

Interviewer: Kaitlin Redy (KR)

Interviewee: Christian Ries (CR)

MU 002 HS

March 20, 2013

KR: Today is March 20, 2013, at 1:55 p.m. name is Kaitlin Redy and I am interview Christian Ries, currently we are in Asbury Park, New Jersey. Okay, let's begin.

KR: Tell me about yourself.

CR: My name is Christian Ries. 25 years old, I am a final year law student from Brielle NJ, currently living in Asbury park, went to Monmouth University studying Political Science, I graduated in 2010 with a B.A., I was born in Point Pleasant, New Jersey, and ...I am fiscal republican and uh I have no religious background ...and I enjoy surfing and fishing.

KR: Okay, tell me what happened during Hurricane Sandy.

CR: Um ...during hurricane Sandy, I was living, I live by myself in my apartment in Asbury Park, um ... I prepared for the storm by filling up my bath tub and just doing typical hurricane preparation, I didn't think it was going to be as bad as it was...I didn't duct tape my windows I didn't do anything like that. .. my parents stayed in their house in Brielle, they too didn't think it would be that bad. They live down by the draw bridge in between Manasquan and Brielle, by the glimmer glass...and um, they didn't do any preparation either.

KR: Where were you ....oh we just did that... What were you doing before, during, and after the hurricane? And how did you respond emotionally?

CR: Before the storm, I was just studying. After the storm, I put all my studies on hold for a little while; um emotionally it was tough for me because although my apartment in Asbury was okay, my parents' house in Brielle was destroyed. They had six feet of water on the first floor; my dad had recently moved his business that was also destroyed. And uh, it was tough for me because I was expected to jump right back into normal life. I also work, and I had to jump right back into work and studies while the rest of uh my family life was crumbling and they had no place to stay and a destroyed home.

KR: What were you doing during the hurricane?

CR: I started off by just watching TV with a couple friends, and then when the power went out we just kind of decided to go to bed ... and we listened to ....we went up to the beach and looked at the ocean and looked at the wind and it was kind of at that point that it clicked that it was going to be pretty bad. Other than that, we just kind of stayed in, and drank beer and hung out and ate food.

KR: When did you lose power?

CR: Lost power at about 9 o'clock that night and it didn't restore for about five or six days.

KR: Was it later than other towns? Or. .. ?

CR: **It** was probably about the same times ... but there was, I watched out the window 26 transformers explode before we lost power. The sky was lighting up like it was fireworks.

Interviewer: Do you know of any stories of people with their power issues?

CR: Um ....my one friend who lives in Sea Bright had power only restored ummmm maybe in the middle of December. He was out without power for five weeks, six weeks.

KR: And what about the response of your town. Did they do anything before the Hurricane, any proactive measures? And then on a local, regional, and national level, how do you think they responded and reacted to it?

CR: Um Brielle just told everybody in that particular area to evacuate. The whole block did except my parents for whatever reason they did not believe it was going to be that bad. They've ridden out a couple storms there and felt like they were overreacting plus um ... the business my father just relocated was near the house and he wanted to make sure that all his stuff, tools, and improvement were working and safe. The valuables in the house, you know there was issues, of looters, so they prepared that way. But they, they disregarded the evacuation. Monmouth County set a mandatory evacuation for that area and they said they weren't going to come. And nationally, along with state level, Chris Christie, if you are within the mandatory evacuation zone, um ... he's not going to waste time and resources to come get you until after the storm until after the storm has resided. And, uhhhhh

KR: And Asbury Park?

CR: Uhm Asbury Park didn't really do much prepping at all. They certainly didn't do ... the notice, they told us to evacuate, but they didn't even make sure cars were off the street, no one came around the next day to check if we were okay, I don't think there was much prepping done here at all.

KR: Did they have spots, like I know some other towns, for charging your phone or giving out water?

CR: I did not go to Asbury Park, I went to Bradley beach to charge my phone. I know we went up to the circle on 34 in Manasquan and anehinser Busch was giving out water in beer cans, which is um a little bit odd, but they were giving out free water and free supplies. Asbury Park I know they had a big evacuation thing at the high school, but um, not personally, I did not personally go to that one.

KR: Okay, how did your community come together? Did you volunteer? Do you know of anyone who volunteered?

