

Franklyn Acevedo interviewed by Jaelyn Heredia
July 21, 2020
Dyckman, Manhattan

Jaelyn Heredia: My name is Jaelyn Heredia and I am interviewing Franklyn Acevedo in New York City on July 26th, 2020 at roughly 4pm. Franklyn Acevedo, do you give me permission to record this oral history?

Franklyn Acevedo: Yes ma'am.

JH: Okay great. I'm going to ask for a few demographic questions first about how you identify yourself. So, your name?

FA: Uhm, my name is Franklyn Acevedo. My age is –

JH: *inaudible*

FA: Oh-

JH: Yeah, how old are you is the next question.

FA: 19.

JH: Do you have any occupation?

FA: ... uhm

JH: Or you're a student, right?

FA: Yeah.

JH: College student. Uhm, what's your racial identity?

FA: Hispanic.

JH: And your gender identity?

FA: Male.

JH: And your sexual orientation?

FA: Uhh male.

JH: Sexual orientation?

FA: Duhh

JH: Sorry?

FA: Duh... What do you- what do you mean?

JH: Male?

FA: Yeah.

JH: Okay. Uh, can you tell me where you're from?

FA: New York, New York or uptown as many would like to call it. Dykeman.

JH: Do you know how "- you mentioned you're Hispanic, do you know how your family ended up in New York City?

FA: Um, yeah. My mom used to live in DR and uhh during her time growing up, she's lived there most of her life. And so when she was old enough to have me, we both uh came to New York and uh that's where I was born.... So she got all her stuff when she came here, she got her citizen stuff. Everything.

JH: Thank you. What was... your opinion of police before the protests against police brutality? Um, began in May 2020. So you know like the content of this interview-

FA: Yeah

JH: So I'm gonna just get into the questions. Can you just tell me-

FA: Yes.

JH: Prior to, kind of this movement um, [inaudible]

FA: Um, Gotcha. Um, let's see I never really uh- my opinions never really changed of the police. I've never liked them in any sorta way- Not in terms of just them, like, doing what they gotta do cause at the end of the day they are police officers, and there are police officers that do end up doing their job. But what I don't like is... them respecting this corrupt system, and them also using it to their advantage in certain instances. And it just happens a little bit way- you know, it just happens way too much, uh in our society especially. And uhh it's just something that I've always seen even before this George Floyd stuff, so it's um, it's really important that now, you know, people are now seeing what's happening and are now awakening to this corrupt system...

JH: Thank you. So it sounds like you, you mentioned that your opinion didn't change so your opinion has not changed at all since May 2020?

FA: No, because uh, I never really had uh... I wouldn't wanna say respect but umm, I just didn't uhh, I can't really find the word for it. But you know it's just-

JH: You have certain negative opinions...

FA: Yeah.

JH: Which you did kind of explain how, um, you don't really like how police officers respect the corruption that exists, and they use it to their advantage. They can and do.

FA: Yeah.

JH: You mentioned that, um... What was your opinion of protest movements in general before May 2020?

FA: Ummm, I thought that they were very important, uh, that they were very thought out, they're very wholesome, because at the end of the day you need a whole community behind something that everybody believes in, and if that's you know Black Lives Matter, the killing of another Black person, whatever it is you, need a whole community. And in this case, a whole country behind your- that because you know a lot of these things have been happening for a long ass time now, so the fact that there are protests is just already important in itself because we have a lot of young people nowadays, now realizing that their rights could get taken away if they do get older - systematically and... um now is just the time to know, and now is really important to know about this stuff because at the end of the day, if you don't there's a lot of stuff that can change, without us even knowing so I'm very glad to have a whole youth, a whole like family almost, of brothers of all the same color, or even a different color coming out, during this pandemic especially, to fight for what they deserve for, you know, it really makes me happy.

JH: So you believe that the youth has a big role in protests in general?

FA: Yes-

JH: [inaudible]

FA: And it shows because- yeah because not to discredit the older people that are going but, the youth going there is, um, showing people that young people really do pay attention to stuff and uh, when it's something that uhh... f**k. When there's something that's like on the line in terms of their career or their life, you know they're gonna know and they're gonna wanna go out for that thing. And they don't want any problems when they're going out to do that set thing, you know? So, seeing the youth now is just very inspiring to see because, a lot of people are like 'oh, you know, these young people don't really know what's going' on... this-that and the third,' but at the end of the day we do, because we go to college. We have, we have to be successful in our lives you know, we want the best or better for our family and everyone else around us, but how can we do that when live in such a corrupt place? Where all these people just try and

put you down in ways you don't even know of, you know? So it's really, it's really great to see... that uhh, the youth especially are now waking up and they're taking a stand, you know, they're doing what they have to do. They're fighting for their rights so... I really appreciate it.

JH: Uh huh... what would you say is the reason for these protests having started in May is?

