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**SPEAKERS**

Participant 222, Interviewer, Interviewer 2

**Interviewer 2** 00:00

Thank you. All right. So thank you for your permission to record. So you can see the interview is now being recorded. And we want to say, first of all, [Participant 222], that your first of all, our appreciation for you doing the interview. And that's your participation is totally voluntary. And if at any time, you can answer or not answer, you know, questions that we might ask, and you could even withdraw from the research, you know, at any given time, If you should decide to, okay, what we also want you to know is that information is is Hal confidential within our research team. So we will look at it, you know, to do our work, but we will not publicize your name or any identifying information, as well as not in the research results. So we just want to make sure that you know, that and then for your own sake around you, just be aware of who might be around and hearing any comments you might make in the event that there's things you wouldn't want, you know, someone else to, to hear as part of your interview for your confidentiality. Alright, great. And your consent is demonstrated. So you didn't receive a document. But for now, your consent is demonstrated by your continued participation in the interview itself. Okay. Okay, good. Any questions about that? either? No? Okay, wonderful. So thank you very much. All right. So we want to start out by first talking to your hearing a little bit about how you would describe your role or your experience in local food systems, and particularly, you know, insulin.

**Participant 222** 01:44

Okay. Just as a simple introduction of me, I am the President of the Board of Directors of the North Flint food market. And that's how I got involved in the foods. And I live in the vicinity, no more than maybe a mile and a half from the location. So it's not something that I got involved with, because it was just something to do, but I was impacted. And so that was the reasoning someone had come to me and talked about, and I've been involved in the community for a number of years now. But I was impacted when major box, big box stores had closed, like Meijer and Kroger. And was the few grocery stores we do have in the areas, they really have not met my standards. And so this was one part of being involved. And so I guess I would say I've been involved in this for about seven years, because you're Renee, you're aware of this. But Teresa, probably it's not that that the grocery store that I'm working with is a co op grocery store. So that is owned by by the residents, those who are members of the grocery store.

**Interviewer 2** 03:09

Awesome, wonderful. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. So in these particular interviews, Pamela, we're really focusing in on the localized food system, as well as the impact of racial equity. So we start out, first of all, by sharing with you the definitions that we have for the localized food system. So first being production. So the people who are growing crops are raising livestock. You know, so whether it's in your backyard doing that, or the larger scale, producers, farmers and folks, the second group, we've clustered together processing and packaging, so the people who are taking those bales that have grown, and cleaning them, washing them, packing them and preparing them, as well as those who do value added process. And so lovely tomato right now, but then we add some things to it and we turn it into a salt or sauce or something else that we want to use some old split in that grouping.

**Interviewer 2** 04:14

Then we have the wholesalers and resellers who are taking those products that are developing developed, and they are reselling them to others. Not they're not the producers or developers themselves in retail, so everywhere you go to buy food so have you you mentioned box stores that that would include the farmers markets, the restaurants, the farm stands, you know all of those different places that you go to buy food so retails are represented in that category. And then last but not least, not everything related to food is edible, nor do we eat everything. So we're awesome. So looking at what happens with bat food. So in some cases, it might be composted. And some other cases it might get rescued and moved along to, again, feed more people or even some people feed animals. So those are the five categories that we're focused on in the localized food system. Any questions or comments about those? No? Okay. All right, great. So based on your roles and experiences in the food system, where would you say? Or just, you know, influences myself or just experienced in the system? Would you say you have the most involvement or experience? Oh,

**Participant 222** 05:49

actually, I would have the production and growing. And the reason why I say that it was only in growing up. My parents always had gardens. As a matter of fact, my father had five acres in Montrose. And when we lived in Flint, and when we would get out of school, we would go and work almost five acres. So he said, when he called it was truck farming back then. And I didn't really realize the value until I got older. Because I always said, No, I'm never gonna do that, again. But that's not true, I'm getting to a point, especially at a stage in my life that I see how important because there's a difference when I go in the store. And let's say when you mentioned a tomato, and I tasted tomato, it's not the same as even though we took them out of the garden, we have more healthier to clean them, but you know, we want to close, but the taste is just so different. And so I know the differences in the, in on the head livestock and and you know, even with the eggs, I know the difference and when people make some statements, so that's not true. But I honestly have to say that it was the production and growing. And it was very, very valuable, because I do know the difference. I and I think that that's what helped even though as I got older, you know, start experiencing health issues. But and, and growing up, we always have the best we always had the best for the vegetables and and even, you know, even with the livestock. So I guess really that's where my experience really even more so than with the I'm not sure we know what I do now because we're planning the store. But But what would have would have been the growing of the

**Interviewer 2** 07:41

growing. Okay, yeah. And then what you're doing with the store fits into their retail. Exactly, right. Right. Right. Excellent. Well, I thank you for sharing that story. That's one of the beautiful things [Interviewer] and I get to hear about is, what people's experiences with food have been. And most of us we go back to our family. Going two weeks ago with the field I grew up on the other side of state, it's called going to the field. Yeah, that's what we used to call it. So [Participant 22], to do this, we're using a method called fuzzy cognitive modeling. And it's mental models; it's a way of looking at and capturing what you see and understand about the system. So [Interviewer] is gonna introduce you to that process. And that's what she's using to document what you share today.

