

Basic Detail Report

Title Interview with Alberta Witherspoon

Date 2022 November 14

Primary Maker Alberta Witherspoon

Medium born digital audio file

Description Interview with Alberta Witherspoon. Interviewed by Samariya Smith

and Felicia Pilewski on November 14, 2022 in New Haven, Connecticut. She was

interviewed as part of the Connecticut Historical Society's Community History

Project discussing her experience during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Alberta

Witherspoon is a retired human services worker. She is a tenant council

president, a city-wide advisory board president, a housing commissioner, a

member of the mayor's affordable housing commission, and a ward co-chair of

Ward 7 in New Haven. She first learned about COVID-19 from the news. The first

disruption to her life occurred in January 2021 when her niece, who worked at a

hospital, contracted COVID-19. Her niece's condition worsened to the point of

needing to be admitted to the ICU and put on a ventilator before she passed

away from a cardiac event. Six weeks before her niece's death, Alberta's

daughter passed away from a heart attack. She explains that it seemed like

everyone around her began being infected with Covid at that point. She did not

want to be around other people and was cautious by wearing a face mask and

gloves when around others. She carried Lysol with her to spray in the elevator.

She explains that she attended a family retirement party and many of the guests

contracted Covid. Alberta explained to the host that contact tracing needed to

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be done, so guests would know that they had been exposed. Alberta first heard

about the Covid vaccine in February 2022 and found information about the

vaccines from the internet and television. She thought everyone should get the

vaccine unless they had a religious exception. Some of her family members

questioned the vaccine, but she decided to get vaccinated. She trusted the CDC

for information about Covid. She explained that during the pandemic most of

the meetings related to her housing work took place on Zoom or via

teleconference on RingCentral. Alberta discusses the Black Lives Matter

movement and the death of George Floyd. She then discusses the 2020 election,

how she is a Democrat, and her views on Donald Trump. She thinks absentee

voting should only be used by the sick and shut in. If you can go to the voting

polls, then you should go in person. She briefly discusses the Capitol

Insurrection of January 6, 2021. Her mental health was affected during the

pandemic because she felt isolated and was grieving several loved one's deaths.

She spoke with her doctor about how she was feeling and decided that therapy

could be helpful for improving her mental health. During the pandemic, Alberta

did a lot of baking, as it has always been a hobby, and she would give the food

she made away to other people. She said she lost some of her independence

during the pandemic and found that food prices rose. She would use the word

"terrifying" to describe the pandemic. The biggest lesson she learned was to tell

your loved ones you love them every time you get a chance.

Dimensions Duration: 31 Minutes, 45 Seconds