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Socastee Interview, Participant #11, April 8, 2021

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"Flooded Afterlives Project" Interview

Participant ID: 11
Community: Socastee
State: SC

Interviewer: Kylie Balgemann
Interview date: 04/08/21
Interview location: Zoom

This protocol for this study was approved by the Coastal Carolina University Institutional Review Board (Approval #2021.102) on March 3, 2021. All subjects gave their informed consent for inclusion before participation in the study.

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Interviewer: How many times have you experienced flooding in your home or place of residence?

Participant: Ok, my actual house has not been flooded but my street has and it's come up to my house. But when the residual goes down into the ground it's coming up through my garage.

Interviewer: When was the last time that your own garage has flooded, or your street is flooded?

Participant: Last time that big rain came through here a few weeks ago I don't remember the date, but it was just a few weeks ago.

Interviewer: And does it take you a while to do that cleanup or is that like a big process for you?

Participant: What I had to do in the situation was to empty my garage, go through my belongings to find out what was damaged and put pallets in my garage to get them up off the floor and then replace the boxes. That took about a day just to get that taken care of and then of course the neighbors across the street, the water was really bad and it completely flooded their house. I wasn't sure when the interview was requested, I wasn't sure if you meant like physically in my residence or in the neighborhood itself so that's why I volunteered as I was affected by the water but it wasn't in my home as far as lotta damage just away.

Interviewer: So, in terms of your garage, which you said floods quite a bit, you said you put pallets down. Do you leave those down?

Participant: I've only been in the house this is a first time it's happened since I've lived there, and we been there a year and a half. In August will be two years and this is the first time this actually affected inside of my home. Well, in the garage I mean so this is the first time. I think they'll be safe with the pallets on the floor because the water didn't come into my garage as the water was the dissipating, it going into the ground under the ground and the moisture was coming up through my garage cement floor into the boxes. So, um... getting just getting them generically off the floor helped.

Interviewer: Are you planning on staying in the area then for a while?

Participant: Well for now I am. My property sits up a little bit higher than everybody else is but from what I've been told by my neighbors, water has not actually gotten into the house itself, it's come up to the garage. It got into the yard in the driveway, but it hasn't actually got into the house but that's that area a few years ago was completely flooded. I'm in Socastee back in the Bridge Creek area which backs up into Rosewood.

Interviewer: You did mention that your neighbor's house had a little bit more flooding than yours. Does it take them a while to recover from the flooding or is this something that they are now used to dealing with?

Participant: Well, the neighbors that live next to me, it happened to their house once. The neighbors across the street kind of catty corner from me, that's a house that is rented and every time it floods the people move out and new people move in.

Interviewer: And then do you have a lot of yard damage from the flooding?

Participant: The water and even just when it regularly rains without the flooding, my backyard tends to soak up a lot of water and it becomes a little mini lake...

Interviewer: From what you have experienced and what people that you know have experienced, what do you wish other people understood about experiencing flooding and the impact that it does have?

Participant: The most important thing is to, in areas that are prone to flooding that are not actually considered a flood zone, make sure you have flood insurance because the problem I'm seeing is the people that live in areas like that don't always have what insurance. When it happens over and over again in a neighborhood that's not considered a flood zone, and they don't get flood insurance because it's not considered a flood zone, they are just put thousands and thousands of dollars each time water comes through. So, I would say that I think if I wanted to do anything it would be get flood insurance even though you don't live in a flood zone. Considerably the amount that you pay when you're in a flood zone is considerably higher than when you pay when you're not in a flood zone. I pay between 400 and 500 dollars a year for flood insurance and I'm not in a flood zone. Those that are in a flood zone, they can pay up to, I don't know, I've heard about 1,200 to 1500 dollars for the year to pay if you're in a flood zone. Sure, that is the difference and I mean it's hard. Especially when it happens over and over and over again and it's not just a one time thing.

Interviewer: So, kind of going off that, with it happening like over and over again, do you ever notice people being like criticized for staying in an area that is prone to flooding? People are like well why don't you just move. What do you think about that like in general?