FA: Uuuhhhh, just build-up honestly. A lot of build-up. Centuries and centuries of just oppression and just systematic racism it's just... all of it just comes down to an end. There's just a point where if you keep fighting, they're just gonna keep going harder and harder. George pro- I said the George protests, the George Floyd incident especially is something that can uh- we can all say is something that really ignited the fire. But honestly it was just all the pent up anger from not being listened, from prior protests you know? Prior protests weren't as strong as this one. The fact that this one got the recognition it deserved from millions, let alone 50 states. That shows something you know-

JH: From all 50 states

FA: Yeah, it really shows that um everyone is just here to listen, and everyone is here to pay attention and make right in our society and basically what we're being fed every day.

JH: What you said about communities and their role in protests are kind of symbolic of like the community coming together... to... address issues,

FA: Exactly, and that's all society needs, really, is a community. Because without a community we just- people, you know higher-ups and elites, what they can do, which is obviously just not good at all in any way, umm, you're gonna have these people just taking over andddd let them do all the work and not let communities do work. How... just look at how many communities now do so much for their own neighborhood, imagine what a government could do for a country. So it really shows you that needing communities is essential now, and the fact that there's communities- and many more communities, coming out is just, you know is just unbelievable. Cause we need all the help we can get, especially now. Been protesting since, like, the 1900s, probably even before, we don't even know. So the fact that now we're getting so many protests, so many things are happening... it's just, it's honestly like... I don't know like, you honestly can't even describe it almost, it's, that's how big it is. The fact that it's impacted not even a community at this point it's just whole stadium crowds worth of people. A whole family.

JH: [inaudible]

FA: Yeah.

JH: Shifting a little bit into how the coronavirus has changed your life, um, you can just talk about this briefly, like this is something that's like going on at the time of these movements, so I just wanna talk a little bit about how they might relate. So starting off with how the Coronavirus has changed your life in general?

FA: Umm, the coronavirus never really changed my life... Necessarily in any way where it was like either heartbreaking or heartwarming really, uhh it was more of like can you really withstand the thing that's going on right now, can you be able to be like, be off your phone and do other things rather than just, just the one thing which is just looking at the media. There's a lot of tests that the coronavirus has put out for certain individuals and uh, for me personally, uh, I saw those tests and you know you fail a couple, you pass a couple, but at the end of the day you know there's... uh there's something this break has really showed you, your true colors and what you want to accomplish- if you even took the time to do it anyways but yeah.

JH: Kind of puts things in perspective. Like being challenged mentally... just, you know in terms of health and stuff. But mental tests, as you put it. ... How do you think the coronavirus has impacted the protests?

FA: Umm, I think it affected it greatly, but not to say that it's a bad thing because, at the end of the day we were all at home and we all pretty much did nothing but look at our phones and look at the media and look at the news because what else is there to look at especially now, everyone wanted to know everyone wanted to... not know, but get an update on the coronavirus, what was happening, are there any new cases, what can we do to stay alive, and then in the midst of all this we had George Floyd, you know a guy who just passed away from police brutality just now it almost just... it was almost as if this was, like, waiting to happen because all of us just... in a house, just, isolated from the world except for our phones just for us to look at police brutality again... but this time it wasn't even just police brutality it was a whole lynching- let's just be honest.

JH: Mhm,

FA: 'Cause, no one just puts some- no one just puts their neck on someone's neck and then visibly for eight minutes and then calls it police brutality, that is just, in my opinion not police brutality at that point it's just a lynching but everyone just looking at that from their houses you know were just in... enraged, you know they don't know what the f**k to even think because all they're thinking about is- is this guy even going to get arrested again now, or is this going to be another cop who walks away from all this going, 'damn, I just killed a black person, oop, their, that- yeah we're done,' but uh, obviously in this case it uh, spread wild fire. spread within the first few hours of that s**t being out, you already had protests going up the ass, you already had a lotta s**t going' down, a lot of people... going out, reaching out for the community, you know. By just from a few hours you already had... a community, you already had it there. So the fact that we were all able to just see for ourselves, at the same exact time - because this is also important is the fact that we all saw this at the same time. And the fact that coronavirus was a thing and we were all in our house, like we all saw this at the exact same time so no one

could say that. What this was, was acceptable. We all saw it at the same time, and we all had the same opinions about it. And so because of that, we just made- we just made it happen. And I'm very grateful for that moment because at the end of the day, whether or not if coronavirus was a thing, this is still something that we have to fight to this day because it's something that's just gonna keep going and going for generations, and it's gonna keep getting worse. So, what- what better way to do it than now? We have to break the cycle now, because if this keeps happening it's just... it's just gonna be 1900's all over again. It's just gonna be... the olden times, but just futuristic s**t, you know? It's like... real s**t.

JH: Yeah.... Thank you, um, now were you involved at all in the protists- protests in May 2020?

