

Interview with Gene Glover

Ariana Flores, Interviewer

**May 3, 2021
Macalester College
Bigelow Building
Dorm Room**

00:00

[AF] Hello, I'm Ariana Flores. I'm conducting my third interview [for the class project] here with Gene Glover. Okay, so firstly, I'd like to give you a brief overview about this interview along with your rights as an interviewee. If you agree, I'll ask you for your consent along with your full name and today's date. This interview is for my medical geography class and Macalester College's COVID-19 archive project. The mission of this project is to collect information on the various impacts of the pandemic on our lives through an array of interviews and images. This will be published through the college and will be available for public viewing. If you agree to participating in this interview, I'll be asking you about your experiences during the pandemic. Feel free to provide as much or as little information as you see fit. If you feel uncomfortable at any point, we can stop the interview. Okay, do you agree to participating in the interview?

[GG] Yes.

[AF] Can you give your full name and today's date?

[GG] Gene Glover. May 3, 2021.

[AF] Alright so first, would you like to briefly introduce yourself?

[GG] Gene Glover. Sophomore here on Macalester campus, about to be a junior, kind of crazy. I'm from Spearfish, South Dakota, which is in the Black Hills on the west side of South Dakota, the better side. And that's like about all there is to know about me. I like to fish, hike, rock climb, and cliff jump. That's advanced.

[AF] So what's it like growing up in South Dakota?

[GG] It's interesting. Growing up with two parents that were professors, the ideology around was always so different in my household versus my friends that I met or people like that. But growing

up in the small town of Spearfish, I feel is the best place to grow up just because if you get in trouble, wherever you go, someone's gonna know you. My friend's mom will find me doing something that I shouldn't be doing at some parking lot or something. So, I mean, in that way, it wasn't that nice for me when I'm trying to get into trouble. But generally, it's a good thing.

[AF] Are you getting into trouble frequently?

[GG] For legal reasons, no.

[AF] And what were some of your hobbies or interests that you like to do, back in South Dakota?

[GG] Well, given that it's not a large city, there are not really cool places to go eat, like Paris--I actually don't know what city people do. I do a lot of fly fishing, hiking in the Black Hills, rock climbing. Over the last couple of years I've gotten into cliff jumping and bridge jumping. I played soccer throughout high school. That's how I spend most of my time.

[AF] How'd you decide to come to Macalester?

04:06

[GG] I got a letter from Macalester, and that was about the only reason that I applied. It was kind of cool. And they were very generous with my student package. And I thought I was gonna go to Colorado Boulder, but they did not give me a lot of money. So I did not end up going there.

[AF] Okay, so I guess we're gonna transition more towards life during the pandemic. So when COVID-19 first came to the United States, what were your first thoughts?

[GG] Before we were forced to go home, it felt really abstract, like it would never really affect me. It felt kind of like Ebola when a few people in the US got it, but they were well contained and it never really spread. Yeah, but when it started spreading, I mean, I got a little bit nervous, but it felt like something that wouldn't really eventually affect me in any way. And then in the middle of March when we had to leave, that's like probably the first time that it actually hit me that this is gonna be life changing for me. Yeah, so I guess that's how I felt before.

[AF] We're people like taking it very seriously at first on campus?

[GG] No, no. Well, there was one point where we had to get into a really long line to try to take food out of Cafe Mac, because they didn't want us to go there for a few days. But no one really knew how to act, or what preventive measures would be beneficial. They said at one point that

maybe we should try wearing masks or something. So I took a towel, and I put a fishing line through it with a hook, and tied it around my face--more as a joke. I didn't wear it around campus because it looked kind of dumb. So I feel like that's a good representation of how seriously I took COVID-19 precautions at the time.

[AF] How soon after the pandemic came were you guys allowed or not allowed to go to classes?

[GG] At any point, we were allowed to go to in-person class. I remember the spring break everyone thought "oh, we're just gonna get an extra week of spring break" because we went to school up to then. And we were told to pack our things a little bit in expectation that we might not be coming back. But like I said before with my expectations of COVID-19 and how seriously I took it, I took very little home, leaving a lot of my stuff here, including one of my plants, which sadly died. But yeah, I'm forgetting what the question was now.

[AF] Oh, how did a lot of other people besides you handle it? Was there anyone wearing masks?

[GG] Oh no, I think some of my friends were starting to get a little stressed about it. At that point, New York was probably kind of bad. But at that point, I don't think South Dakota had a case. So it hadn't really affected anyone that I knew, personally. So it took me probably till I came back to Macalester that I really started taking it seriously. And I'll talk about that later. But yeah, I really expected to have a two week spring break, and I kind of expected it just to blow over. But you heard more and more about the cases in New York--I don't really remember where else it was bad. Yeah, it seems like an abstract concept. And then that's when we started learning. The body count started getting worse and yeah. So not great.

