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JaQuan Brown, Oral History Interview, 2022

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

Transcribed by James Cason

JC: Hi, I am James Cason. The following phone interview you are about to listen to is one I hosted with EMU senior student JaQuan Brown on Tuesday, November 8, 2022. Brown is majoring in Theatre, minoring in creative writing, and is currently enrolled in Journalism 313, The History of American Journalism. Brown is a Black male, age 21, and was born and raised in Flint, Michigan. He has three step siblings, a sister and two brothers. Both of Brown's parents live in Flint. He also has a girlfriend he's been dating for two years, though they've known each other for four. Since June 2022, Brown has been employed at Home Depot on Carpenter Road in Ypsilanti, Michigan, where he works in the flooring department.

The central focus of this interview is to discuss Brown's adjustment from leaving his college dorm at EMU to moving back home to Flint, Michigan, where he lived with his parents, between two households, during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Let's jump right in.

Okay. Today's date is November the eighth. Election Day, actually. The time is about 1:37 p.m. and we have Jaquan Brown on the phone. First, I want to make sure, Jaquan, that you do give me consent to record this interview.

JB: Yes, I do.

JC: All right. Perfect. My name is James Cason. We are interviewing JaQuan Brown today just to talk about some things during the COVID pandemic, the onset of the COVID pandemic for our oral history of the COVID-19 pandemic for Journalism 313, with Professor Li, fall 2022. So, today's interview focus is going to be on the adjustment for you, Jaquan, leaving your college dorm and moving back home to Flint, Michigan, to live with your parents again during the first wave of the pandemic. Okay. So, I just want to have a conversation with you. See where it goes. I do have some focus points and some questions that I'd like to ask you specifically about this. But let's just see where the conversation goes. How's that sound?

JB: Yeah, that's perfectly fine.

JC: Okay, perfect. So, I want to know, I want to start off by asking you, what were your thoughts about going home and how did you mentally prepare to do so?

JB: So, my thoughts on coming home, I really didn't want to come home. I was trying to think of ways to stay down here, even though campus was closed, and everybody was going back home. I didn't really want to go back home so I was trying to find ways to stay down here. Like asking my girlfriend if I could stay over at with them. I really didn't want to go back. It's kind of that way every year anytime I have to go back home trying to find ways to stay down here. But I really wouldn't say there was no mental preparation. [ed. note: Brown rethinks the question] I guess you can kind of say that. So, for me, it was just telling myself, All right, I'm back home, so I can't do all the stuff that I do here back at home. And I just kind of get into this telling myself, Prepare for the BS that may happen when you get back. You won't be there for too

long. It's just only for a couple of months. You'll be back before you know it. I can make it through the time period that I'm going to be home, (that) type of thing.

JC: Right. So, when you say this won't be such a long thing, did you have anything in mind as far as how long this was going to be?

JB: So, when everything was going on, I didn't think it was going to get to where I was at. But in the beginning I thought it'd be like the same as it was over a summer, usually how a typical summer goes. You go back home in April. You're home for May, June, July, and come back in August, or, depending on the time frame, maybe even the beginning week of September. But yeah, it's just between the time frame of May and August. I figured I'd be home and then come back sometime either late August or early September.

JC: Wow. Okay. So, let's say you get home. What was moving home like? Tell me a little bit about that.

JB: Well, for me, well, I'd say for everybody else, it was all excitement and smiles and hugs. Like, Oh, I'm glad you're home. But personally, inside I was crying. I don't want to be here. I was just – I get home, I have my brother because he's the main one that's excited to see me. He's like, "Oh, finally you're here." And I'm like, Yeah, I'm here. And then just kind of in the midst of unpacking my stuff and moving my stuff in the basement and everything else, kind of, I'd say, unpacking everything is me preparing myself to stay there for a while. So, it's like unpacking my things is unpacking the time of me being at college and then unpacking all of the stress and worry I had at

college. I'm unpacking all of that. And yeah, it's always a good thing to go back home for a while. But it was unpacking the stuff I had going on at school just to pack up the things that I had going on at home.