FA: Umm, yes. I have been in... three protests, three or four? But I want to go to Occupy City Hall way more because um, I heard that occupy City Hall you know um, recently- I don't think anyone knows this yet they haven't had it in the news, but at 3:45pm- I'm not sure if it was yesterday or the day before, they uhh, they raided Occupy City Hall at 3:45 and they just went in there, took all the tents down from the homeless, and umm they came down in like a whole army so that's somewhere I would wanna go more often and you know if everybody else can go there as well that would be very important because City Hall is in need of people right now. And um, I do wanna, I do wanna go there in the future but yeah, I have attended to a couple and umm.... Let's just say the couple that I have ate- that I have attended to be the pre- the peaceful ones. And... the ones where you know, s**t got very intense and a lot of people were hurt, harmed, you know, a lot of stuff went down there but yeah.

JH: Do you... have any stories that you could share about your involvement? So you mentioned that the protests you participated in were peaceful... however there was, um...

FA: Yeah.

JH: ... Violence... at the end. But could you explain a little bit about that?

FA: So, going to the two different protests, you really got to see, um, who's really the fault for this. And you can see that the police are- at the end of the day, the fault of what they do because why would you push an innocent bystander to the floor, why would you push your car over the- from what it looks like, you know, 20 to 50 people out of the way, probably breaking ones' leg, you know? Why would you do all that when all we're doing is just voicing out an opinion? You know? It doesn't make any sense, and uhh, as far as the peaceful protests, those would normally go around, you know, early in the morning, and those would be uhh very wholesome, very heartbreaking because a lot of people are going there just out of respecting, just everything there. And it's very heartwarming and you, you know, you just wanna cry when you see something like that because there's a lot of people there and it's overwhelming to see all those people fight for what's right, and you know uh, really voice out their opinions. And it's just, you know,

it's very good to see. And as far as the other protest, which are the ones during the day, towards night which is when it gets more uhh, I don't wanna say more intense but cops definitely show more side [I believe he meant "sign"] of force during the day and night then uh, then in the morning. From what I've seen, um, I can't remember - one time when I went downtown there was a, you know, again just an army of cops just pushing a lot of people out of the way, out of the sidewalk, into the street, you know. And um, although nobody was bleeding, people were hurt. Somebody's ankle was um, you know, sprained. An ACL was probably torn, I'm not even sure myself because he was, you know, on the floor a good amount of the time, and uh that goes to show you a lot of things do happen behind the scenes. And um... more people are getting hurt than expected, you know? You can see it in the camera, you know some people do get hurt, but in person that is just- what you see on the video is just, you know the just sc- just scratching the surface [compared] to what there actually is outside, you know. There's a lot of stuff outside that uh, you know it could be scary for some people, could be traumatizing almost, so...

JH: Thank you, um can you talk a little bit about, uh you mentioned that going to those protests has opened your eyes to who's kind of like the offenders, the real offenders, and um, what happens behind the scenes. Can you talk about how you feel about the cops' response to protests? Um just in general from what you see on the news, but also maybe the police's response to the protests you've attended.

FA: Ummm, are you talking 'bout what they've said in the media or them responding to us during the protests?

JH: Um both if you, and whichever you-

FA: Umm... as far as physically it normally depends on where you are because there's some parts where it is peaceful and some parts where it gets pretty hectic and where it's know to get hectic, but... at the end of the day, you are authority, you have all these weapons, you have a lot of tools at your disposal... why use it against people who just barely even have another T-shirt over them, you know?

JH: Mhm

FA: You're just running around with one T-shirt getting hurt when they can, you know they can possibly die from something like that, you know? They don't, we don't have armor like they do. We don't have vests like they do, we don't have, like, three layers of T-shirts over us. It's 90-degrees outside, we can only protect ourselves for so much, for so long. For so much and for so long, you know? It's um... it's just crazy to see it. And as far as the media goes, umm, cops... there are some that understand and there are some cops that have, you know, shown out publicly you know that they do get it and they understand our frustration, but uh, on seeing that video of that police chief - what, I'm not sure if that was from the police chief, but uh-

JH: Of the NYPD?

FA: Yeah...

JH: I think I know what you're talking about.

FA: Yeah... he uh, he was like talking and he was like 'oh, we're being targeted as the bad guys, yadda-yadada,' and he was making points where he literally just contradicted himself because he, 'cause what he says is what we're fighting for, you know? We're the oppressed.

JH: Yes!

FA: We're tryna fight. You guys are fighting for absolutely no reason. There isn't really a reason for NYPD to fight, because at the end of the day if they are fighting, they are fighting for a corrupt system which doesn't make sense in the slightest bit. And that kinds tells you, like, 'hey man, we really do need communities and really do need the youth, and we need just everyone. Together.' 'Cause at the end of the day you can't trust government, we can't trust NYPD especially during this time, where we're tryna fight, and they're tryna fake be compliant, tryna be manipulative. Almost just using propaganda-type stuff, just like... just... you can't. You gotta break it.