**Interviewer** 08:33

So I'm just gonna run you through an example of the process. And before we get into it, also, you see me looking up all the time, it's because I have a second monitor that is above my laptop, okay, we like this mostly. So this basically, the process is that as Rene asking questions, and we talk through this conversation, I'll be adding concepts, which are these words in bubbles, and drawing connections between them based on your experience and your knowledge of the food system. And so the reason that we want to give you this introduction to what it is, is to make sure that you have a feeling of ownership over your map that you know, to enough to be able to interject and say, you know, I wouldn't connect it like that I wouldn't, you know, name that concept like that I would worded differently and stuff like that. So even though I'm going to be the one, you know, drawing out and building the system, and it's very much your map, so definitely feel that feel that freedom to interject and make changes as you see fit. And we'll be checking in every so often just say like, this is how I mapped what you're talking about, is that accurate to your understanding. So that's sort of like high level. But the the nuts and bolts of it is basically that we'll be drawing connections between concepts. That's basically saying How does one thing impact another? So if I'm looking at an issue like traffic in a fictional city, I might say that one thing that impacts how much traffic there is, is the number of cars. So once we decided there's a connection, there's basically two choices we have to make. The first is if it's a positive or a negative connection, and that doesn't mean that it's good or bad. It just means if one goes up, does the other one also go up? Or does it go down. So for cars and traffic, if there are more cars, there's also more traffic, less cars, less traffic will have a positive connection, and we'll end up with a blue arrow. A negative connection would be something like public transportation, if we had more public transportation or a better public transportation system, we would have less traffic as people are riding buses or taking the subway or something if it's a really big city. So we'll have a negative connection and an orange arrow. The last choice is how strong is a relationship, how influential is one thing on another, so for cars or traffic, I might put that as a strong relationship that it's, you know, really influential, really impactful, you know, if tomorrow, everyone decided to stop driving in their cars, as we wouldn't really have a traffic problem, not that that's likely. But you know, it is really influential, it's really impactful. Public transportation, I might put more of a medium connection, because while it can influence how much traffic there is, you know, the buses still on the road, there's the people who love driving their own cars, or maybe they live or work somewhere that's inconvenient to get to with public transportation. So you know, influential on how much traffic there is, that may be more of a medium connection. And a weak connection might be something like cycling. So if people are biking to work or something like that, you know, it can impact how much traffic there is, but it's not really a solution to the traffic problem can only have so much impact, you know, you're not going to try to carry your grocery is on a bike, you can't move a couch with a bike like it can address the issue, but it's not a very strong connection. So that's sort of the two two things, you know, once we decide there's a connection, we have the positive or is it negative? And is it weak, medium or strong? Any questions about this process? No, well, we'll see. Definitely, Rene will be talking, I will be muted quietly in the background, making all these connections. So part of my job is to be the expert in this this technique and guide you through that process.

**Interviewer 2** 12:41

It actually for you, it's mainly about the conversation, [Participant 222], and I will check in every now and then with you just to make sure that the connections are going well. So if you have fun looking at it while it's being drawn, that's great, but if not, feel free to- you know- not pay that much attention to it until we draw your attention to it. It is interesting when you first explore- when you first get introduced to this. So-so the first thing we're going to show you is, we talked about those sectors, right, of the food system. So what you see listed in the teal color are those five sectors that we talked about. And in particular, on the retail one, you see it broken out a little bit more, where markets, like the farmers market, and then the stores and then restaurants, because we know retail has different views to it. And then the other elements you see off to the left. And we'll get into this conversation as it comes up. But we'll also have a point when we ask you about it, is racial equity and inequities in the system. So I'll be sharing questions with you along the way, and in most cases, what we're doing is we're really listening as you describe the connections. So as you share, you have, you know, you grew up as doing growing and producing, but now you're in retail. So when you sit in that space of your expertise, how would you make connections between those things and other things? And mainly, it's just what you know about it, you know, how do you understand it to be working?

**Participant 222** 14:18

Okay, so you're saying from-from being a grower to retail?

**Interviewer 2** 14:24

Yeah, for example, that would be one and then even now as being a person who's developing retail, what do you see as the connections to all these other elements, you know, in the system, how do they work?

