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## **James Cason, Oral History Interview, 2022**

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Interview with James Cason (JC) conducted on November 8, 2022 by EMU undergraduate JaQuan Brown for You Li's Journalism 313 course.

Transcribed by JaQuan Brown.

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JB: Hey. My name is JaQuan Brown. This is Tuesday, November 8th, 2022. I am here with James Cason for this interview. And before we start, James, I just want to make sure I got you to sit with these questions.

JC: Absolutely.

JB: Alrighty. So, um, so I had to start. I started off with a note prior to this. So we were talking about some of the things that you did when COVID had first started over prior to the starting and right when COVID that started in the first place, there was a whole you say, what was your biggest or most impactful game that you had experienced during the process of the pandemic?

JC: Okay. So just to make sure I'm clear, you're saying. I think you said before the pandemic. But you're saying. F as the pandemic began. Or.

JB: So to start it off right and right in the middle of it. Mm hmm. Well, would you. Would

you classify as your biggest or most impactful gain that you had experienced? Just like it was there before. Right. Right when it started. Or, you know, right when you know, everything got into the serious like that.

JC: Okay. Well, in order to talk about the biggest gain, I have to talk about the situation a little bit. So. Let's just go back to March of 2020. I think that's probably a good time frame. I was living in Cajamarca, Peru, South America. I was volunteering with the United States Peace Corps as a youth development volunteer and COBE. It happened. And so the organization decided to send all 7000 plus volunteers worldwide back to our home domicile. And so we were kind of like in a position where we were waiting on the final say as to when we were leaving, when we had to pack up our stuff, when we had to get to our agreed upon location to meet up, to get to a plane, to get back to the U.S.. And so. You know, my life was put on hold, you know, because I had really worked very hard to get to the Peace Corps. It took me probably about a year and a half, two years to even prepare for it. And then I get over there and after eight months of being there, Cobe, it happened. And so I had to come home. I came home to my mom and step dad's house here in Romulus, near the airport. And I had to quarantine 4 to 4. It was two weeks, one week. I can't remember. I think it was two weeks.

JB: I think if you were traveling, it was two.

JC: Yeah, it was two weeks. Right. And so I had to stay at a hotel up the street from our

house. And, you know, my mom came to visit me at the hotel, kept their distance in the hotel lobby, and then I finally cleared the two weeks and came here to the house where I was living. And within the lockdown with my family, you know, just the three of us in the household. So was me, my mom and my stepdad. And so at that point, you know, things were shut down, lockdown. So it just gave me really a lot of time to think about what Plan B was going to be. Now I'm kind of getting off track. You asked me what my biggest gain was from the pandemic, and I've had so many, and I think probably the biggest gain was something that I hadn't done or completed in the nineties, which was to complete my degree. You know, I decided, hey, this is probably the best time, if any, to go back to school. And so I would say my biggest gain was actually going back to when I actually went to Washtenaw Community College. I took several classes and then transferred over to EMU so that I could save money. And I transferred over to EMU in the fall or no, the winter of 2022. And I'll be graduating this December on the 17th with my bachelor's in communication and a minor in journalism. So, I would say that's probably the biggest gain from the pandemic.

JB: Okay. Okay. So you took something that really just stuck with you?

JC: Absolutely. It was. It's been something that's been like my Achilles heel. Like, you know, where I didn't finish college. And, you know, I've worked really hard and I've had some really great experiences and some great jobs and careers. But not having that degree has always been a challenge for me because I felt judged. I felt like I couldn't get certain positions because of it. And it's something that I felt like, Oh, I really want to finish this

one day, but I may not. So being able to do it is really an accomplishment. And on top of that, to add to that blessing is that I'm going to grad school and that's going to the program that I'm doing. It's an M.A. in TESOL. TESOL is Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, and EMU has a graduate program in that field. And the blessing on top of that is that the Peace Corps offers a fellowship for those who do the Peace Corps assignments. You can actually qualify if a school or university has a Coverdell Fellowship, you can apply for it and go to school for free. And so, I applied for the Fellowship at EMU for the graduate program, got accepted so I can go to graduate school for free.