JC: How much stuff did you have with you when you came back home?

JB: I had a whole lot. I had to have about two and a half – Well, I wouldn't say two and a half. I filled my mom's car to the brim, the trunk was filled, the backseat where my brothers sat at was filled, and pretty much the passenger seat was full. Then, my dad had a pickup at the time, so the majority of my heavy stuff went into the trunk of his truck. But it was a whole lot of stuff. I had a whole lot of bags. I had a whole lot of boxes. I got a big tote. I got a mini fridge over here. So, that had to go in my dad's trunk. But it was just a whole lot of bags and boxes and miscellaneous items in those bags and boxes. So, it was – I can't remember the word, but it was a whole lot of stuff.

JC: So now I remember you saying that, I believe, your parents are no longer together.

JB: Yeah.

JC: So, they still came together to come get you from school?

JB: Yeah, they did.

JC: Okay. So, do they have a decent relationship?

JB: Yeah, they have a pretty okay relationship. Like every other relationship, it's pretty rocky, but they have an okay relationship.

JC: Okay. And so, at that point, when they came to pick you up, was it clear as to where you were going between the two homes?

JB: It was clear to me, and I think it was clear to my mom. I don't know what my dad for instance, but it was clear to me and her that I was going to go back with her. But I knew that. I was like, Well, I'm going to go back over to my grandparents. And then when we got there, my dad was like, "Are you to come over there with me?" And I'm like, Mmm, I'm going to just go live with my grandparents. I'll see you later.

JC: And who did you ride back with?

JB: Uh, my mom.

JC: Okay, so was it – your dad was alone in his truck?

JB: Yeah. I think, if not, my siblings was in the car with him. I really don't remember. But I know he did come down.

JC: Okay. All right, so you get back home, you tell your dad that you are going to go to your grandmother's or your grandparents' house and that's where your mom lives, correct?

JB: Yes.

JC: Okay. And so, you tell your dad that you're going to your grandparents' house and your mom's, and you get to the house. Tell me a little bit more about your daily routines once you actually unpacked and you're in your grandparents' house, what were your daily routines like?

JB: Well, first thing that my parents always tell me, "You got to find a summer job. You can't stay at home not doing nothing." So, first things first after the first couple of days of being there, chillin' out for a little bit, was trying to be on a mission to try to find a job. So doing job applications, trying to do interviews for those said jobs.

JC: Were there jobs available at this point? Wasn't everything locked down?

JB: Uh, yeah. But it was – it was kind of like before it got super deep into it, like it was that first couple of weeks when we were still getting the news about everything and then that's when it happened. But it was still, even if it wasn't, jobs that were in-person, like fast food or anything like that. It was like trying to find jobs that were over the phone or through the internet. Just trying to find anything to not make it seem like I'm not doing nothing over the summer.

JC: Exactly.

JB: Yeah.

JC: And so, how about the living arrangements? Was it clear as to where you were sleeping? What was the arrangement like in the house?

JB: So over at my grandparents, we only have a one-story house, so everything's pretty much on the first floor. We do have a basement, but the basement is super cold, especially during the winter and all of that. It's super cold. There's really nothing too comfortable down there. They did think about renovating it to make it livable down there, but they haven't really done much. So, we just put all the storage stuff down there. But since it's really a one-story house, I made a little futon on the floor and slept on the floor in the computer room.

JC: And so, tell me, the members of the household there.

JB: So, over my grandmother's house is my papa, my granny, me, my little brother, and my mama.

JC: And so, what about the living arrangements with your brother? Where did he sleep?

JB: Uh, again, since it's a one-story house he slept with my mom. We really didn't have no room for a smaller bed in that room. So, he slept with her. They really didn't want me sleeping on the futon in the computer room. They was always like, Sleep on the blow-up bed in the dining room. You can move everything over. I did that for a little bit, too, but I was usually always on the phone, and it was always a certain time where the house was dead silent. So, me being on the phone, and being used to being up to

three or four in the morning, didn't really go too well. So, I ended up just moving into the computer room and I was like, I'll just stay back here.