**Participant 222** 14:38

Okay — well-well I have seen it because there's one thing I didn't say is that my father also took his produce to the farmers market. So that is something even like, again, not understanding the value even back then. And then with the-with the retailers, I think it's important and because we're talking about it locally, that we use local farmers, that would be another reason because the produce will be fresher. You know, even though there's-there's things especially-especially in the winter here, there's-there's just some items we-we cannot get and we have to get it from other parts of the country. But then it doesn't last as long, as far as refrigeration. So I guess you know, those would be issues. Is there another component, cuz I'm on my phone, so I have to move this a little bit.

**Interviewer 2** 15:46

Ah okay. You know, we'll get the connections for you. Just think about-just think about the sectors cuz I can imagine on the phone. that's gonna be a little tough seeing that.

**Participant 222** 16:01

[Laughter] Well, you know, I enlarged it a little bit, but I did. Okay. It does give me some reminders. But yeah, getting back to that, it's extremely important that we use local farmers and it's not only just even just the freshness, but it also increases our economy. It is assisting, you know, financially. It will help our community, because this is the one thing and I know, hopefully, I'm not getting off the subject, but I'm a little troubled here in Flint, because I look, especially look at that processing portion; we have so few processing plants here. The only thing that I see is Koegel's, we lost a couple of dairies — we-I guess we still have some meat packing processes around, but I really don't see them. And then as far as for the vegetables, I'm not exactly sure what Edible Flint does, you know, I hear and I don't hear. But honestly, I think we lack food processing plants in the area. And it would help-it would help our economy if we had more of that, so. And that's something that even with the grocery store that I'm working with is something to-for us to even think about — Who else, in addition to the local farmers, where do we go with the, you know, with the food processing? So that's something you made me think about.

**Interviewer 2** 17:37

Mhmm, okay. Where could you go locally — got that.

**Participant 222** 17:54

Maybe ask me more questions [inaudible].

**Interviewer 2** 17:57

Yeah, so a couple things that I'm looking to. So we've already got the the fact that it's you know, fresh and and tied to the local economy. And you also talked a little bit about the seasonal aspects which [inaudible] go to external, you know, to food producers outside because of seasonal. You talk specifically winter, where you have to go there, and you made a connection there between the quality of that food because you said it doesn't last as long. So just a connection between the quality of food and the seasonal foods, so we got that. And then we have your value add.

**Interviewer 2** 18:43

So a couple of questions I might ask you is: right now, with the connection between the retailers we show right now that's between producers, markets, and stores, do you see any connections as well — between these? What was it? I lost my thought right there in the middle? That happens to all of us. So I was thinking about, you know, with you being the retail operation starting up, and you're looking to get the local producers involved, where else are you-who else are you looking to connect to beside the farmers who grow outside? Are you going directly to them or are you doing the wholesale? You know, as well for produce.

**Participant 222** 19:35

We'll probably would be doing combination, because I know we've been reviewing like regional — wholesalers, so I'm quite sure it's gonna be a combination.

**Interviewer 2** 19:51

Okay, so regional wholesalers, okay. You mentioned Edible Flint, so you do have one wholesaler locally. Do you-do you work with or do have a connection between [inaudible]?

**Participant 222** 20:08

Like I said, I guess today is really good because it's just made me think. You know, cuz I've just been working on the administrative side, you know, trying to move the project forward, because actually, our general manager is the one that would really be getting involved with more-more of this. But, I've heard of them, we do have someone that's on the board that works with them. So that's-that's the one thing we you know, we do have some connections me personally, I have not.

**Interviewer 2** 20:39

Okay. Okay. Nope, no worries. So, talk a little bit about the connections-the kinds of things that you're doing, specifically, that would connect to some of these other sectors in the role that you play. So you're on the administrative side?

**Participant 222** 20:57

Right, because being the the board president, it's my job to see that, you know, policies, that we're working on, so you know-you know, we finalized the bylaws, you know, getting the certain assurances. Really, actually, just moving the project forward, even though I'm not the-you know, there is a project manager-project manager, which you already know, Pastor Flynn. But, my job is to see like-really to represent the -member owners of the grocery store. And so, by representing them, then we have to just make sure that that certain things are executed, but really it's the general manager that's going to have more responsibilities with this, you know, she's gonna be doing the hiring, she's already right now, interviewing. There's so many things she's working on. But me, as far as is not on the startup at the store before the store to move forward. Anything that has to do with-with placement, the refrigeration, you know, anything like that.

**Interviewer 2** 22:07

All the operational stuff. Yeah, share with us, then, some of the perspectives that you have been hearing from your member owners. What kinds of things do they talk about relative to their experience, you know, in the food system that's shaping and influencing what you're doing as a retailer, maybe that's another way to come at it.