JB: Oh, that's a major blessing. Yeah, that's amazing. So, like, even with the gains, leads me to wonder about the losses that you experienced. But I know you did mention that your gains outweighed your loss, something you would consider to be a loss that could have potentially, possibly have altered your mental state during the pandemic recession.

JC: Okay. So I think there's a couple of things in that thinking about losses, the obvious losses that I wasn't able to finish my Peace Corps assignment. Right. And so, like I said, I'd worked so hard to get there. I mean, the preparation, anybody that's gone through becoming a Peace Corps volunteer would know or be able to tell you that it is extremely detailed. There's so much paperwork, there's so many months that you're waiting to hear back. There's medical reports. You have to go see a doctor. You have to get physicals done. If anything comes back wrong, you have to go back and wait until certain results come back. You've got to get special passports. You've got to, I mean, it's almost like

you're working for the government. And so you go through so much to only get there to find out you can't finish your assignment. And so that probably would be my biggest loss was, you know, getting over to Peru, living with the family that I lived with, my Peruvian family, getting into my position, establishing relationships with coworkers at the school where I worked with my family, with my corps volunteer friends, and then not being able to complete my assignment. And so, a lot of people ask me, well, are you going to go back? And I most likely will not go back to the Peace Corps. I mean, so much time has passed by now since I've come back and gone to school and now, I'm going to grad school. There are other programs that I'm considering through the government. There's one through the State Department, which is similar to the Peace Corps, but it requires a master's degree. So, we'll have that in 2024. So, I may do that instead of going back to the Peace Corps, but that would probably be my biggest loss, is not being able to actually physically finish my two year assignment.

JB: Okay. Okay. Wow. And that's something that that can really, you know, detriment a lot of stuff not being able to finish an assignment like that, especially with you being there for like two years and stuff like that. And that would really. That will really, you know, detriment a lot. Well, so that leads me to ask you, what is something that you wish that you would have done at the start of the pandemic, that you would have seen or deemed as a major gain? So like in the beginning of the pandemic, what was something that you wish you could have done or would have done that you if you think about it now, if you would have started it, it'd be like a major gain for you in your lifestyle.

JC: Hmm.

JB: Um.

JC: I mean, the first thing that comes to mind is maybe I could have started going back to school a semester earlier. I've started. I came back in March. Right? Yeah, I came back in March. And then I didn't start at WCC until September. So I could have started in the summer semester. But, you know, I didn't. It was the pandemic. I really didn't know what I was going to do. I was really thinking about, you know, I started looking for jobs and then decided, hey, let me go back to school and started looking into it. But I didn't find the program and decide what I was going to do until a little bit later. So maybe if I had a. Gone back. I mean, I don't really think that that's that it would have been that big of a difference for me. I mean, I've just been three months ahead in my schedule. Anything else that I could have done different in a pandemic that would have created a different reality for me today? Uh. Uh. I really can't think of anything.

JB: Okay.

JC: Yeah.

JB: Okay. Okay. Okay. So then just thinking about, you know, the gains and losses. Like I

said, I know what we talked prior to this interview. You said that you got like 24 gains to ten losses. So then just thinking about those gains or losses, how big those gains or losses you experienced affect you in the household that you're in now?

JC: Oh, okay. Well, I think number one is being in this home has been really a blessing. And I keep using the word blessing because I mean it. It's it's. You know, having a home to come to and to be welcomed. To be here and to have my own room and to have access to a vehicle and to have the entire basement turned into my office study space where I am right now, to having loving parents that I've been able to spend time with. I mean, because the thing is, I've been on the road. I've been traveling internationally now for about eight years. And, you know, I come home for holidays. Sometimes it depends on how far I'm away and how expensive the plane tickets have been. Like, I didn't come home. China was too far, actually. You know, I did come home from China once. But I think between going from Africa, from Tanzania to China, I did not come home between that, but usually between the countries that I've traveled to, I've been able to come home, but I've spent a lot of time alone in these places, you know, being strangers to these places and living alone in these places. Usually, unless I've lived with a local family in some of the countries that I've been to, but for the most part I have spent a lot of time alone and so coming back home has allowed me to be with loved ones and to spend quality time with and to do things with me, me and my mom specifically, I'm an only child, right? And so being home with her has been a blessing and a godsend. We've been able to exercise and get out and walk in different parks and explore the city and travel around a little bit. So, you know, I think about coming home here to this household, those



