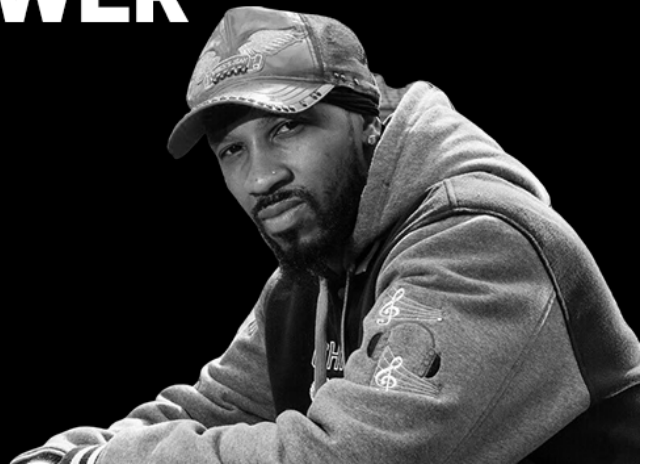


SACKED AMAZON CORONAVIRUS WHISTLEBLOWER CHRISTIAN SMALLS

DEFIANCE #036
WITH PETER MCCORMACK



DEF036 - CHRISTIAN SMALLS INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTION

SACKED AMAZON CORONAVIRUS WHISTLEBLOWER

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Peter McCormack 02:47:

Good morning, Christian. How are you?

Christian Smalls 02:48:

I'm fine, how are you?

Peter McCormack 02:50:

I'm doing very well, thank you. So you, this week, have become global eye of the storm. How is that? How's everything feel right now for you?

Christian Smalls 03:02:

Man, it's surreal. I'm still trying to cope with it. My life was definitely different a week ago. It's definitely for me but if definitely trying to own up to it and help people save lives.

Peter McCormack 03:19:

Okay. Before we get into the actual story itself, I just want to do a little bit of background. You were an employee at an Amazon warehouse, can you tell us which warehouse it was, how long you'd worked there and what your job was there, what your role was?

Christian Smalls 03:33:

Sure. Well, I've been with Amazon a little less than five years. I opened up three buildings for them. One in New Jersey, one in Connecticut, and formerly up to present date was Staten Island, New York. I started out as a level one picker, which is like the entry level. And I got promoted up to a process assistant which is more of a supervisor or for other terms like assistant manager. But the business title is process assistant so you help assist the manager. If the manager is absent, you fill in for that manager and take over the process, take over the operation. I worked in the outbound department, that's the outbound pick department. We call our associate pickers. They pick items off the robots, the robots bringing the customer items to the stations. The pickers pick the items off the robots, they put them in these yellow tilts that go on these conveyor belts down to the pack department. So my responsibility was to make sure the pickers are picking.

Peter McCormack 04:46:

Okay. All right. So five years, I didn't realise it was that long. So we'll have a question around loyalty towards the end. But Amazon warehouses have often been criticised... a lot of time they get in the press both here in the U.K. and the U.S., I'm not sure globally. Can you talk to me about what working conditions are like there? The various stories I've read tend to cover things like breaks, some people unable to take toilet breaks when they need. I've seen stories of people sleeping in cars and sleeping in tents and quite intense conditions. Is this everything you've experienced working for Amazon?

Christian Smalls 05:23:

Well, the biggest thing I heard people complaining about is the break times. They're short and we work long hours, 10 hours a day. Some of our shifts are 12 hour shifts. The biggest complaint is the break time, but that's what makes Amazon, Amazon. Is the fact that we work long hours and our production is broken down by the second. So it separates that from every other retailer because they training associates to adapt to a certain rate that they have to perform or exceed to. And all I can say is, from my opinion, I do believe that the break time for at least lunchtime should be extended to a complete hour instead of a half an hour.