JC: Okay. Understood. I get that. So, did you find a job?

JB: I did not find a job. Every time I go home over the summer, even prior to COVID, I never found a job.

JC: Wow. And so how was that? How did you adjust? I know you just said that you needed to show that you were doing your part to find a job, as you were raised to do your part. How was that received in the family with you not being able to find a job?

JB: For my mom, she was like, "It's okay." At the same time, I had some money on some credit cards that I had at the time, too. So, I was kind of using that to kind of live off of a little bit with helping with groceries or gas if I wanted to go see my girlfriend or anything like that. But outside of that, I didn't have no other source of income. So, mom was kind of like, "It's alright as long as you're safe. At least you're here." My dad on the other hand, was more like, "How did your sister find a job, but you didn't find a job?" And I'm like, Well, I don't know, ask the employers. I'm not sure what you want me to say to that. But yeah, he was more so like, "How come your 15-year-old sister found a job, but you're 20 and you haven't found a job yet." And I'm like, Well, I don't know.

JC: Wow. And does she live with your father?

JB: Yeah, yeah. My sister lives with my dad.

JC: Okay. So, this is like a stepsister?

JB: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

JC: Okay. And what kind of work did she do?

JB: I really didn't ask what job she had. Once he said that I was just kind of like, Well, I'm not going to talk to you for a while. So, once he said that, I just kind of distanced myself. Even when I was staying there I kind of really distanced myself. I didn't really talk to nobody over there. I did, but I kind of kept it short and sweet, like doing the hi and byes. How's your day? Good. Well, what you been doing all day? Nothing. Kind of kept all the answers pretty short. But yeah.

JC: So, did you not? Did you? (Both talking at once) I'm sorry. Go ahead.

JB: I was just reiterating that I really didn't ask what she did.

JC: Okay. So, the question is, did you – I know you said that you had lived between the homes. So, it sounds like you didn't spend as much time at your father's as you did your grandparents. Is that correct, or?

JB: Yeah, that's honestly correct. At first, I was doing kind of like when I was younger. When they split when I was younger, it was every week I went. One week I'd stay

with my mom. Then, the next week I'd go with my dad. Then the following week I'd go back with my mom. And usually, it's four weeks in a month. So, I was like, Well, how about I do two weeks with you, and then, the following two weeks I go with my dad. She was like, "That's fine." So, that's how that worked for a minute. But then I just ended up staying with my mom for a couple of months, I think for a month and a half. And then I went over with my dad's for about a month and then went back over to my mom's and then back over to my dad's. But yeah, that's how that went for a minute.

JC: Okay. And then as far as thinking back to daily routines, what were you responsible for in the household at your grandparents or your mom's as well as your dad's house?

JB: It was typical chores: wash the dishes, clean up behind yourself, clean the bathrooms out, wash clothes. It was kind of the same consistency throughout both houses. It was just that my grandparents were a little bit more lenient on the rules. Of course, they told me, Wash the dishes. But, at the time I was also pretty lazy, so I didn't really do them more than half of the time. But over at my dad's, they had a strict schedule of who cleans what. So, they usually do it – really just me, my sister or my other brother would be the ones cleaning up the house. My stepmom and my dad, they cleaned, but they really wouldn't clean. It was all the kids' duties to clean. So, one week it'll be just my sister cleaning up. The following week It'll be just my brother cleaning up. And they usually go back and forth like that. But then when I came back home, my dad was like, "In order to keep things fair in the house, you're gonna clean up, too, for a week." So, he'd go over to the calendar and he's like, "You see how their names are all – this week is your sister, this week is your brother," and go so on, and so forth.