have been the things that have been on my list of things that have been have benefited me. The gains that I've gotten from being here through the pandemic is actually spending quality time with my family. I don't think I answered your question.

JB: You pretty much answered it pretty [well]. But okay. So then I had to do it a little. So I backtrack here when I was mentioning your local family's, every time you travel to another country, so would you elaborate on that a little bit? What was your experiences with that? Okay.

JC: So let's see. Like I said, I've been traveling for the last eight, eight or so years in different countries, totaling probably eight or nine countries. So, let's say I'll give you a breakdown from. From. I started in Costa Rica. Where? From Costa Rica to Guatemala. From Guatemala I went to China. From China I went to Tanzania. From Tanzania I went to Santiago de Chile. From Chile. I went to Colombia. Where did I go? Ecuador. From Ecuador I went to Mexico. From Mexico I went to Peru with the Peace Corps and Peace Corps back here. So, I have been on the go for quite some time now. Out of all of those places, I have had the opportunity to live in my own apartment and many of them. But when I was in Costa Rica, when I first started this journey, I needed to live. I didn't need to. I chose to live with a local family while I took Spanish classes because I wanted the experience of living with a local family, you know, speaking the language with them, eating with them, traveling with them, etc. So, in Costa Rica I lived with the family and then where else? I had an apartment situation in Chile, and I had two roommates there. One was from Colombia, and one was actually from Chile. And then let's see where else I

had. And in Tanzania, I lived in a volunteer house, so there were other American volunteers that lived in the house. So, we cohabitated there. And then most recently in Peru, I lived with a local family in my city and there were two parents, a mom and a dad, and they had an adult daughter who lived on the coast who we would go visit and she just actually had a baby. So they are grandparents now. So living with these families, you know, it was great to be able to have some type of companionship, which I didn't have in most of the places where I lived alone. Oh, did you want to know something specific about families? I can't remember if you asked me some, so.

JB: It was kind of like your experience. And then it kind of got me wondering like did the experiences that you had with those local families to get to know the families and kind of being accepted into the family? Good. Did your time with them make you a little help, a little bit homesick, like did you miss your family here in Michigan, in the US or did even with you being homesick that they even, you know, kind of make you feel a little bit more welcomed in the sense like, did they do anything to kind of, like, cheer you up or make you feel like even though I'm not at home, I feel like I'm at home, you know? Yeah. Was anything like that as well, it being with those local families in your travels, huh?

JC: Good question. I'll go back to my family in Peru. I think one of the biggest differences from me and maybe others that have that I was with in Peace Corps, I was probably the oldest person in my Peace Corps group. So usually, the typical age range or Peace Corps are. Early to mid-twenties on the higher end of the scale, maybe 30. And when I was in Peace Corps, I was 48. So, they called me like, you know, the granddad of the group,

right? So, you know, I take that to say, you know, living in these homes with these extended families, it was a lot different than being 20, you know, in someone's home. So, I was respected, you know, as an adult male and appreciated for, you know, sharing my stories and, you know, where I've come from and had involved my family. Like I call my mom. My mom would know, you know, the people that I live with, and they would always send greetings to my mom and my mom would send greetings to them. And it was more of a culture share, you know, just kind of talking about where you've come from, who you are, what you like, what you don't like. And I'm a pretty picky eater. And so, you know, that was a big challenge, like living in different countries is especially living with a family because you don't want to offend the family by not eating their food. But at the same time, I don't want to eat certain things. And so, where a lot of those 21 year olds like yourself, you know, who are a little bit more adventurous and will eat anything and everything, I wasn't that guy. And so, I had to find a way to say, "Hey, I don't want to eat that," you know.