Christian Smalls 06:19:

I feel like sometimes people need time to recollect, time to actually relax themselves, enjoy a break time, a full meal without rushing. Everything there is just like rush, rush, rush, rush, rush. You don't have no time to settle down and you're putting a lot of strain on your body. Sometimes working there, well, I tell people all the time, "If you have a gym membership, you might want to cancel it. Because depending on what you're doing, especially in my department, it's 10 hours of calisthenics. That's exactly what it is.

Peter McCormack 06:56:

Wow. Is it mentally challenging?

Christian Smalls 07:00:

Absolutely. You got to be mentally prepared to work there more than anything. More than physically because it's a lot of pressure on you to perform and like I said, the mental aspect, you're dealing with you got to make expectations, you're dealing with the fact that you got to adapt to changing your lifestyle at home. You're used to doing things at home when you get off of work like watch TV, watch movies, or try to wind down. You can't do that anymore, working there, because the days go by so fast. Well, not the days working there, but you have to wake up early in the morning to go back to work, or whether you're in a night shift vice versa, and do the same thing over for another 10 hours. So you have to mentally be prepared for that. If you're not mentally prepared to adapt to that, you won't last. So you have to be mentally prepared. Physically will come second nature.

Peter McCormack 08:03:

Also, are the environment safe if someone is struggling, can they get support if they're feeling mentally tired? Are there risks to injuries? What kind of safety procedures are in place within the facilities you've worked in?

Christian Smalls 08:16:

Well, I'm not going to say they don't preach and practice safety, because they definitely do. But you got to think, everybody, every human being is different. The safety procedures may work for a 20 years old but we also hire people that's 55, 65, it's not going to work for them. And you're trying to tell somebody 55, 65 to work like they're 20 years old, it's not going to work. That's the disconnect when it comes to safety, but they still practice and preach it. But they got to understand that human being are different and that's one major concern when it comes to that. And that's what causes the injuries that happen. You got older elderly people sometimes trying to perform like they're young again and there's your injuries. And you got young people, they want to push and push and push for months on end, there's your injuries. You

can't avoid them, you can't avoid them. The overtime, it happens. And because company's globally known and globally, there's going to be a lot of injuries across the globe.

Peter McCormack 09:33:

Okay. And compensation and benefits, do they provide medical? Do you think they provide fair compensation?

Christian Smalls 09:39:

Yeah, the Amazon pays well. They pay well, they got good benefits, health, dental, medical, all that. They pay well. They could have done a different type of negotiation when it come to the stocks. They took the stocks away, but obviously seems like we're working for greed, right now.

Peter McCormack 10:03:

It sounds almost like some kind of... it's almost like we've gone back in time in that this is kind of some kind of weird dystopian future and the people in there are treated like robots and everything is about numbers and performance, is that unfair?

Christian Smalls 10:21:

Well, the whole company's ran off of metrics. That's what they do. They run off of metrics. So in order to run off of metrics you got to have some type of technology incorporated. But the people have to bring the metrics. So you have to make people pretty much turn into some type of computerised but humanised machine. So yes, you do train people to work like a machine in the sense, if that makes sense for you.

Peter McCormack 10:52:

Yeah, of course. And are individuals measured on their performance and are there targets that if you don't meet that you might face some kind of penalty?

Christian Smalls 11:02:

Well, yeah, that's the thing. You got to meet expectation. There's a hourly rate for every department and you got to meet that hourly rate. Then if you don't, if you fall beneath the quota, eventually over time they find a way to wean you out of there, get out of there, they're get you out of there one way or another.

Peter McCormack 11:22:

Right.

Christian Smalls 11:23:

That's how it works. It's a high turnover company.

Peter McCormack 11:27:

Right, there is a high turnover and there's a high turnover because if people aren't performing and they try and get them out or because people themselves can't take it or just a mix of the both?

Christian Smalls 11:36:

A mix of the both. You got people that work hard for six months, eight months in the same position and they want to do sometimes else and they're like, "No, you can't right now. We're hiring more people. We need you here, we need you there." And you're like, "Well, I've been doing this for almost a year now, I want to do something else." But they can't. It's like they can't afford for you to do that. This business needs for you to do this. So you're forcing good people to quit and then you're not sure about the new people that you hire and they may not be as good. It becomes a high turnover.