And he was like, “Since you're here, I'm going to erase your sister or your brother's name, and then I'm going to put your name right there so then it's you cleaning up this whole week.” So, it's washing the dishes and cleaning up after yourself. It wasn't cleaning everything in the house, but it was just cleaning up, just washing dishes is pretty much was the main thing washing dishes and cleaning the bathrooms.

JC: And so, you are, I remember you telling me you are a super senior, so.

JB: Yeah.

JC: And so, tell me what a super senior is again.

JB: So, a super senior is a senior that prolongs their stay. I'd consider it – You do your four years, but then you stay an extra year. So, you're in school for five years.

JC: So as a super senior, this means you've been going back and forth between campus and Flint, home to Flint for the last four years, during the summers, is that right?

JB: Yeah.

JC: Okay. So that means that you had pretty much had a routine of what you did during the summers when you were home. Do you – when you compare your summers prior to COVID, up till when you actually were in the pandemic, was it very similar or do you see it as different?

JB: Honestly, it really wasn't no difference. It was pretty similar. Prior to COVID, every time that I came home, they was like, You gotta apply for a job. I applied for jobs. I'd get into interviews, but I wouldn't hear no calls back until I come back to campus, and they're like, Oh yeah, you didn't get the job. Well, I'm like, Of course I didn't. I didn't work all summer. So, even with COVID it was the same thing. I applied, they never said anything, or I'd apply, I'll get to the process of over the phone interview and then I won't hear nothing else for the rest of the summer. And even with going back and forth with the homes, it all kind of came pretty much with the same. Yeah, it really wasn't no difference.

JC: So, what would you, looking back, what would you say were your biggest challenges in the whole moving back home during COVID?

JB: My biggest challenge?

JC: Or maybe not your biggest, but just challenges in general. Like if you –

JB: On being home over summer during COVID?

JC: Yes.

JB: I'd say honestly, I'd probably say after we really got into the nitty gritty of the pandemic and we was on that full-blown hundred percent lockdown, I'd say probably the biggest challenge was trying to stay cooped up within the same four walls of the houses. You know what I mean? I'm usually a hermit anyway, so, I'm pretty

introverted to begin with. So, I'm usually always in my room, I'm always in the house. I really, rarely go outside unless it's to go see my girlfriend or go out to eat or go grocery shopping or something like that or to do errands. But outside of that, I'm usually at home. But then when we got into the full-blown lockdown, I think for me what was hard for me was being at home, always waking up in the same walls, seeing the same people every day and then having to deal with everybody's attitudes. And yeah, it was just kind of a real whirlwind. And on top of that, my brother was – my youngest brother is super young, so he has a whole lot of energy. So, with him trying to exert the energy out and not be able to really took a toll on everything as well.

JC: Right. I can imagine. That was actually where I wanted to go was about the relationships, whether we're talking about your parents, your siblings, your girlfriend, kind of thinking about how moving back home affected these relationships. Tell me a little bit about that.

JB: Okay I'll probably start with me and my girlfriend. With me and her, of course, we both don't like me going back home. We understand we can't really do nothing about it because both of us don't have any cars or we also don't have a place to stay down here. So, it isn't really like – we couldn't really do much about it. So, it's kind of like sucking it up and dealing with it. But after we got to the full-blown lockdown of COVID it was really harder to see her than it would have been prior to COVID. She also stayed with were her grandparents and they were also kind of like those families like, We're not really going to go out unless it's really serious.

JC: Where's that? Where do her grandparents live?

JB: They live out in Belleville. Belleville and Flint is pretty much like an hour and 45 minutes away. But depending on how fast you going at, it could be sooner than that. But it's a pretty decent drive. But of course, they let me come in and visit and everything else. But they were like, We're not really going out nowhere, we're not doing nothing. But me and her, it was kind of hard. We used to get into arguments here and there because she hated being home. I hated being home. And we both had to deal with people attitudes and everything else. So, that didn't rub us off the right way. So, we'd lash out at each other not knowing or not trying to. And then that also would lead us into arguing. So that was the downfall of that.