JB: Without coming off as disrespectful, right?

JC: You know, because you don't want to offend, but at the same time, you don't want to get sick. And so that was always a challenge. But, you know, I'm pretty strong willed and I'm kind. And so, I would just explain, I really don't want to eat that. I'm good. And, you know, once they got to know me, they kind of made jokes with it like, Oh, you're "quisquilloso" which is kind of like, you're picky. And I'm like, Yep, that's me. And so, they would say, "Well, what do you want for some fried chicken?" or "What do you want

some French fries?” “What do you want?” And I'm like, “Yeah, I'm good with it.” And so, you know, they got to know me, I got to know them. And as far as making me feel welcome, they, they, they always did. And I became a part of their family. And they looked out for me, you know, in a country that I didn't know much about and introduced me to people. And I felt like I had a really good social connection in Peru in that small town of like, I don't know, maybe a couple of thousand people lived in this town. Right. So, yeah, I think it was a good exchange and I definitely. As far as feeling homesick, yeah, you definitely get to that place where you do miss the niceties of home and like simple things like having a washer and dryer. I mean, all my clothes I had to wash and hang up and air dry. And, you know, I'm missing some dryer sheets on my clothes. But, you know, the small things, you kind of get over it when you're doing something for a greater cause. But yeah, you definitely get homesick, but they, they, they help me through the process.

JB: Okay. And then like another thing to, um, like kind of get sidetracked from like the actual interview interview. But I think I'm really intrigued about the story where it's like, what? So I know you committed cultures and everything else. So like, I know you just mentioned that you're also a black male, so I can tell you about your experiences of being a black male in those countries. And then also, were there any countries that you felt more akin to than other countries? You know, like, were there any countries that, you know, you felt a lot more welcome to and potentially want to go back to, you know, after you probably like retire or you just wanted to go just to visit, you know, where they're in the countries that you feel like, you know, like I come back here, like I may not stay for a

long period of time, like, you know, a couple of years, but I'll stay for like a couple of months maybe.

JC: Yeah, that's interesting. That's a good question. So, yeah, I've connected in different ways in each of the places that I've traveled. Countries that stand out in my mind are Tanzania and Colombia to name a couple. And I think when I think about the connectivity, it's always about the people, right? Because you can have beautiful places. You can have beautiful scenery, you can have great climates, you can have great buildings, you can have great activities. But what really stands out are its people, right? The countries' people and the people of Colombia. Have been more than warm and kind to me. They welcomed me. They really made me feel like I had a home. And at the same that I can say about Tanzania. Tanzania stands out in its own way, fashion and form, because I connected culturally with Tanzanians. I had family. I really felt like this is my friend. These are my relatives that I'd never met before. Like, wow, like I'm at school, but I'm like, with other blacks, right? And that's something that, you know, traveling around the world, oftentimes you don't connect with a lot of black people. And so to be able to be in another country with black people, working with black people, laughing and talking and celebrating with black people was really. Was really an awesome experience and I still have relationships with them until this day. Like I talk to them on WhatsApp probably a couple of times a week and several other people that I've worked with there. So yeah, I definitely would put those two countries at the top of my list.

JB: Okay. Okay. Yeah. Well, this is really amazing. It's really amazing to then finally it kind of

go back to the interview question. Yeah. You had a little bit. So like elaborate on what some of those gains and losses were that you had experience. You don't have to be truthful in depth if you don't want to. Okay. But anything that you feel comfortable with sharing with me. Just kind of elaborate on those gains and losses and the process that you went to when it came to those gains or losses. Like what? What did you do in those processes? You know, what did it do to your health, physically, mentally, spiritually? How does that affect anybody if it did affect anyone, household or, you know, friends or your lifestyle in general?

