

Community Conversations NJYSA COVID-19 Storytelling Project
Participant 492: Dwayne Robinson, Jr.
Interview conducted by J.W. on March 19, 2021
Transcribed by W.T. on June 9, 2021

00:00-01:19

Interviewer: I might need you to really speak up here with the wind and everything, but—

P: Alright.

I: Thank you so much Dwayne, for taking the time to share your experience during COVID with me today.

P: No problem.

I: Just to kinda start, I wanna invite you to talk a bit about how COVID-19 has impacted your life and what's really changed for you going back to March 2020?

P: Uhh, March 2020 was a lot. Umm, I had my child, uhh, at the end of March 20-nine—uhh, March twenty-ninth I had my child. And umm, it—it was—it was pretty hard, umm, being like—being a parent during this whole thing, 'cause it was—it's already new to everyone and being a parent is new to me because I—'cause—

I: Mmhmm.

P: Everything's new, so. It kinda hit me uhh—like a—pretty hard. But umm, I did get to spend a lot of time with my child, as—as far as umm, as far as like the—the positives I got from this whole situation.

I: Absolutely.

P: Umm, 'cause uhh, we had to shut down our—our center today—or, not today—but before we had to shut our center down so I got to spend time at home and everything. So that's—that's a positive, but uhh, it was—it was a little hard just because we couldn't take our child anywhere, like she couldn't—she can't see any of her family, and that's—that's a really big thing. 'Cause I know—I know they do want to see her and everything and her birthday's coming up.

I: Yeah.

P: It's—it's been a whole year! [laughing]

I: (inaudible 01:17)

P: It's still here!

01:19-02:24

I: Like I know they're callin' the—like new generation, like 'Generation C' 'cause they were born during COVID, but—

P: Mmhhh. [heavy exhale] Phew!

I: Wow, that must've been very difficult.

P: Yeah.

I: Can you tell me a bit about any resources that you have been able to rely on—I mean taking care of your new baby, or—you know, like who—who was there for you during that?

P: Umm, my—my—my family and my fiancé's family have been really—really, uhh, have been a really big help.

I: Mmhhh.

P: My church and community, they've helped—they've helped out a lot. We have our giveaway that we have every single week and I personally haven't had to get (sic) grocery shoppin' in a while! [laughing]

I: [laughing] Nice! That's definitely a plus—yeah!

P: Mmhhh.

I: Absolutely.

P: Yeah.

I: Umm, and so those are definitely some massive challenges and—and I see that you've been addressing them and you've had some support from your family and community. Umm, was there any kind of digital resources or technology you've really relied on during this time and especially, ya know, navigating this new—this new experience for you?

P: Yeah, FaceTime has been used a lot! [laughing]

I: Mmhhh! [laughing]

P: A whole lot! That—that—that's the main way that my family can see my—see my daughter and everything.

I: Yeah.

02:24-03:24

P: They can—they can see her on FaceTime and she get's so excited she'll take my phone and [laughing] I had to figure out a way to have to lock it when I—I'm on FaceTime so she can't—

I: [laughing] (inaudible 02:33)

P: Yeah!

I: She must be so smart already!

P: She gets very excited to see everybody and—

I: Aww!

P: And it's good to see how—'cause she got so much personality and—

I: Yeah!

P: Everyone gets to see her through FaceTime. And umm, those Zoom meetings, they—they help out a lot because we have a nurse that umm, that talks to us all the time about Riley. Yeah, her name's Riley.

I: Aww!

P: But umm, they—she talks to us about Riley, how she's growing and everything and we talk to her through Zoom meetings—she used to come and umm—when my fiancé was pregnant she would come and talk to us like face-to-face but then everything happened so we had to switch her over to virtual.

I: Yeah, so all your visits, umm, during that time, like leading up, that was all virtual too.

P: Yup! Uhh, up—no—up until uhh [pause] actually once we had the baby it was—it all went virtual 'cause that's—

I: That was like right it!

P: It happened right—right, yeah. 'Cause we closed down, umm—we closed down the day before we had our baby.

I: Wow.

P: Yeah.

I: That's like, a lot.

03:24-05:04

P: Yeah, it's a lot.