And then, familywise, my youngest brother, he was super excited I came back home. He was like, "Yay, you're here." He always wanted to go outside to play. He always wanted to wrestle, play with his NERF Guns, and play football. He'd want to do all of that. And I wasn't against it, but at the same time, with me being so much older than him, I didn't have the enjoyment that he had while playing. I enjoyed it, but I didn't. After a while I was like, Alright, I want to go back inside now. He was outside for like 5 minutes and I'm like, Yeah, I want to go back inside. He's like, "We just got outside." I'm like, I know. I don't want to be here. Really, everybody was excited when I came home. Yeah, with my brother, he was just happy.

And then, grandparents, they were happy to see me. My mom was happy to see me, of course. But both my granny and my mama both work. My papa's retired, so he was at home all the time, but he never really did much besides watch TV and drink beer. So, he really didn't do anything. So, it was really just trying to entertain my brother as

best I can without him getting yelled at for potentially breaking something or just jumping around or screaming.

And then, over at my dad's, since everybody's a little bit older. Everybody stayed to themselves; they were either on the phone or playing a game or watching TV in their room. Everybody kind of kept to themselves. Yeah, we talked, but it really wasn't a sit down, let's all play together type of talk. It was just like, Oh, I'll come in, bother you for a quick minute, and, alright, I'm about to go back to my room.

JC: Wow. So, you talked about your girlfriend, your grandfather, your grandmother, your brother, the household at your father's house. How about your mom? What was the relationship like with your mom during COVID?

JB: Me and mom, it was really good, like it is always. She was the one that would allow me to take her car to go see my girlfriend whenever I could and whenever she let me. But it was – me and her relationship is always really good. We never really butt heads. We don't never really get into it. We always – It's like one of those good mother-son bonds. I always mess with her, and she hates me for it. But I always mess with her whenever I get bored. I'll be that big kid that'll just jump on the bed and then doing that whole – I don't know if you watch Family Guy, but when Stewie was messing with Lois, talking about, "mom, mommy, ma." So, I do that to her a lot. Just sit there and I'll look at her and I'll just do that. And she be like, "What do you want?" I'd make fun out of being home as much as I could, but she usually was always working, so I couldn't really do much with that. And usually when she came off of work, she was always super tired, so she'd go straight to sleep, sometimes. And then, when she's

off, we'd go do errands and stuff. It's been times where she wouldn't talk to me for a little while due to me asking to take the car so much to go see my girlfriend and everything else. At times she wouldn't say nothing to me. I know at one point she ain't talk to me for about a week, two weeks. And I was like, What's going on? But it bothered me when that happened. But then she got out the funk of it and then we started talking again.

JC: Wow. Do you remember what caused it?

JB: I know it had something to do with the car. I believe it was because me and my girlfriend made plans to go somewhere. I had mentioned it to my mama prior. And, I was like, Can I use the car to go hang out with her? And then, she had plans to go out that same day. So, I was like, Wow. So, it was like trying to beat the clock. And then, me and my girlfriend would always butt heads. So, in the midst of me waiting on my mom, she would be like, "Where are you at?" And I'm like, Well, I got to wait on my mom and bring the car back. (Incoming email notification chime) Then, she's like, "What's taking so long?" I wouldn't say she was nagging, but she was very impatient and trying to rush the process. And I was trying to be the calm one, like, I just got to wait on my mom, chill out. And then it'd just end up me getting annoyed for her. And then I'm rushing my mama, and then she felt rushed. So, when she got home, she just threw me the keys and got in the back and didn't say nothing to me. So, then I went to go hang out with my girlfriend, came back home, gave my mama the keys back, and then she didn't talk to me for a while after that.

JC: Okay. I'm sure that was a challenge.

JB: Yeah.

JC: So, who would you say was, thinking about all the relationships that you had during that time of the lockdown, being in Flint, Michigan, thinking about everybody that you were connected to, who would you say you found it easiest to communicate with throughout the pandemic? And why?

JB: The easiest to communicate to? My girlfriend, most definitely.