JC: Okay, fair enough. Let me give you one on each side. A loss and a gain. How about.

JB: That?

JC: All right. Okay. So let's start with a loss. A tactical loss would be having my own apartment. Okay. And so, like I said, depending on the country that I was in, I had different living situations even in the last situation that I had abroad in Peru. I had my mom and dad, that family situation there. However, their house was I don't know how to describe it structurally, but it wasn't your typical home that you would see in the U.S. It was maybe like a four-story situation. They lived on the second floor, on the third floor or a couple of rooms. And, um, on the fourth floor was like the terrace area where they did laundry and off the laundry area was my room and had a lock and key. And so it was kind

of like having my own suite upstairs so I could really be up there and not see them at all. Right. So, I still felt like even though I lived with the family, I still had the autonomy of my own space and place and the most beautiful scenery looking outside the window at the farm animals and just green pastures. And it was picturesque. I'm like, wow, this is amazing. So. So having that, I still felt like I got lonely, right? And so, you know, having my own place could be looked at as a positive, but also as a negative. But I'm used to I'm an only child, so I'm used to living alone and I'm used to being in my own space. So, returning home through COVID has brought me back home to my mom and stepdad's house, so I no longer have my own place. Once again, I told you, I have my own room. I have the basement where I have my office area and I have a vehicle that I have access to so I can get out if I want to. But it's still not having my own place. How did that affect me? You said mentally, spiritually, emotionally, yeah.

JB: But in the household or anything like that with the gains and losses. Yeah.

JC: You know, kind of like what you said in your interview, like having conversations on a phone, you know, being heard. I'm used to having my privacy of, you know, speaking freely and not that I'm talking about anything that's life or death. But just to know that you don't have the privacy of being in your own home when you're in your home, own home, you communicate differently, right? You speak louder, you talk louder, you laugh louder, and you just converse a little differently over phone calls. Whereas when you live with someone, you kind of mute yourself a little bit more. You're conscious of who's around you. So those kinds of things, you know, you just kind of adjust. You deal with

your circumstances and realize that this is a temporary period. Mine is going to be a little extended because I'm going to grad school, so I'll be here for two more years. But the pluses outweigh the minuses, if that makes sense, right? Like, I don't look at that as something that I can't live with. It's very comfortable for me here. So, you know, that would probably be one of the losses that would speak to me if I looked at a gain that I haven't already discussed. I would say getting my credit together, you know, this has been an opportunity for me to pay off some old bills, raise my credit score and watch it and continue to raise over this period of time. I've been able to, um, you know, I've gotten grants, I've gotten financial aid, I've gotten, you know, stimulus through the government and I've been able to save a little bit of money. So that definitely has been a plus. So that's definitely affected my, my, my mental state, my financial state, my, you asked about something you said was really important, more than more important than anything. You asked me about my spiritual state. And I'm a man of God. I'm a Christian and I love God. And so, this time, being home has allowed me to commune with him, that trust me, I've been living in all these countries and I talk to him a lot, you know, wherever I may be. But being here through the pandemic has given me just another avenue to coming to God in a new way, to trust Him in new ways, to believe in him in new ways, and to follow him in new ways. So this whole pandemic has really shown me how to walk in faith, you know, and it's and it's elevated my faith walk, if that makes sense.

JB: All right, let's just let it in. So I know. I know you said something like that. To stick out to me was the adjustment you had. So, like, would you elaborate on those adjustments? Like, how was the adjustment from, you know, the change for you with both the gains



and losses? You could do one of two on each side if you'd like. Well, just the adjustment on those gains or losses and the experience on that.

