Oral History Interview with Mulin Huan, 05-21-2020

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Mulin Huan conducted on May 21, 2020. The interview took place at his home in Princeton, NJ as part of the Voices of Princeton Project's COVID-19 Collection.

Readers are asked to bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of the spoken word, rather than written prose. Questions provided as prompts to the narrator of this oral history are included in square brackets, wherever it is apparent that the speaker is responding to a given prompt.

TRANSCRIPT

Mulin Huan: [00:00:00] Hello, guys. My name is Mulin Huan, and I'm sixteen years old and I live in Princeton, New Jersey, and I am a high school sophomore. And I am taking this interview by Voices of Princeton about the current COVID-19 pandemic.

[Voices of Princeton]: [00:00:17] [When did you first hear about COVID-19? What was your initial reaction?]

Mulin Huan: [00:00:18] Question one, when did you first hear about COVID-19? What was your initial reaction? So I first hear about Covid-19 at mid-February, I believe in 2020 on a Chinese media. I am a Chinese American, so I do have access to this media, and I did not think it was a big deal at first because it was reportedly very similar to the SARS virus in 2003, and that virus didn't even expand out of China. So I did not think it's going to be a big deal at the time. But time proved me wrong. And yeah. Okay.

[Voices of Princeton]: [00:00:54] [When did COVID-19 start to feel like a local emergency to you?]

Mulin Huan: [00:00:54] Question number two when did COVID-19 start to feel like a local emergency to you? COVID-19 started to feel like a local emergency, like when I got the news that this has spread to New York and because I live in New Jersey and it's really, really close. So, uh, yeah, when it spread to New York, I knew that school shutdown and stuff is not going to

be a matter of if it will happen or not, but a matter of when will it happen to that is when it starts to feel like a local emergency to me.

[Voices of Princeton]: [00:01:25] [In what ways have you been personally affected by COVID-19?]

Mulin Huan: [00:01:25] Question number three, in what ways have you been personally affected by COVID-19? So for me, um, I became really anxious for my family and friends' health. But perhaps the biggest impact the COVID-19 virus had on me is that I need to get used to online learning as a high school student, which is really different than learning at school.

[Voices of Princeton]: [00:01:49] [How are you coping with the ongoing public health crisis? How are you feeling?]

Mulin Huan: [00:01:49] Question number four, how are you coping with the ongoing public health crisis? How are you feeling? I am feeling like really, really bad for these people who are unable to work because of the pandemic. But I think social distancing is still really important if we want this situation to end.

[Voices of Princeton]: [00:02:09] [Have you ever experienced anything like this before? If so, tell us about it.]

Mulin Huan: [00:02:10] And number five, have you ever experienced anything like this before? If so, tell us about it. So I personally haven't experienced anything like this, but my parents have. I was born in 2003, which is the year of the SARS breakout in China. And, um, they, my parents, they were asked by the government to stay at home. And if they want to go out, they need to wear masks and they are trying to stay away from people. Basically, we are trying to do right now.

[Voices of Princeton]: [00:02:41] [How has COVID-19 affected you and/or your family's day-to-day activities?]

Mulin Huan: [00:02:42] And yeah, and next is the day-to-day life section of the interview. Question number one is how has the COVID-19 affect you and your family's day-to-day activities? The most directly affect my academic works. Like I mentioned before, the temporary closure of schools means that we need to rely on computers and phones for our schoolwork. The AP test is also really different, and it is especially difficult for history students because you have to write a full-length essay in forty-five minutes. And yeah, so most, mostly academic. And yeah.

[Voices of Princeton]: [00:03:18] [How are you changing your daily behavior?]

Mulin Huan: [00:03:19] Question number two, how are you changing your daily behavior? So I am having like experience with big change. Like in my schedule right now. It affects my sleeping schedule and eating schedule. I now usually go to bed at 12 a.m. and wake up like at

10 a.m. or so. If there's no, no, no school in the morning that day, I'll probably wake up at 10:30 and then, um, I'll only have two meals each day as opposed to three meals before the pandemic. So that's how it affects my day to day life.

[Voices of Princeton]: [00:03:54] [What have you found difficult about staying home? What have you found easy?]