Peter McCormack 12:15:

Am I right in thinking also the place that you worked at, there had been attempts to create a union and there were blocks to the creation of that union, is that correct?

Christian Smalls 12:24:

Yeah, I heard about it. I'm not really familiar with who was doing it, how many people were doing it. But I did hear there was some controversy about it a couple months back, from a former employee.

Peter McCormack 12:37:

Okay. All right. Well, let's get into what happened over the last week. I became aware of the story a few days ago and in reading the story I've read a couple of parts. I first heard about the story, Christian, I was like, "Well, that's fucking bullshit, I need speak to this guy." And then I saw the stories that said you had broken social distancing rules. And I was like, "Okay, well, I need to ask about that." Now today, I've read about the internal memos. It's quite a messy story when you get into the details. Can you talk me through what happened? Talk to me through the primary chain of events as they happened.

Christian Smalls 13:13:

Yeah, sure. As you know, we're dealing with this pandemic, no secret about that. I tried to be proactive weeks ago, beginning of March. People started getting sick around me. Talking about dizziness, fatigueness, light headed, I've sending people to AmCare office multiple times. People going home sick,

people vomiting, so I tried to escalate that. I went to HR, say, "Hey, there's something wrong here. We need to close down the building and quarantine. I feel like it's only a matter of time before somebody test positive in the building." This was before we had our first known case. And they pretty much, "Oh, don't worry about it. We have no confirmed cases. We're following the CDC guidelines and safety." I'm like, "Okay, but it don't seem to be working."

Christian Smalls 14:11:

So I started to come to work less and less because I wasn't trying to put my family at risk, myself included. But as I was sitting home, all my days off, unpaid, had to take money out of my 401k and everything, I was trying to help close that building down. Help behind the scenes. I contacted the CDC, the health department, the state department, the government, I didn't everything I could. But New York is dealing with the epic center right now, so they're overwhelmed. Now, it's the middle of the month, my rent is coming up. I don't have any more time, I'm not getting paid and I'm running low on money so I decide to go back to work. Unfortunately I didn't really want to but it's like, "I have to, I have to. I have to go at least one check and then maybe I can take some more time off."

Peter McCormack 15:09:

Let me just go back a second here.

Christian Smalls 15:11:

Sure.

Peter McCormack 15:12:

So people were getting sick within the warehouse and you had tried to escalate this, what was the response when you had escalated this?

Christian Smalls 15:21:

Yeah, it was like, "Oh, we can't do anything. We can't close the building down because there's no confirmed cases yet." Just like, "Well, that doesn't make sense. You're going to wait until somebody test positive and then you're going to react?" Everything is reaction, reaction. I'm like, "Well, I'm trying to be proactive and avoid that." Because once this virus get in these type of buildings, you can't stop it because you don't know where it came from. And that's what I was trying to avoid.

Peter McCormack 15:46:

What were the internal conversations with you and your colleagues? Was everybody concerned, some people concerned?

Christian Smalls 15:55:

No. People were concerned but it wasn't really high alert. It just like, "Oh, yeah. We know." One of those things. Everybody was still acting like society was still normal and that was the most alarming thing for me because we were still... I don't know if you follow me on Twitter, but I have videos up there. If you've seen my videos, they're trying to say I violated multiple safety guidelines, no we all did. The entire building, we was just partying. We had a huge party the middle of March, the middle of March. So what guidelines did I violate? The whole company violated, we had a activities party in middle of March. But you're claiming that it was just me that violated, doesn't make sense. Doesn't make sense.

Peter McCormack 16:49:

Well, we know why. We'll get to that.

Christian Smalls 16:53:

Right. And obviously, that ties into what happened this past week.

Peter McCormack 16:59:

Okay.