Participant: Well, a lot of these people and I'm going to guess, from what I've seen, a lot of people that live in the area that I'm in, they're not expensive homes. I don't want to say that they're not nice homes because they are, but people have been living there for such a long time that they just don't want to move. They built their life there and I think they're just are willing to do it over again if they have to... Hasn't touched my house so I feel like I'm gathering information or just hearing information from them that I think they're considering actually moving because they think they were flooded out a couple years ago and that water was in their yard. She was a little bit frustrated because she doesn't want to deal with it again and it is a hassle to deal with it.

Interviewer: What do you think can be done to get more help support flood survivors?

Participant: That's all that's a huge question because I used to work in a social services department and they have a non-profit organization and quite about five years ago...four, five years ago there's a huge flooding area. We had people we were out serving. We would take our vehicle out, server lunches and we actually had to take little boats to put the food in to people's houses. I don't know what could be done. I've heard and I don't know how true it is but there's an offer...offer for the government to buy into the home areas that have been flooding up to a certain amount of money. For those that have had damage, I would take it in a minute if I had gotten flooded but I have not so I don't know that I would qualify. I have not received damage to my home. I would do it. I would say yeah. The other thing would be that there's so much building in the area that it's taken away from like when you cut down trees and you can take away what actually sucks in the water, you're only adding to the problem. With all these wooded areas are cut down, that takes a lot away from what absorbs the water when it does come to the area and the more they cut down, the less absorb less things.

Interviewer: Is there anything that you think the local community could do to help better support like your neighbors and different areas that are having those issues with damage to their homes?

Participant: The smaller scale, I mean if you're refurbishing your house, considering maybe leaving that furniture somewhere or having a place to put furniture for people that do flood they can go and have access to. Not a lot of the organizations that are out there, they will help provide with as much as they can, but I know the organization I was with we didn't always have something to give everybody that came. In each if each individual community came up with an idea of "OK I know I'm gonna be buying new furniture, I'm gonna get rid of this furniture and maybe I can take it somewhere" so that when this area floods... I don't know how that would work because you have to have storage place and stuff but like just have an idea that if you know you're gonna buy new things or if you have things that you can't you already have extra people that you know have been damaged. Maybe a suggestion of something like that, along those lines. I wouldn't know how it works out because their stores are looking to lose a lot of money and organizations that will help as much as I can. When we donate our furniture and stuff to those organizations, and they're sold throughout the year. Maybe organizations could have a stock of furniture for people that when it's flooded or even people that maybe have been burned out but specifically with this topic that you're carrying on with is flooding, just have a stack of furniture that is be able to community that has been damaged.

Interviewer: Then to go along with that a little bit, do you think that there is enough attention and focus on what is happening with flooding in the community or do you think it needs more attention?

Participant: I think it's in between because I hear a lot of "Here we go again" and "Here it comes again" and "Now what are we gonna do". I don't have cable TV and I don't really keep up with the news on the TV a whole lot. So out of what I what know, it is what I see. Some of these go back to the other question that you said mentioned maybe there's houses up on stilts and people that have raise their households up from the ground. Maybe organizations could work on doing something like that. I don't know and then what you're saying now, those are hard questions, just really hard questions. The media can take things out of control. I know I have friends that will call me when they see on the news that Socastee is flooding. They'll call me right away, "I hear you're flooding out I hear flooding out". No, I'm not flooding out but Socastee is. They're not always detailed about where specifically in Socastee. They will say, you know maybe it's Rosewood or whatever and they have said Bridge Creek area but I'm in the Bridge Creek area. I didn't flood, just the back road did. I'm on the back road but just part of it flooded not the whole thing. So sometimes the media doesn't take details to consideration.

Interviewer: Is there anything else that you would like to share about your experiences or advice for people considering moving to a flood area?

Participant: I would make sure you don't just look at the information that your realtor gives you on whether or not it's flood zone. Go into the neighborhood and talk to the people and find out where you flooded. If you were, is this the only time or has it happened before? Get into the neighborhood and talk to people in the neighborhood and don't just look on the map to find out if the flood zone because the past couple years even something that's not considered a flood zone has flooded.