's try not to rag on anyone too much.

Ashley Tibollo 22:13

Backing up a little to the beginning of what you were saying. You were talking about, like news sources? What were your primary sources of news?

Joseph D. Joseph 22:23

So as embarrassing as it is, my primary source of news were things that Google sent me, Reddit, which is not a good news source at all. Definitely not. It's very it's very, it depends which side of Reddit you're on. But you can be very conservative, very liberal. atheist religious, like it's, it's, it's a mess on Reddit. So definitely learned a lot of stuff there. It's a lot of conflicting views, which was, I think, I think, you know, conflicting, conflicting views is always great. Because you just listen to one side of a story, you never get the full picture. I did learn to dislike the typical news sources, as they tend to be very leaning one way. And I've learned early in this, like, there's definitely like a shot culture in the world right now, where the headline that get you to turn your head the quickest or get you to click the quickest is the one that they choose. And I've definitely picked out a bunch of, again, finger quotes here, news sources, where after reading the article, the article doesn't even relate to the headline. So between, you know, Reddit, and like news that I was like reading news, websites, and then um radio, those are my major ones, for sure. but A little bit of everywhere. Thankfully, Reddit is a lot of a lot of different places kind of coming together. So I think it's a pretty diverse pool. But it is, it is just Reddit. So

Ashley Tibollo 23:57

In just sort of wrapping up everything here. Has your experience during this pandemic transformed how you think about your family or friends or community? And if so, in what ways?

Joseph D. Joseph 24:12

Again, very positive or negative things that happened after this pandemic, I grew closer to some people. I grew way closer to Janine faster than I think ever would have grown closer to her. My family and I you know, I learned some stuff in my family that I necessarily didn't want to learn. I learned some things about my my employees and co workers and people in general that I didn't quite care to learn. And you know, some ways it's good some ways it's bad. I think. I don't associate with some people now, after seeing how they handled this pandemic. For sure, I just straight up cut some people out. I left Pretty big, pretty big believer in and caring about the people next to you and supporting people next to you, I don't think I don't think it's okay for you to lift yourself up and push people down or you know, push people down to lift yourself up however you want to word it.

So it's a tough question. We got me on this one I hear I got to reread it because my brain is rambling.

Yeah, it's transformed things. I've just I'm disappointed in a lot of people. I think I'm disappointed in a lot of a lot of the community, a lot of people and how we as a community are not getting together. And you know, overarching USA, the north, the South, Republican, Democrat. Its such a huge political divide now? I'm really disappointed at how everyone's kind of like, handling themselves in this and no one's no one's free. No one's no one's been perfect. It's just, I think most I'm just disappointed.

Ashley Tibollo 26:01

I 100% agree. Yeah. And my final question for you is knowing what you know, now, what do you think that individuals communities or governments need to keep in mind for the future?

Joseph D. Joseph 26:17

I think, oh, boy, I've doing this for a while. I'm doing good.

I think education, I think educating people, I think, unfortunately, it's such it's such a huge societal problem, like it's never going to be solved. unless some huge, huge, huge major reforms happen. Like, like there needs to be. I didn't notice start learning to be reformed, like, new sources, not trying just to get views and clicks and likes or that won't happen, because that's how they make their money. And that's how they sell their stuff. But the misinformation is crazy. People not educated themselves is crazy. I mean, this whole pandemic, you know, if I didn't read something Janine read something and told me about it. She is huge on researching things. So I learned so much about pam, you know, not pandemics in general, but the virus and vaccines and you know, there's the stock market crash, the stock market in the middle of all this wasn't a crash. It was the GMAT thing, the game, The Game Stop thing. I learned so much like about it, that I had to go and research myself and I just wish, I wish other people I wish people in general would just remember to like, go and do some research, like don't trust anyone to think for you don't trust people to know what's best for you or know, what's best to put in your body or whatever. I think. I think that was my big way of cause. I think education needs to come back to

being a forefront in America. So I just felt like people were making uninformed dumb decisions, and not really knowing things. Even even even my bosses are very smart people. They were so into conspiracy about vaccines, and I just wanted to like, I wanted to like read them by the shoulders and shake them, and say that not how vaccines work. Like that's not what they're designed to do. So I think, you know, education, working on the younger generation. I think that stuff's really, really important for this.

Ashley Tibollo 28:25

Well, thank you so much, Joseph, for your interview for contributing to the archive it is greatly appreciated.

Joseph D. Joseph 28:33

My pleasure. I hope I didn't ramble too much.

Ashley Tibollo 28:36

No, no, it was great. So have a wonderful day and stay safe. Thank you.

Joseph D. Joseph 28:41

You too.