[AF] So was it a shock when Macalester first said you guys aren't coming back?

10:00

[GG] A little. It was mostly disappointment that I felt. I went home and I was with my friends so it wasn't too bad in South Dakota. At that point nobody took COVID-19 seriously. So we were kind of just doing our own thing at home. And yeah, it was strange the fact that we were going to be at home for at least the next five months. Or maybe blame Macalester on thinking that we might come back after a few more weeks.

But yeah, I guess after that we started doing online classes, which were so bad. I hated that because some of my professors were kind of old. My French professor, she was so nice. But she had no clue what she was doing on zoom. And she dealt with the problem of not being in-person by just assigning more things. So I went from having three hours of French class and maybe three hours of French homework every week, to having an hour of French class every day and

three hours of French homework every day which would suck. And then my chem classes and chem labs were harder to do.

I don't really remember what else I had. But I remember distinctly, as soon as classes started, the first couple days were fine and felt almost like a syllabus day because no one really knew what was going on. But after that there were distinct chunks, where I was doing four hours of classes a day, and then like 12 hours of homework. I would wake up at 8am, do my stuff, have two or three free hours to hang out with my friends, and then I would do homework till like 11pm and just be exhausted after that. So that was not ideal. And that made me a little bit nervous about how I was going to work in the module system. And the module system really feels like that, but cut in half. So I think it's a good idea, given that we're online that we're only doing two classes, or at least that the professors have had more experienced teaching online. It's more of a reasonable workload.

[AF] Do you think that Macalester, when they initially went online, were prepared?

[GG] [Shakes head] I was shaking my head, so no.

[AF] How would you compare the quality of the classes, since they're both still virtual? How would you compare the quality of the classes now versus when they first went online?

13:48

[GG] They're definitely more enjoyable now, I'd say. I feel in a lot of situations that we're learning less than we would have in person, or less than I would have in the last couple months of my freshman year. At some points, my professors have said "wow, these guys are doing a very good job, this is exactly how much we would have learned in person". So maybe it's just that I'm only taking two classes. But it feels like less information. My cell biology class feels super easy. And I enjoy the class, but I don't feel like I'm really learning that much. Not as much as that I expected from a hard science like cell biology. It feels more like some other classes that I would take for a gen-ed (general education) or just a filler class while I'm taking three harder ones. I'm not complaining at this point, I took o-chem (organic chemistry) last module, which was tough. So it's been a nice restful module for me.

[AF] Do you think you prefer class formats now or back when it was just a regular semester system?

[GG] I definitely liked my classes more in a regular semester system. What's nice about the module system is I've been kind of able to crank through a lot of my requirements as pre-med.

Because I probably could not have taken biodiversity, cell biology, and stats all at the same time. But in this case, I was able to do that, which was super helpful in terms of me doing my bio major and getting stuff done. But no, I definitely enjoyed my classes and my professors a lot more in-person. And the few times that I've been able to be in-person with professors, when they offer it twice a week or something, it's a way more enjoyable experience for me in-person with them. And I feel like the professors are more personable. And I feel like it's hard to connect with people over zoom, especially those that you don't know.

[AF] Do you think it's been difficult balancing your time with the classes now, considering they're faster paced? Some might say.

[GG] Yes but just considering my hard class, if it was easy I could. I recognize that every day I would have to do the three hours of o-chem and then an hour and a half of studying. So I could anticipate what I was supposed to do. Whereas with my easier classes, I feel like it's harder to budget my time. Because with cell bio, for example, I've been late on a bunch of things, not because I don't have time to do it, but because I just don't look at the Moodle page. And then I'm like "oh no, I missed two assignments". But I wouldn't say it's harder to budget my own time. It's more just realizing that I'm in classes, and I have to do things for them. In the last year of the semester system, I would have a schedule.

So I go to class at 9:30, and then I'd get out at 1:20 and then I eat lunch. And then I work until 4:30, and then I'd usually do a bit of homework before dinner, and then hang out with friends or do more homework after that. So it was a pretty strict daily routine. Whereas now I wake up at like 10:30 or 11:00, roll out of bed, get lunch, consider doing some homework for a while, generally don't, then maybe like go play soccer. Then I'd realize that I have to do homework, and come back frantically to do some. And that's about it. There's so much less structure to my day now. Especially like without o-chem. O-chem was the one thing that put structure to my day.