**Participant 222** 22:34

Yeah, with them, especially, I mean, quality is extremely important. They want the freshness — they want, I mean, the items that they would use, not something that somebody is going to tell them that they need.

**Interviewer 2** 22:53

Their choice.

**Interviewer 2** 22:55

Pardon me?

**Interviewer 2** 22:55

So it's their choice.

**Participant 222** 22:57

Yes, yes. Because especially because probably 95% is going to be-it's going to be your African Americans going to be shopping here. And so there's certain items they want. They want to make sure that they have the fresh greens that come in — if there's, you know, okra or anything that they're going to use, not, like I said, not something that people from other stores, you know, they may have everything. We may have some organic, but it's not going to be 100% across the board. That's not-even though this is a co op store, it's really going to look at more of a perspective of a regular store, I guess I want to say, more of a neighborhood store. And they're looking at the services to make sure that we have the special services, so those are the kinds of things we've been really working on as the board to push and especially with the general manager, she's-she's from the area. Her expertise is phenomenal. You know, if you've talked to [General Manager], she has 28 years experience at a large store and you know, as a store director. So there's certain things that we want to bring back the services that-that we knew as growing up, that people you know, hadn't gotten in the past.

**Interviewer 2** 24:27

Ah okay. So you're basically-when we look at the experience is what you're describing, the experience that your owner members are going to have in the story. Right?

**Participant 222** 24:41

Especially for the service — when people come into the store, that they're greeted, and with smiles, that they're-the option of people will take the groceries out of the car. However, we'll add, you know, if we-people need to order (I don't see this as a big percentage) but I'll let people order and we need to do deliveries, that type of thing-these are the kinds of things we're discussing. But especially that piece, when there's somebody available to you, you ask a question, we get those questions answered. And we do want the quality-we want very, very-we want clean stores. Because we intend to have meat, you know, just not prepackaged meats, but we'll have some of that, but the majority-they can have the cuts that they want. And we will have meat cutters, there. And we do have some people who are member owners who are retired, so we-so we will also be doing some coaching. In addition to that, though, we will do some partnerships, where we will have cooking demonstrations with me, because I swim around the deli area, we will be doing healthy food demonstrations, you know, how to prepare your foods maybe in a different way than you're accustomed to. And then in addition to that, we will also have a-a-an event center. So that will be available to the-to the-well actually, to the community if they wish.

**Interviewer 2** 26:33

Okay. And these are all the kinds of things that your member owners have been talking with you about, that they want to see happen in the store?

**Participant 222** 26:41

Yes, see, we do. We do community engagements. We do them once a month, and prior to COVID we actually sat at tables, where we divided up and maybe it might be your interest [inaudible] that it's not just certain people that are just working on the store, the member owners had a lot of input on what they want to see in the store.

**Interviewer 2** 27:08

Excellent. That's excellent. Excellent, excellent. Those are the kinds of things we definitely are interested in understanding about-about the experience. When you-as you are developing these conversations and having discussions with folks, one of the things we want to understand is a bit about some of the things that are influencing the food system, you know, in Flint. So, with-one of the things we want to discuss is like racial equity or racial inequity. So as it relates to either your work as a up-and-coming retail operation, or the experiences of, you know, folks, you know, in the food system in Flint, you know, how would you say that-what would you say about the impacts of racial equity or inequity on the-your experience as a new retailer or experience with people in the food system in Flint?

**Participant 222** 28:16

Well, we know that there's been a lot of inequities, as far as the few stores that are in our neighborhoods, they don't have the quality, they're not clean. You know, and really, in the produce, if you look at many of the produce sections, it's just inferior produce — and it's just appalling, to walk in-it looks like floors haven't been mopped and I don't know when and I've had an opportunity, especially when I was working my way through college, of working in retail, where we had to have those stores cleaned every night. We had, you know, we had to face departments do things like that, it's like people just don't care. And the stores that we have, it's almost like we're doing you a favor for being here. And so many of the retailers, the owners of the stores that are in our neighborhoods, they don't live here. They do not live in Flint, matter of fact, they don't even live in Genesee County. So it's-because I had an experience where I went to a place that had nothing but produce in Dearborn Heights. And I was shocked to see the quality of the produce there. And I said, these are the same people and I guess I have to look at the ethnic group, because they're either called Indians or I don't know who else is own stores from-from the Arab community. But this is one thing you have to remember, that who's, you know, the population in Dearborn and Dearborn Heights. I was just shocked to see the quality of it. And even when they saw this-the owner picked up a pepper and had a blemish on, and he threw it in the trash. And I said-and I was just amazed, first of all, that they did have something like that. And so those are the kinds of things and then we-there's a lot of price gouging, because see, we've also been, especially when working with some of our consultants, we've been going into stores, especially the board. We've gone into stores, we've looked at the prices, we've looked at the quality of the meats and the produce, and whatever else they had in the store. And I went into one store, in one of the Flint neighborhoods. And all the WIC products were in the front of the store. I didn't pay much attention to it while I was there, so I said, maybe I'll get a loaf of bread. And when I went to the-the cash register, the woman said, "you know, this is $4.50. Do you still want it?" And I was just really shocked that that loaf wasn't even like a full loaf of bread, but they had all the WIC products, that-those-that had to, I guess would be women and children.