JC: And why?

JB: I'd say it was easiest to talk to her because of the fact that me and her could relate on a lot of different things. She has a lot of siblings as well as I do. I think it's the same amount as me I believe. So, she understood where I was coming from when I was babysitting and watching the kids, being stuck in a house, and dealing with everybody attitudes, because me and her are both pretty strong impasse. She's stronger than me with the impasse scenario side of it. But we could both feel that everybody's emotions in a sense. She's just a little bit more sensitive to that. So, I'd say it was pretty easy to talk to her, the majority than anybody else.

Me and my mom got a really good bond a great bond at that. But it was some things I couldn't come to her to talk to her about; and then I couldn't go to my dad to talk to him about certain stuff; couldn't go to my stepmom; couldn't go to my sisters or my brothers nor my grandparents; I couldn't really go to nobody besides my girlfriend or

even some friends that probably I reached out to or they reached out to me and I communicated with them. But besides that, it was just my girlfriend.

JC: Okay. And then on the flip side of that, who would you say was the most challenging to communicate with and why?

JB: Everybody. (Cason laughs). I'd probably say especially my dad. And possibly my grandparents. I'd say they were probably the hardest to talk to. They cared about my mental health and everything else. But it was kind of like, You don't have nothing to worry about, so why are you having mental health issues? Like, it's not a real thing. So, I couldn't really talk to them about it. With us being men, it's very hard to talk about in the mental health. Especially with me being a black man, and then mental health, that didn't really go well. So, I can come to my dad, and be like, Dad, mentally I'm not okay. He's like, "Oh, shrug it off. You'll be fine." And then with my grandparents, my granny, she'd make jokes about it. My papa, he was just always watching T.V. or drinking beer. And if he was out the house, it was to cut the grass or go shopping for himself. So there really wasn't nowhere I can talk to him about it. The only one I could really talk to about mental health was my mom and my girlfriend, pretty much. Because my mom understood the importance of mental health. So, she'd always talk me through it, be like, "It's all right. I know you have a lot on your mind, but it's fine. We're going to get through this." And it was the same with my girlfriend. She was on the same tip. But, yeah, those are probably the hardest to talk to, is my dad, and my grandparents.

JC: Okay. So, let's kind of shift gears. We're almost done. To talk about what you were just saying about mental and physical health based on the relationship dynamics that you've kind of explained. My next question, you've kind of answered it. I was thinking, did you ever feel that you were suffering from anxiety, and did you ever think of seeking professional help? And if so, explain it.

JB: So, I really didn't – Oh yeah, I did suffer from anxiety and a little bit of depression, too. I honestly, didn't seek any professional help because it was like, I do that, then everybody's going to look at me like, Why did you do that? Why are you seeking help? They know the importance of seeking help, but they're like, "Why would you go through all that trouble?" And then they'd all be like, "Why didn't you come talk to me? You know you can always talk to me. You can always confide in me." And it's like, "No I can't. I can't do that because you're going to make me feel terrible about it. Instead of trying to calm me down and help me through it, you're going to throw it back in my face." And I wouldn't say I didn't want to. I wanted to for a little bit, but it was kind of like, Who's going to listen to me? Who's really going to actually help me? Because I know there's a lot of therapists out there that say they're there to help and listen, but then the advice they give isn't really the best advice to honestly give. It wasn't till I came back to school when COVID was happening, kind of when it was easing up a little bit. It was in between the time of the first wave and a second wave of COVID when I came back to school where I sought mental help with therapists. I forgot the therapist's name, but she helped me out a lot.

JC: Oh, that's awesome, because that was something that I thought about, when you talked about being a black male. I'm a black male as well. And so, I was thinking on the lines

of the conversation about mental health being taboo in some of the social circles that we're in. And I wanted to talk to you about that to see how you were able to overcome if you were able to overcome the obstacles of talking about it or seeking the help. So, you've kind of talked about that. Maybe we can talk about that a little bit more.