CR: I volunteered my time to my family, I didn't volunteer to anybody else, ya know, it was tough to focus on a larger level when your immediate situation is that grim. I do know people that have volunteered mostly with wn like waves for water, or habitat for humanity, but even that, I don't know anyone that has donated a lot a lot of time. I have some buddies that work for Ergophobia Clothing, they have been donating a lot of money and time with Waves For Water and uh companies like that, and just donating money which is important. But as far as physical labor, I know a couple kids that have done beach clean ups, I know a couple guys that have done Habitat for Hwnanity, but I think most of the people are just saying they are going to help restore the shore, buying t-shirts, rather than actually doing something. Getting their hands dirty. I have another friend who volunteered for wn, it's his job now, he gets paid, but he signed up for Seaside Park public utilities, and now he's helping do all the sewage and all the cleaning up the reeds, all the stuff on the houses.

KR: Do you think your community came together well or lacked a sense of community?

CR: Brielle lacked a sense of community; because there was only 35 affected homes in the area, with a big population. But I think other owns in the areas, had a sense of community, urn, where everybody was joined around one common location that had power, had a generator, and wn, they wanted to unify a lot of people who had the same question as far as how FEMA was going to respond to the situation or people how they were going to get their money. I think people rallied, but I do not think it was on a level, urn, that I don't think it was to restore their township, I think it was more to voice their individualistic concerns. Community wise, I think a lot f people are concerned about the boardwalks but don't have the voice or power to get it done so they focused more on the individualistic concerns.

KR: Did the hurricane affect you or your family economically?

CR: Yes, uhm .. .I lost my job. Because I had to dedicate time and effort to my parents' home and when that hit a lot of people and business dropped. So when I went to go back, there wasn't a spot for me. My dad's business, he lost, he lost about 70,000 dollars of equipment and uh ... \$100,000 in inventory. And uh ....and ....the flood insurance you know is great. He had maximum flood insurance, but it only covered up to the first 310,000. And ... there is more like ya know 550,000 in damage on the house, which has to come out of his retirement, or his pocketbook or a second mortgage. It's not easy and people decided that if you wanted to have a mortgage you needed to raise your house, which is another 100,000. So what happened is, he bought out the house, and now he has to struggle to get money together for rebuilding.

KR: Do you think your community will change after all of this?

CR: I think there will be more preparedness. I think uh ... urn.

KR: But as far as like in the summer? Or tourism?

CR: Oh absolutely. Um .. .I, I think that the beach is gonna take a little while to restore, I do not think all the ocean front amenities, that people are used to are going to be open in time for the summer. I think people are going to be weary to be here in the hurricane season. I, think that it is gonna put a big dent on summer rentals.

KR: That's another question, do you think your parents, well obviously you talked about their FEMA money, but do you think they are going to rebuild or are they going to leave, and why?

CR: They are rebuilding currently. They took the insurance money; they paid off their house so they didn't have to raise it. But they are currently rebuilding, the grim situation is that even if you want to leave you are not going to get the money that you just put into your house to rebuild it. I spoke to someone who is realtor and they said it is going to take ten years for buyers to forget this situation. So even if they want to leave, they are going to leave in a whole. So it's not going to be good time for them to leave. So they are going to rebuild, and then they are going to stay and see if they can ride it out. . . I know...

KR: What about for younger populations, like would you think about now buying a house on the water, or by a lake or river?

CR: I mean I love it, I think it was a kind of a super storm like they said. But I would think, certainly would be little bit more weary of it. I know people who are young and my age, who have houses in union beach and seaside park and that area, and they are being forced to leave. Its not a choice for a lot of people. Luckily enough, my parents were fiscally prepared. They had the right insurance, but it's not an option for a lot of people. And um ... I think another thing is there is a lot of people who are being forced to make choices whether or not they are going to pay their mortgage or rebuild their house, which results in them getting foreclosed upon, which is not a good situation. It's tough.

KR: How do you think the media portrayed the hurricane?

CR: I think the media covered it well, urn, and I think to amend or add to a pervious answer, I think they got that the communities were rallied around each other. Giving each other food and giving each other shelter. And making sure everyone had what they needed. But I don't think the community pushed to restore people's homes and you know, I think the push was more individualistic. I think the media focused more on the damage and now only have come around the social issues that are being implicated with it. Uhm ...