**Participant 222** 31:21

But anyway, what they could qualify for — I couldn't believe the prices! They were just unbelievable. And so, maybe many of them don't know we've been coming in these stores and watching our women to, I think even a Family Dollar, and they have a lot of food but it's processed food. I saw someone with an EBT card and they spent about $75 on processed foods. And so this person is just right in front of me, and it has really opened our eyes by going out and seeing what people have and what we've had to work with. And then oh, the liquor stores, it's just unbelievable. And I've lived in the suburbs too. But I never saw the liquor stores, I've never seen anything thing like and then returning back to Flint to see this. And so we do have the inequities, we're paying more for lower quality foods. And especially for those that need it the most is-that they're paying because they don't pay attention if they have the WIC or if they have the EBT, you know, they just buy it.

**Participant 222** 32:37

But then with what we want to do, not only when you buy, we also will give you the opportunity to see how you can cook with it. You know-you know how you can, because we've taken so many things out of the schools. Whereas when we were taught how to cook and do home economics, and all these kinds of things; I'm working with another group that have decided to start a home economics, something totally from the grocery store. But these are the kinds of things that are appearing in the community. We're beginning to wake up. We need to do something differently. There are, you know, the universities that do have programs where their teachings just said, how do we reach the people that need it the most-the most. Those are the biggest things we have seen and it's just, it's appalling. And that we're for looking at the floors. And one store I went into, it's a destination store because of the meats, but I don't see how they can buy it because just looking at the floor and it's just all broken tile and-and it's dirty and-and I even asked someone, but they couldn't even help me, and I'm thinking, "how do people come here day after day", and they drive a good distance to get there because of the meats, but it's a turn off for me. And so we want to change that-we want to change the dialogue-the dynamics that you can buy local. And not to say that it will be the cheapest, we know that,you know that that's not gonna happen, cuz we know we have a lot of education to do.

**Interviewer 2** 34:09

Right. Okay. Excellent. Thank you. Thank you and on your end as a retailer and you may or may not know this. Are there barriers, you know, racial equity barriers to just your access to resources as a retailer? Is that impacting you in any way? You just talked about how it's impacting the experience, you know, that shoppers have, but as a retailer, is there anything that you've experienced as barriers to your participation in the food system?

**Participant 222** 34:46

Well, having the opportunity to to see other African American retailers — when I grew up, we had them. Even though they might have been smaller, there were mom and pop stores. We don't have that-the only time we really get to do this is when we attend the co-op conference in Wisconsin. We see others that are beginning to have co-op stores. And we have an opportunity where we can talk to each other, we can interact with each other. The closest one we have is one that's-surprisingly, they started working on theirs before we did-but they are having their grand.. not the grand opening the...

**Interviewer 2** 35:39

Oh, the groundbreaking — you're talking about Detroit?

**Participant 222** 35:40

Right, the groundbreaking there's-they're doing-we did ours in August, and they're doing theirs in a couple of weeks. But the thing is being able to contact those or even Black farmers or-or you know anyone like that, it's a barrier because we just don't-we just don't see them. They're not near nearby. And I think that's another reason why many people are looking at us. But then we also have the issues, I don't know if you ever follow Flint politics, but we have a lot of negative people out here, and we honestly feel that people don't want to see us do this. We go through more scrutiny than anyone else especially, and I really commend [Staff Name] because he goes through a lot to secure funding. I did a presentation about three weeks ago to a month ago now, at city council. I just wanted them to see-it was on our meeting night-and we decided to all come in person, and we had over 50 people that showed up. And you know, just to say these are the people that are member owners, they want to see-it was part of the American Rescue Plan Act. And there's been a lot of negative things-just really negative things, just-just negative comments. Really, one of the the council people put negative things on her page, which to me is an ethics issue. But-it's-there's-that has been probably the biggest barrier, you know, is having trust factors and people, because it's taking this taken-we've been working on this for seven years. And a co-op is very, very different. You cannot be successful if you don't have customers, or if you don't have member owners, and like I said, even to try to get the $250 which just helps with the startup costs, but people don't want to pay. "What are you gonna do with this?" I said, "Nobody asked Sam's Club what they're gonna do with every year you pay $45, you're gonna do it for the rest of your life, or $250; this is a permanent thing." So, I say the barriers, our trust. And then we have other people sometimes I question I said, "is this done by design, that they just don't want to see or don't think that we that we can do anything?" So we have to do a lot of encouraging. So this is going to happen, no matter what, this isn't a one person show. This is us and and then we've had people say, "well, what do they think, there's a specialty store out in Grand Blanc," they said "do they want to be this specialty store on the north side of Flint?" we just always say, "so what's wrong with that? Why can't we have something nice?" ...Because our renderings are nice and we want it to be first class. But then there's people that question why we are doing this.