JB: Yeah. So, when it came to seeking – because I remember I did come to my dad saying I'm not okay mentally. I'm stressed, I'm tired of being in the house, everything. And he was just like, “Ah, it's going to be all right. Shug it off. Walk it off. Play the game. You'll be fine.” That didn't help with nothing. What you told me didn't help with anything. So why did I even come to you in the first place?

It was a struggle to actually seek help, because it was always like I'm so used to doing everything on my own. I used to be like that when I was younger, too. I wouldn't say I talked to myself, but I talked to myself. I'd have a therapy session in my head, I guess. Just laying everything out. I'd cry in a corner in my own time behind closed doors. I'd punch the wall or punch my bed, trash my room around after, to let all the steam out of being stressed and everything else.

But it wasn't till my girlfriend was kind of like, “You got to find help, or you got to really seek it.” And then, even coming back to campus in between the first wave and a second wave of COVID, me and her fell out. So, me and her wasn't talking for a while. So, then that's when I really kind of went down the drain with my mental health. I was failing in classes; I didn't really get out my room. Times where I knew I had to go to class, I didn't go to class. Even when I knew about the assignments that

were coming up I never did them. I'd read the instructions. I'd try and do it. And if I couldn't do it, I just gave up and just went to sleep.

So, it wasn't like – I finally just had a breaking point and I had emailed my professor one day and I was like, I can't do this anymore. I, I seriously need help. So, my professor sent me the link for the, I forgot what it's called. (Brown remembers) Oh, CAPS. She sent me the link for CAPS for the campus therapist session thing and she was like, "Contact, call this number, email them, contact them. Let them know what's going on and work your way through it." And once I did that, it took me a minute to kind of do it too, because I was like, I'll just try and be a man about it and just tough it out and not seek any help. But, after a while, I was like, I can't do this on my own. So, I end up calling them. And then I got in contact with somebody. I think her name was Tania if I'm not mistaken. But I got in contact with her. We had a Zoom meeting every week, pretty much. And she'd give me homework assignments. Did I do most of them? No, I did not. But I did do some of them. So, she'd give me homework assignments like, "Oh, open – I know you're usually stuck in your room due to COVID. So, open your blinds up, get a little light in the room, maybe that'll help out." And then, she'd be like, "Rearrange your room, even, so it doesn't – every time you walk in your room, you don't see the same thing every time you walk in." She's like, "I know we're in COVID, so put a mask on and just go out for a walk, even, go for a walk. Even if it's late at night, just go on a stroll to let off some steam. Take a hot shower. And if you have to, you can cry. Go ahead and cry in the shower if you got to." But she was like, "Just find different ways to just relax and calm down." So, I used to do that. I'd open my window. I would kind of go on walks here and there. Even if it wasn't for that long, I just kind of go out to get some fresh air and come

back in. I did improve a little bit when it came to classes, but I was kind of so far behind that I barely passed. But I did pass most of it.

JC: Okay. Wow. Well, I'm glad that you sought help. (Both talk at once) Thinking about that.

JB: It was a struggle.

JC: So, thinking about that, well, I'm thinking about the timeframe, and I know we were talking about you would go home every summer and then this was pretty much similar. I'm trying to get the time frames of how long you were home for COVID versus how long you were normally home for summers.

JB: For COVID, I know that – I think it was that first month and a half. I believe I was still at home. When school started, that first month and a half when school started out, I think I was still at home because I do remember I used to tell my grandparents, I got a class to go to so I can't – because I know for school my brother had started as well. So, they'd usually ask me to help put him on the classes. And then, after that I'd go on class in the middle of him being in class. So, I think the first month and a half I was at home for classes. And then that's when everybody got an email saying, "If you're coming back on the campus, get a COVID shot. Send proof that you got the COVID shot and then we can go with the process of that." (Incoming email notification chime). So, I did that, and I came back to campus. (Both talking).

JC: So, your time home after, with COVID was actually shorter than your normal summers at home, yes?

