

**FROM ME TO YOU  
A COVID-19 ORAL HISTORY PROJECT  
MT PLEASANT, SC**

**Oral History Interview**

**by  
COURTLAND SUTTON**

**April 29, 2020**

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**A COVID-19 ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

NARRATOR: Courtland Sutton

DATE: April 29, 2020

PLACE: Mt. Pleasant, SC

**SUMMARY KEYWORDS**

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**Courtland Sutton** 00:00

Hi everyone, my name is Courtland Sutton, and I'm a first year MFA student in film at American University. Professor Laura Waters Hinson invited me to be a part of this project.

**Courtland Sutton** 00:12

So when I think about how COVID-19 has affected me, personally, I actually am at home in my front yard of my childhood home. I get being inside of my apartment, not being able to hang out with friends, not being able to go wherever I wanted, go out freely, go to the movie theater. Just be out of my house as much as I wanted to when I wanted to really started to grate on me. And I do have a roommate but she and I, you know, weren't extremely close. So it was easier for me to come home and convene with my mother and father. You know, people that I love a lot and people that love me. People that I can hug, people that I can touch, people that I can, you know, share a meal with, hang out in the front yard with -- that was really important to me in order just to get that closeness that I was missing due to COVID-19. It was really, really hard for me so I decided to come on home.

**Courtland Sutton** 01:16

And I think that's particularly because I'm a full time student. I work a lot. And I was trying to decide, like, why is this so hard? You know, most of the time I'm saying I would love to have some extra time at home, I'd love to sit at home a little bit. Now all you get to do is sit at home. Why is this so hard? This is exactly what you wanted. But I think it's because that social aspect of school, a lot of my friends are there. I'm talking with classmates, I'm talking with, you know, professors or students in classes that I TA for with my co workers or with my boss. That is where I get my socialization from and my social activity from, and

without going to school, I don't don't have that. And, and so I just needed to get together with some people. And those people just happened to be my parents that I could have regular close conversations with.

**Courtland Sutton** 02:14

What has kept me going in this moment of crisis? I don't particularly feel like I can't go on, but I do feel really trapped in the sense of like, I'm just gonna be sitting indoors for a couple months. So what has kept me going is this idea that COVID-19 is creating a forced sense of rest. I'm going to finish my classes. I'm going to take a break for the summer and do what I can remotely from home and use this time as a blessing or as a gift to plan for the future, to do all those projects at home that I always never have time to, whether it's cleaning or, you know, getting my portfolio in order, updating my portfolio because that's never finished. I'm using it as as time to prepare. So that has kept me from feeling like all is lost. But also using it as time to rest because that's important too. And, and this is not a time for you to go go go go go go go go if you don't come out of quarantine with anything, any project if you don't create something while you're here, you wasted your time. I don't believe that. I'm just using it as a time to take some rest and then also to get done when I can. So it has really given me sort of an opportunity to pause.

**Courtland Sutton** 03:43

What do I hope we will learn from this crisis? So particularly Americans, I hope that we will learn that we need leaders who are competent. (There goes the wind... And a motorcycle).

**Courtland Sutton** 04:09

So I hope that we'll learn that we need leaders that are confident, competent, who are okay with predicting in their best knowledge, with their best knowledge, with experts, what's going to happen, and then being okay, strongly leading and putting their foot down and saying: "This is what we're going to do. Y'all have to stay inside until x date and whatever is left to clean up or fix when we come out, that's what we'll do."

**Courtland Sutton** 04:40

So I think, you know, hopefully we'll get some better competent leaders from this, we'll get a better social safety net. There are a lot of people, millions of people, who in the span of a month or a couple weeks have filed for unemployment. And I think America, because of that legacy and that history of bootstrapping, doesn't have a good sense of why a social safety net is so important and can be so helpful. So I hope that will... Sorry. I'm in South Carolina, so lots of mosquitoes. So I hope

that we'll get a sense of why a social safety net is both necessary and important, and why it should be an American thing.

**Courtland Sutton** 05:23

And I hope that we'll get a lot of compassion and understanding for our fellow citizen from this because a lot of people are facing things that they never had, they've never imagined that they would be dealing with. There are people in the restaurant industry who have largely lost their jobs if they can't, if they don't work in a restaurant, that does take out people who work in movie theaters. All of a sudden, you know, these jobs that are quote unquote low wage or only quote unquote deserve to have minimum wage, like people working at grocery stores, people working at gas stations, all of a sudden it is blatantly clear who helps keep the country running if it were to go down to its bare bones.

**Courtland Sutton** 06:05

So I think, well, I hope that we will come out of this with understanding for people who really do make the world go round. People who, you know, through no choice of their own, are on the front lines and are sacrificing parts of their lives for us. And I hope that it'll affect the way that we think about regulations, about rules, about laws, and about how we elect our leaders and what they do with the power that elections give them.