**Interviewer 2** 38:59

Hmm. Okay, thank you for that. That definitely speaks to mindset as well as barriers that you just talked about. There's a lot of that going on. When you look at the system, as you know it in Flint, are there other influences that you feel are affecting the food system? You know, you talked a bit about politics. Are there other factors that you feel that have influenced or are influencing the system in Flint?

**Participant 222** 39:44

Because of the water crisis, we have a lot of giveaway programs so to speak. A lot of food pantries have popped up. I mean, it's a good process and yet, you know, some items are good, sometimes, it just depends-it depends on the week, you know what's given out. But then there's other times it really isn't the quality. And I just wonder if people notice that people are still getting in lines for water. Which, you know, you don't have much of a choice, whatever somebody is giving you, that's what you're going to get; you don't have much of a choice in that. But there are a lot of programs and what I'm questioning is, eventually it's gonna stop. You're going to still have some food pantries, you're gonna have some major ones. But some of that's going to stop at some point, you know people keep saying, "Well, you know, we still can't drink the water." Well, come on. There's not that many people that are left with, you know, pipe issues. But it's one of those things that if it's free, let me let me just go after it, but it's going to come to a point that it's not going to always be there. But yeah, right now, it is an influence. It is an influence right now.

**Interviewer 2** 41:21

Okay. What impact did you see from COVID, relative to the system?

**Participant 222** 41:34

COVID still showed that you needed — at least that this was an influence that you still needed, you needed to have balanced diets. And look at what you're eating, I guess I didn't pay much attention because I stayed in a lot, and sent my son to go get food. And, you know, that kind of thing. And then he could-he didn't mind, he was going to go out and it didn't matter. But I didn't see a whole lot of change. Because of the water crisis, and so we already had a system where there was some place where people could go, I mean, in addition to the stuff.

**Participant 222** 42:22

Oh, yes, it did, I take that back. COVID brought out a lot of price gouging — a lot of price gouging, long before we're having this problem now where there's a supply issue. But then, you could go in these neighborhood stores and they would have the paper products, whereas like Sam's Club didn't have it and the major boxstores, they didn't have the paper products. But the neighborhood stores did, so they got you in, because if you wanted to come in to get the paper towels and the toilet paper and that kind of thing. But if you went to the meat department, you're paying $80-90 for a roast. If you-so they brought you in for one thing, but then-so well since I'm here I might as well just buy it, but it was amazing. People started taking pictures of how much they were charging. So I have to say, it was a lot of price gouging.

**Interviewer 2** 43:17

Mhmm. Okay. I'm thinking... [Interviewer], any questions you have, in terms of some of the connections that you have here that you might want to ask [Participant 222] more detail about. Thank you so much, [Participant 222] this is a perspective that you've gone deeper in some areas. And I think because you're in a retail space, we really, really needed that perspective. So, other things, [Interviewer] that you might want to have explanation on some of the connections?

**Interviewer** 44:01

Two things I want to check in on that were implicit, but I want to make sure that they're there. Two things you talked about: sort of this central hub of things that influences people's decision of where they're going to shop, you know, options for online ordering and delivery and also options for curbside pickup that you talked about - would it be fair to connect COVID-19 to those two concepts as sort of the prevalence of them have risen a lot during the pandemic. Is that accurate to your understanding?