JC: Okay. So adjustments on a loss side, maybe the lack of ability to travel, though, would probably be a loss because I'm used to being able to get on a plane and go. And I guess maybe that I don't know. That's such a great example because I've still traveled. I mean, obviously, the pandemic finally let up and I was able to travel again and go visit my friends in California. My God, godson in California. I've taken a trip. I took a trip for my 50th birthday. We went to Greece, me and my mom and my aunt. We did that in April. So, I've gotten to travel. But in the beginning of the pandemic, maybe just sitting still in the house, you know, I guess I have become a homebody over time. So it wasn't that big of a challenge, but maybe just. Realizing, having to refocus and to realize, hey, this is a period of time where we're called to sit still, and we'll get through it and time will pass and you'll be able to travel again. And it did just that. And after time, things were lifted and travel restrictions were lifted, and I was able to travel again. So, I guess just being able to reevaluate what's important and what to do, what not to do, wait and move accordingly on the. On the gain side, I can say. Hmm. What is another gain that I haven't talked about? Because there were so many. I was looking for my list. I had written down some things, but I can't find my list. Gains. Gains. Gains. Gaines School was a big gain. Hmm. Maybe I had an internship. I was able to work this summer in a digital internship that I found out about through EMU. And I worked with a sports company. There's two brothers out of Austin, Texas. Who are they? They play sports. They play ball football in high school and college. And the CEO of this company at a startup decided that football

wasn't safe. And he wanted to do what he could to make the game safer. So he came up with this device that's used in the game of football. When people are tackling and learning how to tackle properly, this device helps them to keep their head up, which will minimize the number of injuries that they're experiencing in the game. And so, what this company is doing is trying to promote its product. And so, I was brought in to help them sell their product, promote the product, create a blog for them, which I did, and get the word out and try to connect them to some people in the Detroit area. So that was a big plus that came from the pandemic because I would have never done that had I not come home. And it was great because I was able to, to, to work with a company that was brand. It's not brand new, but it's a startup and they're out of Ypsilanti and I can't remember what I was asked to answer with that. Plus, what were you asking me about how it affected me?

JB: The the change, the, the adjust the changes with the gains or losses like the adjustment from, you know, traveling and then experiencing those gains and losses. You know, like I know how some people, when they get again, they can get very good rides in a group, you know. So I wouldn't say it's more like I wouldn't say it's like a no, ha ha, I got this and you didn't, right? Most people will be like then, you know, some people would. Me included, whenever we experience a loss, we kind of just shut down and we kind of give up on ourselves, right? So it was kind of like the adjustments that you've made when a pandemic started on receiving those gains and losses, and what did it do to you or, you know, your household or anything like that? I think you did. You did answer the majority of that. Yeah.

JC: The only thing that I would add to that decline is, I think I've continued to be grateful. I think that's the biggest thing. I've continued to be grateful for every gain that I've had, because I know that it didn't have to be this way. Right. And it really has been a blessing. I mean, I have gotten so many gains and I have not taken it for granted. I've been grateful about it. And I feel like I've taken these opportunities and done the best that I could do with them. Right. And I think that's all that we can do. We have to look at what we're given. Some things are good, some things aren't, some things are better than others. But whatever we have, what have we done with them? I think at the end of the day, that's what it really boils down to. What did you do with what you had? And I think that, you know, the internship, school relationships at home, all of those things equate to, hey, this is what I did with these. And I've done the best that I can or could, so I'm satisfied.

JB: Okay. Okay. And you get two more questions and then we're done. Okay. So the first question on those gains and losses that you experienced was something that impacted, you know, various things in your life. You know, like I know we kind of like answered the majority of this, you know, throughout the interview. But, you know, let's go on the funny side of life, you know, how did those gains and losses affect you financially? How did it really affect your daily routines? You know, like I know prior to COVID you we had like a strict routine on certain stuff when we did. How, how did those experiences alter throughout totality? And then when you experience as those gains and losses, how did how did though how how did that affected a little bit more in a sense, both financially and your daily routines and then those relationships with your friends that you've

mentioned in California and stuff like that or even outside of California, those relationships with that to just kind of elaborate on the impact that those gains and losses had.