Mulin Huan: [00:03:54] Question number three, what have you found difficult about staying home? What have you found easy? What I found difficult is that is like what everybody else think is difficult. Staying at our houses was a little like chances to go out and do something together with people other than my family. Like I do not find anything particularly easy. I mean, if anything, I'm able to like to stay in bed like for a longer time. I hate, I hate like getting up early. But yeah, also I got time to spend with my family, which is pretty nice if like, if we're not worrying about our life right now.

[Voices of Princeton]: [00:04:34] [How have you been staying in touch with people as you socially isolate?]

Mulin Huan: [00:04:34] Question number four, how have you been staying in touch with people as you socially isolate? I have video-chatted with a lot of my friends using platforms such as WeChat, Discord, Zoom and Skype, and I also like send messages to keep in touch with my friends, my families in other countries with text, Instagram, Facebook occasionally. And yeah, I'm really happy that social media exists right now in the 21st century.

[Voices of Princeton]: [00:05:09] [Have you picked up any new hobbies to stay busy at home? Revived any old hobbies?]

Mulin Huan: [00:05:09] And question number five, have you picked up any new hobbies staying busy at home? Revived any old hobbies? I've been doing a lot of gardening works. I've been doing like a research study on carnivorous plants, which are plants that eat insects. These are something I've been like, I have an affection for when I was young. And now, like, with like, more time spent at home, I have more time to spend with my plants and observe them, which is really fun. I really hope, like, I can get to do something like skateboarding with my friends when this is over. But whatever.

[Voices of Princeton]: [00:05:43] [How would you describe the atmosphere in Princeton right now?]

Mulin Huan: [00:05:43] Um, question number six, how would you describe the atmosphere in Princeton right now? I mean, Princeton, it isn't a big town, so there's not a lot of people as opposed to like something like New York City. But with the Coronavirus pandemic breaking out, it, um, feels even more empty than before. When we were where we are, like occasionally doing like grocery shopping, but probably like once a week or, um, once every two weeks. We rarely see people like walking on the sidewalks, which is pretty rare for me. But I do see a lot more animals and I've seen more deer around my house. I even saw a fox, which is, which is, I mean, it could be a good thing. It could be a bad, bad thing.

[Voices of Princeton]: [00:06:36] [What have been your primary sources of news during the pandemic?]

Mulin Huan: [00:06:36] And what have been your primary sources of news during the pandemic? Primary sources of news. I have a lot of sources, news sources. Like I said, I've been keeping in touch with the Chinese news media, as a Chinese American, and I've always watched YouTube about all those different news channels about what the government is saying. I watch CNN, Fox News, like you name it. But yeah, all those news say stuff like really differently, especially like with the Chinese and American news medias, they say drastically different things. So I try my best to keep in touch with both sides of the story, and I try to not be biased towards one another to get the full picture.

[Voices of Princeton]: [00:07:29] [Have your news sources changed during the course of the pandemic?]

Mulin Huan: [00:07:29] But yeah, and then question number eight. The last one is section is, have your news sources changed during the course of the pandemic? Like I mentioned before in the last question, I have a lot of news sources. Basically, like if you name one, I probably like watched one or two, at least one or two reports from them. So I don't, I won't say like a lot of these sources changed, and I've been keeping in touch with the same media like since the beginning. But again, there's a lot of them.

[Voices of Princeton]: [00:08:02] [Has COVID-19 affected your school, or the schooling of anyone in your household? In what ways?]

Mulin Huan: [00:08:03] Next section. Employment and school. Has COVID-19 affected your school or the schooling of anyone in your household? In what ways? So I am a high school Sophomore. And my, my school, Princeton High School, has been closed for more than two months right now. And we've been turning to online schooling. We've been using several different platforms, including Powerschool Learning, Google Classrooms. We've been having classes via Zoom, and sometimes our teacher just post what they want us to do on the, on their websites. So yeah, I mean, if you get used to it, you get used to it. But in the beginning, during the transition period, it's really tough. My sisters, they're, they're eighth graders, they don't have as much work as me, but we are basically using the same platform to keep in touch with our teachers and classmates.