**Participant 222** 44:34

I don't know if it had that much of an influence on the African American community. Because we have a tendency of, we want to feel, we want to touch, you know, that kind of thing. Maybe the younger generation, because the majority of our member owners are seniors, I'm gonna have to say, or maybe 50 and up. And we don't really have that trust factor. I mean, now I'm-I've been the Amazon queen during this, but not to order food. So, I don't know, for our retail, if that's as much of an issue until we get more of the younger, because that probably has been a little bit of barrier too. Even though we've had younger people on our board, and who have gone to the co op conventions with us, they don't seem to be bringing the memberships in, because some of the things is if they don't-they haven't seen as many African American businesses as they did in my generation and the generation before me; they really have not had that opportunity to see that. We have a lot more of them that are doing-you know, entrepreneurs, but when, like you said, when it comes to delivery, like I said, we will have it as an option. But honestly, I don't see it as as being the highest end, because then also we come from a union town too, whereas my son will go to self checkout, well, I'm not going. If I have only one item I'm going to just get in the line. Because one, I don't want to take a job from someone. And number two, the store does not give me a discount to check out my own groceries and do that; I'm paying the same amount of money as somebody that's getting it alive. So with generations, that's different, I tell my son, he said, well, he's in a hurry, you got things to do, you know, he's in his 40s. I won't do it and basically, because I did grow up in a union town and my father was an hourly worker, in addition to being a farmer, it's important to me, you know, there's just certain things that I have certain standards that that I won't do. So like I said, we will make these things available; I know one generation will do it. But for a lot of them who are working now, I don't think that really has that much of an impact than the delivery.

**Interviewer 2** 47:10

Ah. Those are some great concepts you just introduced [Participant 222] there, the job creation, or the job sustaining, to the retail operation, you know, because of the options that you offer: self checkout versus which, you know, you tied that to...

**Participant 222** 47:36

I don't think we're going to have any self check in our store. From my understanding, we've had the discussion of this, and there's not gonna be any self checks. This way, we'll start out that way, we'll see [laughter].

**Participant 222** 47:46

But that we've been discussing thus far, because we have an 80,000 square foot store. And so, right now, that's not in the discussion to have any self checkouts.

**Interviewer 2** 48:00

Gotcha. So we want to make sure we have a note on it. It talks about jobs tied to local economy, specifically jobs, jobs and employment period. Okay.

**Participant 222** 48:11

And that's basially for the store, not only having an option to have a store in the neighborhood, especially in the North end of Flint, but also for job creation.

**Interviewer 2** 48:21

Job creation. Yes.

**Participant 222** 48:22

That was one of the biggest reasons why we would do this: job creation.

**Interviewer 2** 48:26

Okay, excellent. Excellent. Excellent. So we asked you a lot of questions. We talked a bit about influences. You talked about politics. We talked about water, and COVID, a little bit as well. And you talked a lot about the experience, and the things that are really done, what people are seeing, and also a bit about how race and racial equity or inequity tie in to that. In all that we have asked, is there anything that we've that we've missed, or some area that you think we should talk about that we haven't raised as a question to you?

**Participant 222** 49:11

No, those are good questions. Matter of fact, it just made me think so there are some things I'm going to cover in our next meeting, next board meeting. Because it really made me think about-because we've been-we've been working on this, but it's more than people see, like I said, especially, seeing what the competition is doing and what's good, and what's not so good. Some of them have been surprises, especially when I saw that WIC aisle [laughter] I was just amazed.

**Interviewer 2** 49:46

Yeah, yeah. I think one thing and I don't know if it's here, because you can point it out, but the generational differences and how that affects choices-choices in terms of like, you know, that impact employment, choices that impact how they shop for food, and things like that. So those were a couple of things I heard.

**Participant 222** 50:09

Right. It's important because I said...

**Interviewer 2** 50:13

Food choices.

**Participant 222** 50:15

The next generation, they think a little differently. And we have to take that into consideration. But there's some things because of having technology and doing things so fast. I don't think that they look at the part that if you get in that self checkout lane, you have eliminated a job and yet, yeah.

**Interviewer 2** 50:42

So tying that link to the food economy, yes. Right. Right. Other distinction I heard you make [Partcipiant 222] was, you talked about not only generational difference, but I don't know how we would frame this, but union mindset. I don't know if that's just generational or if there's another way to make that distinction. Because like you said, people that have gone through a union mindset versus others. Not quite sure how to represent that. But I thought that that was significant that you called that out? Okay, there we go support for unions, you might put slash union mindset, [Interviewer], that's great. Okay. Thank you, didn't want to lose that point. Because that's a big one, too.

**Participant 222** 51:35

Right? Because the union is very different today, than it was probably my father's generation; it was extremely important because it helps with wages, it helped with health care. And I guess I'd have to say there's been a major push for union busts, because when you look at the salary-or the wages that people have, let's say that go into General Motors now, it's very different. They're not making as much as the union had helped build on the past, and so many of that generation has retired or, you know, moved on.

**Interviewer 2** 52:15

Mhmm. Okay. Great. Thank you.

**Participant 222** 52:20

I'm not sure-but-I'm not sure. [inaudible] I need to do some research myself. How do people feel they're in unions, now? What's the feeling now? It's probably not as strong. Because when I used to work for the universities, and I put training programs in the plants, I had to have a union bug on my cards. I had to make sure I drove not just an American car, but it couldn't even be a Ford, it had to be a General Motors car. So I don't know, you know, I really don't know what the climate is now.