JC: Okay. So, you know, I think. I think what comes to mind first is. The relationships, right? Like, I think about being able to spend quality time with my friends. I think about spending quality time with my family. I think about being able to go to a walk in the park with my mother. I think about being in Los Angeles to help my friends who take a vacation and leave me at their home with my godson to take care of him while they take a trip and spending time with him and pick him up and take him to school and go to the pool and go to the park. I think about connecting with old friends from high school that I haven't seen in 30 plus years that I've been able to reconnect with them being home in Michigan to support them. I saw a friend of mine, no friend of mine who is a teacher by day, but she's a performer at heart. And she actually sings and acts and dances. And we went to see a Little Shop of Horrors that we saw her perform in Royal Oak, you know, so just thinking about the relationships, I think that is like the biggest effect that the pandemic has had on me is an increased amount of time of quality relationships, because I've always been a a quality relationship guy. But I think the pandemic has even given me more of that, which makes me happy.

JB: Okay. And then the financial side of that, you know, how did how did those gains or

losses affect that or just the pandemic in general? How did you feel? Actually, like I know a lot of jobs had to be scored and had stopped. Did you have to go back home? Right. Like.

JC: How does it affect me financially?

JB: Yeah.

JC: It's been a blessing, you know, because coming out of Peace Corps, I was able to receive funds through the Peace Corps. Like I said, when I came back to school, there were grants available to me. I was able to get different opportunities. Like I said that the internship that I worked over this summer, I also had the opportunity to work for the campus newspaper when I was at WCC and I got a stipend for that. I've been able to get different grants and it's just worked out for me, man. Like it's is nothing but God, I really give it to him and I believe that God looks out for his children and and in and I know that it's a blessing and it's nothing that has to do with, you know, James, it's all about God. And I've received the benefit financially. I'm not worried at all. I'm not worried at all. So it's been a blessing. Yes.

JB: Mm hmm. Yeah. Well, you know, that was a real power that I also am a Christian, too. So just hearing that really, really, really put my faith in a man. So that was really blessed. Thank you for that.

JC: I'm glad you said that, because that was that was one of the questions that I had on my list that I didn't get to get to. In your interview, which is what did you have any faith that you adhered to in your journey and how did that affect you through the pandemic? I'm sorry I didn't get a chance to ask you.

JB: Yeah, okay. You're okay? Yeah. And I guess. Is that realistic? Yes, I am. I am a Christian. I did falter in faith a little bit. Like I'm not saying I didn't believe in him, but I do believe in a higher power and I do still believe in him. But it did. You know, after COVID hit, I didn't really go to church. Mm hmm. So then when, you know, it kind of lifted a little bit, we were going back to the church. I kind of feel out of place. And then with the congregation I'm in, really the only person that's in my age group, like everybody that was in my age group left. Mm hmm. Going back to fabrication, it was like just a lot of older people go and everybody was a no younger people saying, well, my brother, he's the only one at that church now. That's his age. Everybody else is, you know, 30, 40 years. Right. And he's the only, you know, nine year old. They're the only 21 year old there. Right. So really, no younger people. They're as they were when I was growing up. Okay. Lots of people left for school or they just left in general or they just followed the pastor when he left to find, you know, his own congregation. A majority of that went with him. And along with, you know, some people that were my age and younger people that was my brother's age were literally just me and him whenever I came back home. But I still believe in a higher power. Know if I know that all the stuff that I did, you know that I am blessed with received in my lifetime was in, you know, like you say, it wasn't all because of me. It wasn't just Jaquan. It was stupid, you know, because even with me now,

you know, I wrote the story of my heart surgery and everything else. So even with me breathing now, it was through him. It was in my power to my strength. It was the strength that he gave. He gave it to me. And yeah, even though I don't go to the physical church no more, no, I still do believe in a higher power. I still pray every chance that I get, even when I'm even now overwhelmed with life and school and everything else. I still do what I can in my spare time to just pray and just, you know, just tell him like I can't fight the fight no more. I need. I need to, you know. India will be my first test ball tour here and there. But again, I still believe that he is that naive and it's just like he doesn't have me. I know that he cares.