18:48

[AF] What do you think's most different about college this year, as opposed to last year, when things were normal?

[GG] I feel like it's way different meeting people. I think most of my friends that I met last year I met through classes. I would sit next to them and then talk to them. Like "we should do the homework together" or something like that. Whereas this year, I feel like I've met most of my friends through the group that play soccer together. And then from there admit their friends or ways like that. I feel like I'm not going to reach out to someone on a zoom call to "hey, do you want to do the homework together?" It's either I know someone in the zoom call, or I'm just

gonna do the work by myself. So I feel like that's maybe the biggest difference is. It's just hard to network or make connections with other people.

[AF] Besides like making connections with people is there anything else you miss about a normal college experience?

[GG] There are way more events and things that we can do. It's nice that they've had some sports back. So it's been cool to watch those. But I go to plays, or my roommate Lou, he's in the orchestra. So I'd go watch him three or four times a year. Or I have friends in the various choirs, and I'd go listen to them. Generally every weekend something was going on, whereas now there's not really that much that goes on, at least that I know about. I don't read the Mac-daily. Yeah, I feel like that's a big difference. The Leonard Center just opened up, and I used to spend a lot of time there. But I feel like wow, it's a large change. I feel like connections to people is the biggest one.

[AF] On the contrary, are there any positives of this year compared to last year? Anything you actually enjoy about campus?

[GG] Sometimes it can be nice not having so many people on campus. Like tables at Cafe Mac are almost always open, the ping pong table is almost always open. You can go to Shaw Field and there aren't like 10 different groups playing Ultimate Frisbee or Spikeball. So that's nice. Other than that, I'm not sure. I also kind of miss the ambience of people doing things around me, you know. But I guess with the schedule, it's kind of nice to that you can go through a bunch of things through the module system. But yeah, I guess being from South Dakota with few people, it sometimes can be nice not having so many around me.

But I definitely miss having upperclassmen around too. I feel like they bring an amount of tradition that is lost on first years, like I would have no way of learning things like throwing snowballs at the bell. I guess you learned that eventually.

[AF] Yeah. So what is some advice you'd give to first years? Or what do you think you'd want them to know most about?

23:14

[GG] Well, if I was talking to one of my friends, I'd specifically say to him that he should not be taking so many labs in general, because there are so much more difficult in-person, I feel at least mine. But they're way more fun in-person. They just take up a lot more time. Also, I feel it's a lot easier to talk to your professors. And, not really become friends with the professors, but know each other more. And I feel like you should really take advantage of that when you're in-person

with them. I feel like if you know them, and you feel comfortable around them, that's the best way to, even if it's a hard subject, get better at it. Sometimes I was kind of intimidated by my professors. And I feel like those are the classes that I enjoyed the least or did the worst. And I think just take advantage of being able to make connections with people in-person rather than just like meeting numbers.

[AF] I'm gonna transition more towards life during the pandemic. So what were some of your favorite hobbies or things to do during the pandemic in South Dakota?

[GG] Well for a long time, like I said, I was kind of stuck doing a lot of homework every day. So I didn't have a bunch of free time. But in the moments that I was taking COVID-19 seriously, I would try to do things that were away from other people. And fly fishing was one of those things where you don't have to be close to others, you're not supposed to be close to other people. So I did a lot of that even when it was kind of cold, when you're not really supposed to go fly fishing.

I remember this one day--a fun fact about Spearfish Creek: it's one of two creeks in the world that freeze from the bottom up, instead of top down--and I had already known that, but I was made very specifically aware of that when I tried to go fly fishing this one time, and I was walking in the creek. And I was like "why is it so slippery" because I kept falling in. And it was because there was ice on the bottom. And so to try and remedy that I would try to walk across these logs, or trees that had fallen across. And I for some reason, this one time, took my shoes off, and then proceeded to fall five feet off of this tree into the water, lost my shoes, and had to walk a half mile back to my car. She (the car) was covered in snow.

So that was not a great experience fly fishing. But it did nothing to deter me from coming back a couple days later, to try to catch the fish that I'd seen. I tried to swoop down intentionally off that tree.

[AF] Did you end up getting the fish?