**Interviewer 2** 52:56

Okay. Anything else from the perspective of being the co-op and other factors that we should reflect here? Or you've walked us through a number of different things that have been really insightful.

**Participant 222** 53:12

I hope I didn't get off. You know, I hope I didn't get off of the questions that you asked. But when you asked, and it just came to me, and I just started thinking about things. Cuz at first I was thinking, I don't remember anything with COVID. And I said, oh, yes, I do. The people were taking pictures of how expensive meat and this type of thing was, but yeah [inaudible] in the last few years.

**Interviewer 2** 53:37

Yeah, no, everything was on point. Because it's really all about your perspective and your experiences, and what's going on. Our job was to ask questions that prompt and help you to tell your-you know, to articulate your experience. So everything that's shared, is on point. It's your map. It's your experience, right, it's what you know.

**Participant 222** 54:02

Exactly. That's true. It's true.

**Interviewer** 54:05

Do we have a hard stop at 1:30? I don't.

**Interviewer 2** 54:13

Okay, so I'm going to ask the last question. Do you have at least five more minutes, [Participant 222]?

**Participant 222** 54:19

Yes, I do.

**Interviewer 2** 54:20

Okay, wonderful. So the last thing we would ask, you know, when you look at this map and the changes, or just the the system as you understand it with us, you know, because we're looking for leverage points and ways to facilitate change. And obviously, there's things that we want to implement, and want to see different. So what kinds of things would you see or suggest would help improve the food system in Flint?

**Participant 222** 54:58

One, see that we have a-that we can go from the process, you know from the growing. I really would like to see some food processing plants in Flint. I've been talking about this for years; I'd like to see that. We are set up for manufacturing and they have all the infrastructure, we have the highway, we have the trucking, the freight, the rails, the highways, we have all of that. So I would like to see more like a food processing plant. I would like to see more type of stores that we're doing, I don't want it to be just us; I would like to see it in other parts of the city.

**Participant 222** 55:48

And do more education: educating people — that can be anyone, you know, concerning foods and concerning the quality of foods. Even showing the comparison, you know, between organic and clean and in regular foods. And I guess really just if you're in business to have a store regardless of a person's social economic background that you think of quality regardless of you know, where they live. I've been on, even the South East Bay, going more toward Burton, and there was this one store and I went in it one time, and they just happened to have something that was on sale. And I'm glad they close, because it was an awful place; it was just awful. And so, you know, we need to do a lot of educating and working with each other. But yeah, I would like to see more, if not a co-op store, more stores that are owned by minorities.

**Interviewer 2** 57:21

Okay, wonderful. Well, we thank you so much, [Participant 222], we know t hat with all this going on with you all to get this store open, that you had a lot to do. So we really deeply appreciate you taking time, because your perspective is a unique one, and it's a place where we needed the voice. So we appreciate that.

**Interviewer 2** 57:46

You will receive a of a evaluation. So two things, one of the link, you can click that if you want or one of your email one of the if you have any questions after this or something comes back to my like way, I just thought about this and I didn't say it, feel free case we have to resist email address to the notes for you. One of the questions that you'll see in the evaluation says hey, if you know other people that we should invite into this, we're actually pretty much in our last week. But if there are if there's one or two people that you feel like hey, you have to after having been through this, and you must talk to this person, then please reach out to us you know as quickly as you can. And have you

**Participant 222** 58:37

talked to Arlene yet have you talked early you have talked to her okay, and

**Interviewer 2** 58:44

that we would love to talk and we was like you know wild and loud because he's doing all this stuff is Pastor Glenn. You really need

**Participant 222** 58:55

to talk to him a fight find some way there has someone they can

**Interviewer 2** 59:04

reach out to him and tell him that and hopefully he'll he'll give us an hour you know this time and because it takes about it it takes at least an hour right right maybe maybe a little more but I hear what you're saying we feel the same way so if there's anything you can do to help with that that would be greatly appreciated because

**Participant 222** 59:24

I was I was crying because I mean all of us were busy that's what what happened on Friday was back to back and I mean my meeting went over so he because he was in there's other things you know that he he would have to this perspective especially trying to secure farms. Hey, like I said he's done a phenomenal job and in that regard.

**Interviewer 2** 59:49

Okay. Will be flexible just like you know, because his his voice is really super important. Right? We flexible you know in terms of you know how we we make space and fitted in. Just let us know, let us know.

**Participant 222** 1:00:04

All right, I'll try. I'll try. Okay. All right. Thank you so very, very much. Great talking to you again.

**Interviewer 2** 1:00:13

Yeah, we'll be reconnecting because we need to reconvene our group to chat with working on so. All right.

**Participant 222** 1:00:23

Okay. All right. Bye bye bye bye