Christian Smalls 17:00:

Like I said, I returned back to work on March 24, 8:30 in the morning. Around nine o'clock I see my colleague, she look very sick. Her eyes were bloodshot, puffy, she had a mask on. She was wearing gloves and she told me, she was like, "I went and got tested for the corona virus," the night before, which is Monday. Mind you, she been working there for 10 hours a day for a number of days in a row. So I was like, "Wow, you need to go home." And she did, she went home. About two hours later, we had a meeting with just the managers, a think meeting. We have a daily think meeting. And that's when we learned about our first confirmed case.

Christian Smalls 17:46:

I'm like, "Oh, not a surprise." But we learned about it saying the associate was in the building on March 11. I say, "Wow. So where is he now?" And they were like, "Oh, he hasn't been here since." So I said, "Well, it doesn't matter. Are we closing the building down? We need to close the building down and sanitise it." Because there was a building a week prior in Queens, New York that had the same thing. They had one case, just one, they closed the building down, paid everybody and sanitised the building professionally. And that's all I was asking-

Peter McCormack 18:18:

An Amazon building?

Christian Smalls 18:19:

Yes. Amazon building.

Peter McCormack 18:21:

Okay.

Christian Smalls 18:21:

So I was like, "We need to do the same thing they did." They was like, "No, the difference is, the associate is not here on the premises." I said, "I don't care. You don't know how long he had it. You don't know where he got it from." It doesn't make sense to me, that's not a solution to tell... they wanted to tell certain people that was on that side of the building where he was working at last. Still didn't make sense to me. But I took another stance and that was the last time I worked for Amazon. I walked out the building at 12 o'clock and I never went back to work after that. I went back to the-

Peter McCormack 19:02:

So you went home after that?

Christian Smalls 19:02:

I went home, 12 o'clock.

Peter McCormack 19:05:

Yeah.

Christian Smalls 19:06:

Once again, I started to fight behind the scenes. Also, I did come to the building every single day off the clock and sat in the break room and told employees the truth. I came back to the building every day at 7:00 in the morning, me and my colleague that I ride to work with, who they didn't quarantine by the way. I ride to work with him every day, he pick me up every morning. We sat in the break room for eight hours a day, spreading the word, telling people, "The virus is in the building, you need to voice your concerns." And every day we were marched into the general manager's office and voiced our concerns, groups of 10. And we're telling him, "Close the building down. We're scared."

Peter McCormack 19:50:

And you hadn't been ordered into quarantine at that point?

Christian Smalls 19:53:

No. Absolutely not. No. I kid you not, because you have to understand-

Peter McCormack 19:56:

See, this is the bit that I was confused with because they said that they'd ordered you into quarantine, yet if you'd been going to the building every day, I don't understand why security hadn't asked you to leave.

Christian Smalls 20:09:

No. Well, let me explain.

Peter McCormack 20:12:

Yeah.

Christian Smalls 20:13:

My friend that I sent home on Tuesday, her results didn't come back until Wednesday. She tested positive on Wednesday. So the way it works is with their flawed policy, you don't get paid quarantine until they receive the physical documentation from the doctor's office. So they didn't receive the documentation until Thursday morning. But guess what? I knew that I came in contact with her, so what do you think I did? I ran to the office, she's a supervisor just like me. I ran to the office and said, "You need to close this building down immediately. Not only was I exposed, the whole department was exposed because I know what our job entitles, we work with people, hundreds of them. You need to close the department down." They didn't do nothing.

Christian Smalls 21:10:

They literally, "Oh, we're going to get on a phone call with the regionals." "Don't give a damn about no regionals, this is your building. I'm telling you. She told you she tested positive over the phone." Because HR gave her a phone call on Wednesday and she told them, "Yes, it's positive." But guess what? They didn't put her on quarantine until Thursday when they actually got the physical documentation from the doctors. But meanwhile, so I told them, "Yeah, I need to go on quarantine." On Wednesday, I told them that. I went to HR, they was like, "No, the way it works is, you'll get notified by a phone call." I said, "By phone call?" I said, "Okay." And my colleague was standing right there, he's a witness. He heard the exact conversation. They said they will notify you by phone call or email. I didn't get neither one of those.