[GG] No. While I like to fly fish, I'm not very good at fly fishing. At points the fish are kind enough to pity me and allow me to catch them. But that is not that often. When I was feeling COVID-19 safe, I would hang out with my friends. We had kind of made our own pod in our own way, and we would play basketball and stuff. We found these short trips that were fun that we could drive on. So we would plan those. But most of the time Spearfish didn't really feel like COVID-19 was around. There were a couple of weeks where businesses closed down. So that was kind of strange. And there was a lot of backlash against that because at the time, there was only like eight people in Spearfish that had gotten COVID-19. So people thought it was not a big deal. Later, they'd find out as we had the most COVID-19 cases per capita, why we were closing businesses. But at the time, it felt kind of dumb. And even I, as a smart math student, was like

“this seems stupid”. I also just wanted to get ice cream at the place that I like to go to, but that's besides the point.

[AF] Were small businesses impacted a lot by the pandemic in Spearfish?

[GG] Definitely--not always in negative ways actually. I felt that one of the biggest things, I think, for small businesses despite having to close for a while, is that for a while, people didn't really want to go to Walmart because they felt scared about being in a place with a lot of people. And Walmart in Spearfish is like--we have a super Walmart and everyone always gets their groceries there. But there's some smaller family grocery stores. That people go to but like, that's only if you want nice meat or something. But um, during the time when people didn't want to go to Walmart, they would go to these little grocery stores.

Or my friend's dad owns a Papa Murphy's, which is pizza that you buy, and then take it back home and bake it and eat it. And he did quite well during the pandemic, because people could just go take their pizza and eat at home. So in some ways, it was nice. In many other ways, not at all nice. Yeah, so some were affected more than others. And I'm certain that the revenue that I brought the ice cream place after the two weeks that they had closed had to make up for the two weeks. So I felt good about doing a service for Spearfish that way.

30:55

[AF] Was your family impacted in any way? I recall you telling me your parents are professors, how was uni (university) there?

[GG] It was interesting. I don't think any of my family ever got COVID-19 or have gotten COVID-19 to this point. It was strange. A couple of my friends go to this very conservative school in Virginia called Liberty. And there was like a big deal about Liberty refusing to close during the pandemic. It was a super-spreader type thing, because there were so many college students there. And they (the friends) actually got COVID-19, and they were the only people that I knew at the time that had gotten COVID-19. But sad--not sadly--what was not good about them getting COVID-19 was they didn't have very bad symptoms. So they came back and told everyone that it was a joke. So no one that I knew at any point took it seriously. At this point, I was slowly getting into the groove, like “maybe this isn't a good thing, maybe we should wear masks and stay home”. So that at that point, it was kind of annoying.

And in terms of the university in Spearfish, it's quite different from Mac. They have a mask mandate at the university I guess, but there's constantly like 30 cases at any point in time. And they're also pretty small, like 3000 students. So at one point, there was consideration of trying to just reach herd immunity--which I guess, in retrospect, I think college students are not so bad

when they get COVID-19. But reaching herd immunity doesn't seem like the most responsible way of doing it. And my mom was much more so than me anxious about COVID-19. So she took all the precautions and did what she could, but a lot of the students there are from very rural conservative towns and were very anti mask, and would do all kinds of passive aggressive ways of fighting the man against having to wear their masks.

So that could be annoying. And the university did a very poor job of notifying my mother if students would have COVID-19. So someone would show up for a few days and then realize they had COVID-19 and then they wouldn't tell my mom. So she would get upset about that. Yeah, not a great job. She's always so impressed with how well we (Macalester) did.

34:24

[AF] Was it just college students who didn't take it seriously or South Dakota in general?

[GG] Definitely, South Dakota in general I'd say. College students probably took it more seriously on average than the general population. Yeah, there was never a mass mandate in South Dakota. The governor never made a mask mandate. She was kind of championed by a lot of my friends' parents for doing that which is super annoying. But yeah, no mask mandate. Nothing was really closed by South Dakota ever--it was always these places would close on their own because they felt that they should protect their own people.

But yeah, bars were open. Some of my friend's dads would frequently visit various places once sports opened back up. A classic thing is for Spearfish to do Friday nights in the summer--a bunch of people would show up and go to vendors or whatever. A lot of people come despite Spearfish being so small, there's like a pretty large turnout. So those were pretty good events for spreading.

One of the big things for South Dakota is the rally, which is this motorcycle group of Harley Davidson. They come like in early August every year. And it's over a million people that come to South Dakota to do this thing. Which South Dakota is only like 800,000 people in the first place. So it doubles our population. And they decided to do it this year, which was kind of controversial. Not so much in South Dakota but elsewhere. And yeah, there were a bunch of statistics about it. I think I heard something like every county in South Dakota or in the US was affected by the rally in Sturgis, South Dakota, which is about 15 minutes away from where I live. So generally, unless you own a business during the rally, people don't like the motorcyclists that come. But this year, I was especially annoyed with them because they knew that they were coming despite COVID-19 and because of that they were especially resistant to wearing masks.