I: Definitely. Umm, so, what have you really been able to kind of trust? I know you said that you have these conversations with healthcare providers, umm, just as support—but is there kind of like, news or online resources that you've been able to trust just to kind of figure out what's going on and (inaudible 03:43).

P: Umm. I—I haven't—I haven't really wanted to trust, uhh, anything comin' a—because—like this is all new to everyone still.

I: Sure.

P: So just like it's new to me, it's new to everyone else that's also reporting the news, new to all the doctors and everything.

I: Mmhmm.

P: They're still experiencing everything as everyone else is doing for the first time because a lot of people haven't even been—like in this world, a lot of people haven't even been around for anything anywhere close as big as like this, as far as healthcare-wise.

I: Absolutely. So it's like so new to everyone.

P: Yeah!

I: Just like—yeah. Absolutely. Can I ask you too about, you know, there seems to be like—you've had some joyful moments, but is there anything that's really disappointed you, during this time? Or anything that you didn't expect that surprised you?

P: Umm, I—I honestly didn't expect it to be this long. I—I really wish it hadn't because, like I said, I'm—it's been a year and [laughing] and my daughter can't even see—see anything really!

I: Riley's first birthday's coming up! This is already here, yeah!

P: Yeah, we been plannin' that actually umm—as we speak—I was—I was just in there plannin', umm—I had to make like a nice little card to send out to our loved ones and a letter from Riley. It like, states like, 'Hey, I wish that I could see you guys and we had to send you guys my—my wishes and everything,' and hopefully she'll be able to see everybody soon and, yeah. We had to—

I: Aww, that's so (inaudible 04:58). That's so incredible that you're still able to connect and the love is—is so much there.

05:04-06:44

P: Yeah.

I: Absolutely. And so, how do you feel about the vaccine? When that's made available to you is that something you're gonna choose to receive, or?

P: Umm, I honestly do not—I'm not— not a big fan of vaccines.

I: Mmhmm.

P: Especially this one right here. Let's just put it—like I said before, it's a—it's very new. It's not like the flu where it's like it's been years and years (inaudible 05:28), it's still new to everyone.

I: Mmhmm.

P: And I—I wouldn't want to expose myself or my child to anything that new before we see—before I can see tests and (inaudible 05:40) and everything, but—

I: Yeah, I definitely hear that.

P: Yeah, it's a little too early for me.

I: Little too early. Still too much that is unknown.

P: Yeah.

I: Absolutely. And so can I ask too, ya know, is anybody, like—do you feel like anyone's been left out of the pandemic just in your community, family—like, anything that New Jersey really should've done better to focus on making sure peoples' needs were met?

P: Umm, I—I—I personally can only speak for my community and we (inaudible 06:12) awesome job through this whole thing 'cause my—my aunt, the pastor, she um—she—she's been men—like we—we have so much more food comin' in through this pandemic than ever before, and we're having multiple giveaways for everyone. Every single week, like—we have—we have this really big one that comes, we have paper products, soap, toothbrush, toothpaste and everything! It's—

I: Looking at this set-up, it's incredible.

P: Yeah. And this—this not even a big one today. [laughing] (inaudible 06:38) we could feed the whole community, like just through our program—we feed—like we have other churches that come around and everything.

06:44-07:47

I: Yeah. When did it kind of all start? Like, you know, or in—in the pandemic, like did you see a new—like did more people kinda come during that time, or?

P: Umm, yeah, they—yeah, it start—everything started rollin' around 'cause umm, stores started closin' and umm everything started flyin' off the shelves—toilet paper and everything!

I: [heavy exhale] That toilet paper is the theme of this pandemic, I tell ya! [laughing]

P: Goodness! I had never thought that toilet paper would be as valuable as gold out here.

I: I've never seen it, I'm telling you!

P: Yeah.

I: And so, thank you again for your time today. Just as one last kind of question, is there anything you'd like to share that you think people should know, umm, that I haven't asked you about?

P: Umm, I—I would just say try to make the best out of the whole situation. Just—we gotta make lemonade out of these lemons, 'cause this is—this is something that we're gonna to be dealing with for a—probably decent amount of time still too. I would just say try to make the best out of it because—it's like I said, it—it—it hits everyone else different, and we just gotta help each other out. We gotta stick together too. That's our main thing.

I: Absolutely. That's—that's it. Thank you so much for your time, I'm gonna stop recording.

I: Alright.