JB: Uhh, I think it was a little bit longer, actually.

JC: A little bit longer?

JB: Yeah, I didn't come back to campus till, like middle of September, I believe.

JC: Oh, wow. Okay.

JB: Yeah.

JC: So, about five months.

JB: Usually, I come back to campus on a regular summer, end of August, beginning of September. But for COVID I didn't come back till almost the middle of September.

JC: Okay. So, it was longer.

JB: Yeah.

JC: And so, it was a buildup, a culmination of being home, COVID, relationships, romantic relationships, family relationships, all of that together kind of culminated

and exploded by the time that you got back to school. And that's when you sought the additional help. Is that right?

JB: Yeah. And then after I got on campus, everything kind of calmed down for a little bit before I sought help. And then just rerose after me and my girlfriend kind of fell out at the time that we did, and that's when I sought the help.

JC: Wow, good for you. Good for you. I'm glad you did. Thank you for sharing that.

JB: Oh yeah, no problem.

JC: Okay. So, let's say we're going to wrap this up. We've got about 5 minutes left. Last part that I wanted to talk about are the gains, the losses, and the reflections. So, thinking back (incoming email notification chime) over the entire experience that we've been talking about, of being home with family during COVID-19 lockdown, what do you think or what do you find your most significant gains from going through the pandemic to be?

JB: I'd probably say, well, the most obvious gain, I didn't get COVID, so that's a gain.

JC: WHOOOOOO! There we go. (laughter).

JB: The bigger gain right there, I didn't get COVID. But outside of that, probably another gain would be maybe a stronger family bond. Yeah, it was a lot of BS that happened at being home and everything else. But it was a stronger family bond, of course. Felt a

little bit more connected with the family than I did prior to COVID. I always had a strong family bond, but when COVID happened, I felt it got a little bit stronger, especially on my mom's side over my grandparents. I felt it become a little bit stronger.

JC: Nice.

JB: And then, of course, between my other brother and my dad's, our bond was a little bit stronger than it was prior to COVID.

JC: Your brother, you said?

JB: Yeah, my other brother and my sister, over at my dad's. Our bond got a little bit stronger as well.

JC: Good.

JB: (continued) then prior to COVID. But I'd say that's probably the only gains I can think of. Losses would be mental health, the arguments that everybody would have, all the attitudes and the lashing out between me and everybody, with my girlfriend and family, not being able to really relieve any of the stress of being home. I was able to – in between that timeframe of the first wave lifting and the second wave getting ready to start without us knowing, I did get out the house a little bit to go hang out with friends but really didn't last too long. I think the only time I actually got out was for one of my friend's birthdays. And it was only because his birthday was a couple of

weeks after mine. And then, I got to go hang out with them and then I hung out with some other friends over at the park for a little bit. But that was about it.

JC: Okay. Awesome. So last question. Do you have any other thoughts on your time spent at home with family in 2022, according to your unique experiences?

JB: I really wouldn't say – Oh, well, probably, another big surprise is my cousin that I grew up with kind of surprised everybody for coming up here. It was like a, Whoa, what you doing up here? But I think it was because he, what was it? I believe it was because his, I think it was somebody on his dad's side of the family. I don't know if it was a birthday celebration or what was going on, but he did kind of surprise everybody. So, he did that for both the middle, I think in COVID, and then also around Christmas time, he did that as well. When the second wave hit.

JC: Nice. This is the cousin that was raised almost like a brother. Is that right?

JB: Yeah.

JC: Oh, nice. So, he came from Atlanta or from outside of Atlanta, right?

JB: Yep. And so that was a big surprise. Besides that, I really wouldn't say there was much of a difference.

JC: Okay. Wow. Well, I feel like I've gotten a piece of your life. (Laughter).

JB: Yeah.

JC: Okay, I'm going to go ahead and stop the recording. We're at 45 minutes and 30 seconds, so we're right on time. So, thank you for the interview today.

JB: Sure. No problem.