So that was super cool. Yeah, I forgot about that. Oh, my mom was super anxious about that for a long time. Yeah, somehow maybe we just haven't gotten COVID-19 I think there were some huge percent of South Dakotans that had already gotten it for a while.

38:11

[AF] Kind of switching pace again, what were some of your favorite memories during the pandemic?

[GG] Hmm, I think definitely the excuse to go outside with just a couple friends more was nice. It meant that I was doing a lot of hiking and fishing, which is kind of cool. I went on a brief road trip with my dad. And to try to be extra safe we would only use Airbnb is like stuff like that. So it meant that we would stay in some cool places. So we got to stay in North Dakota for a week. I went to some other places, but none as memorable. Coming back to Mac was nice. I felt very lucky to be one of the few sophomores that stayed on campus.

[AF] What was the process like to apply to get to be on campus?

[GG] There was an application, but first it was an application for people that needed to stay on campus. And apparently the total number of rooms weren't filled, so they allowed people that didn't necessarily need to be on campus to apply. I wasn't going to at first but a few of my friends said that they would so I did it. And I got in. So yeah, it was a pretty easy application. And I was surprised that I was accepted to be here. But I'm super happy that I was able to do so. Because I do not think that staying in Spearfish would have been the best for me, especially considering all of my friends that aren't going to the university in Spearfish left for their own universities. So it would have just been me and my mom and one person that I knew there, whereas here I had a few friends and I got to meet a bunch of new people.

[AF] During the pandemic, are there any new interests you've taken up?

[GG] I did a lot of cooking during the pandemic. Not the bread like a lot of people did. I was also trying to stay healthy. So I would try cooking a bunch of different fish like tilapia. I made a blackberry sauce for tilapia [chef's kiss] If they can't hear on the phone, I was doing a chef's kiss. I made a bunch of stir fries. I bought a wok, which is a big pot that you can stir stuff around. And that was super cool. I should know, I got that for my birthday.

I went on a two week workout regimen where it told me that I would be able to dunk by the end, and it lied to me. I was not able to dunk at the end, nor was I able to really touch the rim ever--which now I can for the record. Keep that on there.

[AF] Gene Glover can touch the rim.

[GG] Yeah, I guess fly fishing was kind of new to me. I guess I mastered fly fishing. Yeah, but other than that, I watched a lot of TV. I put up a projector in my basement. It projects on my wall and we can watch movies with Obi Wan Mandalorian.

[AF] And were there any major changes in your daily routine?

43:11

[GG] Definitely--actually in the summer I always wake up at like 10 unless I'm working that day. But it changed my life. Especially considering South Dakota never really changed much. We never recognized COVID-19 was a thing. So that didn't really change. I went from waking up at 8:30 to waking up at 10:30 not doing much.

[AF] Yeah. Do you think your perspective has changed on the pandemic since the summer compared to when you went back for winter break?

[GG] Quite a bit. When I went back for the summer, I had no respect for COVID-19. It wasn't until mid-summer till I came back to Macalester that I started taking it seriously. And I guess a good representation of this is that when I came back I made my friends wear their masks in my house. Which was a big deal because some of them were mad about that, or a couple of them didn't show up because they didn't want to wear a mask in my house. So that was pretty important. But I think after two weeks of being around each other, I decided that we could go no masks in my house. But I feel that's a big improvement from just immediately seeing my friends face to face in the summer.

[AF] Do you think you've changed as a person in the past year?

[GG] I think everyone has weird habits at this point. Well, I'll put my mask on just going into my own home. Or while watching a movie I'm like "what are all those people doing without a mask on?" or stuff like that. I'm not really sure if my habits are that much different other than these little weird things that I do. I guess my sleep schedule? Not great anymore. I guess I'd consider that a habit.

[AF] And is there anything you've learned in the past year or taken up that you're gonna stick with going into the future?

[GG] It was cool to me learning how to cook and trying to eat healthier and then working out a little bit. I think hopefully I'll maintain some of that. Other than that, I think I'm more excited for things to have some sense of normalcy.

[AF] Yeah, and my final question is if you could describe the pandemic, in one sentence, what would you say?

[GG] The pandemic...was...hard [laughs].

[AF] Oh, well it was a pleasure to get to know you a bit through this interview. Are you hopeful for the future?

[GG] Yes, and it was also a pleasure getting to know you, my interviewer, in this interview.

[AF] Awesome. Okay well, I'll see you on the next one.

[GG] Yes, goodbye.

[AF] Bye bye.

47:54