[Voices of Princeton]: [00:09:00] [How has the COVID-19 outbreak affected your community? This may include many communities including school, clubs, church, job, town, etc.]

Mulin Huan: [00:09:00] Next section Community Response. Question one, how has the Covid-19 outbreak affected your community? This may include many communities including school, clubs, church, job, etcetera. So the COVID-19 has affected my community drastically as a student. I am obviously unable to go to school and am facing a challenge to adapt to the new school system online, which is pretty much 90% done, but I'm still trying to get used to it. It's really a tough, it's a really tough transition. I am also, I am also a really big roller coaster

enthusiast. So the roller coaster community has been affected a lot. Theme parks around the world have been shut down because of the, uh, Coronavirus outbreak, and I've been talking with some of my, some of all my friends online about their thoughts. And it's, it's pretty sad, like to be honest, because I've been looking forward for all the new rides coming up and so has everyone else in the roller coaster community. So yeah, that's basically like what, what is, what it is about. It's just everything is getting delayed.

[Voices of Princeton]: [00:10:13] [What have you observed as changes to society and the Princeton community as a result of this crisis?]

Mulin Huan: [00:10:13] Number two, question number two, what have you observed as changes to society and the Princeton community as a result of the crisis? Hey, what changes? I think the pandemic really united people of Princeton together. My friends, my family and our neighbors have been helping each other out by sharing masks. We have, we have some extra masks and we decided to share with them. And we've, we've also been sharing like cleaning equipment, which makes me, which makes me so happy that we still have each other and even under quarantine.

[Voices of Princeton]: [00:10:46] [How do you feel about the national, state, and local response to the pandemic?]

Mulin Huan: [00:10:46] Question number three. How do you feel about the national, state and local responses to the pandemic? I'm going to be honest here. I don't think the United States'

federal government and state governments, and I mean local governments, all forms of governments, are doing enough. I mean, it has to do with the way democracy works in the United States, which most, in the majority of the time, it's like a really, really good thing. But in the time of crisis, it could harm people because the government, the federal government really can't do anything if the states don't cooperate. And, um, I mean, 2020 is obviously a really big year for politics with the election coming up. What I'm, what I've been seeing is that the, the two, the, the two political parties are like really trying to win the election instead of like solving like the crisis, the current crisis of the COVID-19. Now, what I've been seeing is that all of a lot of the, a lot of politicians in the United States are trying to blame China for it, which I mean, I mean, you can do it, but I mean, I would try to stay neutral before the actual source of the virus gets discovered. And now I think rather than playing the blame game, I think it's best if we can just unite together and solve this issue rather than like playing the blame game. I mean, I mean, you can't really like, find a cure to the virus by blaming others and, um, okay.

[Voices of Princeton]: [00:12:27] [What is something you'd want people in the future to know about your experience?]

Mulin Huan: [00:12:27] Next section, the future, question number one, what is something you would want people in the future to know about your experience? I want the people to be aware of the fact that the pandemic is not to be underestimated. I know a lot of people, and a lot of people still think that the Coronavirus is greatly exaggerated by the news propaganda and stuff, which, which is one of the primary reasons why it's getting so bad, because a lot of people are ignoring the fact that the virus is still dangerous. The United States underestimated the virus,

and that is one of the primary causes of why the, the situation, like the United States, is becoming the most affected country in the world right now. On the future, people do not make this mistake again.

[Voices of Princeton]: [00:13:13] [What are your hopes for the future after this pandemic?]

Mulin Huan: [00:13:14] Question number two, what are your hopes for the future after this pandemic? I hope the world can be more united than it is divided right now. I want future people to, um, to unite together, to solve things as a whole rather than like blaming others rather than solving, actually solving the problem together. And because when we, when we are united, we can do everything.

[Voices of Princeton]: [00:13:40] [What's the first thing you plan to do when no longer sheltering-in-place?]

Mulin Huan: [00:13:41] Question number three. The last question. What is the first thing you plan to do when, when no longer, like when the pandemic is no more? I'm going to meet up with my friends and perhaps going to amusement parks together and just I'd probably like go to the newly opened indoor ski resort in Newark, which seems really fun. I really hope this pandemic to end. And yeah, thank you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]