JC: And well, I think that this is an opportunity for us to both be reassured that he that He is in the mix and that this call has not happened by happenstance. How about that?

JB: Right. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

JC: Not it's not happenstance.

JB: In the midst of this, I started thinking I was like, man, if I was. But anybody else with a partner, I'm pretty sure they wouldn't have helped me as much as you could have.

JC: That's awesome. That's awesome to God be the glory for that.

JB: One last question. Okay, we're done. Okay. So final question. Did you gain a fear of

catching the virus? And then if you were to catch the virus, how would that have affected your lifestyle when it came to those gains? And then follow that question, how did that affect how would that have affected the losses?

JC: Okay. You're going to I'll start with the first part, but then you're going to have to take me back to those parts because I don't know if I'm going to remember more. Okay. So, for the first part, I did catch COVID. So, was there a fear in it? Sure. You know, masked up just like everybody else in this household did. And the you know, you just never know where you get it from. But I believe when I did get it, I had gone out to a restaurant near my home. It was a sushi bar and I set it up. I don't know if you've ever been to a sushi bar, but they have seats right in front of the sushi chef. Chef where you can see them preparing the sushi. So, I sat at the sushi bar and there was a seat between me and the person on my left and a seat between me and the person on my right. But of course, in a restaurant you take off the mask. So, I did take off my mask and I ate there. I also went to the gym that day. I did have on a mask at the gym. But, you know, like you get hot, you take it off for a second, you put it back on. So, I don't know if it happened at the gym or I don't know if it happened at the sushi restaurant, but it happened at one of the two. So, it did affect me. It made me more cautious. It made me realize the thing was more real. You know, I did document my sickness through it on, you know, everything that I felt every, you know, every minute of the day. I kind of recorded everything so I could remember back to it, but it's done. I haven't contracted it again and I've been healthy. So, you can take me back to the other part of your question that I don't.



JB: Remember is if you were to catch the virus, which you elaborated that you did, so that the fact that you contracted the virus, you know what it was and how that has affect the losses that you experienced. And then again, with the gains but with the losses this time that it's like the losses.

JC: How did it affect the losses, the other losses, or.

JB: Just generally how did they affect your lifestyle when it came to the losses that you experienced? Just experience with the virus, you know, like I know with the virus, your life probably kind of went on to a standstill because you had to, you know, be in quarantine and stuff like that. So how did the new lifestyle of having the virus and then the losses that you had experienced? Hmm.

JC: I think obviously, you know, like I said, it heightened my awareness. It made me more cautious. I don't know that that's a negative, that it's probably a positive. But I was sick. That was a negative. I couldn't be around anyone for that period of time. That's a negative. What? How else did it affect me? My sickness, COVID? I don't know. I guess just overall is just the awareness that it is a real thing that it happens and that you need to be more cautious. You got other, I think maybe another loss that people, you know, they're afraid, are you okay? You know, are you sick? Are you not or have you gotten tested? Have you gotten your shot?

JB: It's a worry.

JC: Right. And so, you know, and it can happen to anybody. And I think that it's a humbling experience because you think, well, I'm messed up and I've not gotten sick and I'm staying away and then bam, you get sick. You're like, okay, well, I guess it happened.

JB: Yeah. You know, like, all right, you talk to him.

JC: Yeah. So I think that's pretty, pretty much it just kind of like the way that you're treated through having the virus is kind of humbling. But I got through it.

JB: Right. I'm glad that you got that all vetted. You are. We came in here.

JC: Because not everybody made it.

JB: And inevitably lost their lives to a.

JC: Lots of people.

JB: Yeah. So it's really a blessing that you're still here. You're still breathing. Mm hmm. Even with the fact that you got COVID.

JC: Yeah, for sure.

JB: And that's everything I have. Thank you for your time with the interview. Thank you for sharing your story. Like you said with my interview, I feel like I got to know you a lot better.

JC: Yeah. I appreciate the time. This has been a pleasure.

JB: For both of us.