KR: Do you think it's kind of been put on the back burner and kind of ignored or no?

CR: I think there is, I mean its not being ignored ... .i see it daily, see daily news on the impact of hurricane sandy. But I just think it has weened off, but I do not think. At first itw as look at all this damange and look at how bad this is. It was kind of a spectacle. People couldn't believe and then uhm... I didn't say people don't get it. I talked to people down at law school and they say ya know like the way the news portrays it its stupid to rebuild. I don't think they showed enough of the reality of the situation for the people who were effected, the people who were without power, for five weeks. The

people who don't have homes. All people see on the news is how. The way the people see it is the million dollar homes on the beach or these people, these wealthy home owners, and people are saying they shouldn't rebuild it's not right. Mother Nature wants it back, take it back, but that's not true. It's a community and I don't think they portrayed it like that, I think it was portrayed a little bit differently. Ya know, like wow, this jersey shore summer town, but there are people who live there all year round. And that's where people call their homes. And people say it's stupid, it's stupid to live on the beach, it's an assumed risk, why should we pay, and this is our home. I don't want to live anywhere else, this is where I live. So ... uh.. .I think the media did an okay job

KR: Uhm hmmm.

KR: And what do you think that Asbury Park and Brielle should have done differently? And what would you have personally have done differently in your personal experience

(Pauses, takes a deep breath .... )

KR: Like I know you said you filled the bath tub with water. ..

CR: I think, I think, uhm .. .I think Asbury Park should have told more people to evacuate because the next day, I went out and looked around and there was just a lot of people in their neighborhood, ya know ... I don't think Asbury Park portrayed how grave the situation actually was to the largest subset of its population. Uhm ... there was no mandatory evacuation and the fact that my friends and I could go up onto the boardwalk at about midnight and see how the storm was coming, where it was coming, there should have been a mandatory evacuation. There should have been road blocks. It was just kind of a ... .it seemed disorganized in Asbury Park. Where in Brielle, I understand they told people to evacuate, but Brielle you know the debris from the hurricane was gone within 24 hours, or 72 hours ...

KR: And when they didn 't have power, I know towns like Avon and Bradley were checking IDs and stuff. Did Asbury do that?

CR: uhm ... no .. .. no .... (Laughs)

KR: When there was no lights like in other towns, I know there was cops with lights on?

CR: No, and Asbury Park is not exactly a safe town. Uhm and, they didn' t check my TO, they didn' t. (Laughs ... ) they didn' t really do much to ensure safety. There was people walking around and ... their response was very, like there is still debris in the streets, they still haven't cleaned up all the way, there is still park benches six blocks in land that were on the beach ... there was a situation where there was the lake on 71 in Asbury Park had overflowed, and there was fish in the street and urn people were going and putting garbage cans over the fish and dragging them and pulling them out of the street. The police thought it was more of a ...

KR: Like a criminal issue?

CR: Yeah, like to pull the fish out of the water and take them home, then it was to really make sure that the beach was secure, really make sure people weren't hurt.

KR: Yeah.

CR: It was more of a response, they saw people pulling fish out of the lake and "get out of there, get out of there", meanwhile the beach is open, there is people walking the beach, unsecure fences, down electrical lines. They should have been making sure the town was secure.

KR: And at that point, people still didn't have power?

CR: I think it was the second or third day without power, and people were finally coming out of their house. The town was by no means secure. Asbury Park has a habitual problem with being unresponsive to the needs of the people and I think Asbury needed help from the State Police or the National Guard because it seemed unfocused and un-unified. It seemed like one police person would be trying to keep people off the beach and then would leave to get a response. To go to respond to another call, when they should have focused their resources on one.

KR: Well do you think that lack of state police or other presence was because Asbury wasn't hit as bad?

CR: Asbury wasn't hit as bad, but J...yeah, I think that Asbury also has a very young police force, inexperienced, and somebody should have recognized and brought in other forces

KR: Because of the population that lives there?

CR: It's young, I haven't seen a police officer over the age of 25 in the two years I've lived here.

KR: Okay, that's it...Okay I think that's it. Thank you!