Christian Smalls 22:03:

So I kept coming back to the building. Came back Thursday, Friday, Saturday. Like I said, leading up to that, the day I got quarantined, I was arguing to the point where I was cursing the general managers out about closing down the building, on Friday. No response, they didn't do it. They just didn't do it. The policy was flawed and the way they do it is, they have somebody, I guess, watching a video to see who she came in contact with. And they quarantine the people she came in close contact with. But how on earth do you only quarantine me that was around her for five minutes and not the associate that had been around her for 10 hours? You see what I'm saying? So it was like I was targeted to silence me.

Peter McCormack 22:57:

Yeah, yeah.

Christian Smalls 22:58:

Because I'm speaking up, they're like, "You know what? We're getting annoyed by you doing this, let's quarantine you." Just me, just me, nobody else. Not the person I drive to work with, not none of the employees. And you know what else that is not really known to the public? How many cases we got in that building? We don't know how many cases we got. I know. I know personally. You know why? Because these are my friends. Her best friend is the third case, her best friend. The person I sent home Tuesday, her best friend tested positive on Thursday.

Peter McCormack 23:37:

So you got three confirmed cases?

Christian Smalls 23:37:

Yes. That's the third one. And guess what her friend does? Her friend is a supervisor as well for the pack department. So she's in charge over hundreds of packers. She got the virus, so now the virus hit three phases of the building. The first case on March 11 was receiving side, that's inbound, that means everything coming in the building. The second case is my department. It goes from inbound to my department which is the pick department. Pick goes to pack department. So the virus is literally moving throughout the building. Phase by phase, department by department. And I'm like-

Peter McCormack 24:18:

Wow.

Christian Smalls 24:19:

Yeah. That's exactly-

Peter McCormack 24:21:

Well, outside of those three confirmed cases, are there other suspected cases now?

Christian Smalls 24:28:

They're not suspected any more, they're confirmed, confirmed.

Peter McCormack 24:29:

No, but are there any others? So that's three confirmed cases of-

Christian Smalls 24:31:

Yeah, there's double digits.

Peter McCormack 24:33:

How many people work in the building?

Christian Smalls 24:34:

5,000.

Peter McCormack 24:35:

5,000. So do we know how many are off sick out of those 5,000?

Christian Smalls 24:40:

Dozens. Dozens.

Peter McCormack 24:43:

Okay.

Christian Smalls 24:44:

Dozens. Dozens. I'm telling you, dozens. And confirmed is double digits already. Confirmed is double digits.

Peter McCormack 24:52:

And one of the other things, Christian, that I don't know, and I would have to speak to somebody, but if people in the warehouse are sick and they have coronavirus, can it transport onto the packaging of things you're sending out? Could it then transfer to the drivers-

Christian Smalls 25:07:

Absolutely.

Peter McCormack 25:07:

And then can it transfer to homes?

Christian Smalls 25:08:

Yeah.

Peter McCormack 25:09:

And the reason I raise that, well, I know it lives on cardboard for a day. But I've had two deliveries in the last week from Amazon here in the U.K., and neither driver was wearing gloves.

Christian Smalls 25:22:

Well, hey, man. Better hope and pray. If you're asymptomatic, you don't know. You're a carrier, you're just a carrier.

Peter McCormack 25:29:

Yeah.

Christian Smalls 25:30:

You got to think. It lives on cardboard, it lives on plastic, it lives on metal. All of those things in our buildings, all of them.

Peter McCormack 25:39:

I do wonder if Amazon can be a place, if you do have an outbreak, it also is a place that ends up distributing the virus.

Christian Smalls 25:46:

I already said that. That was the first statement I said.

Peter McCormack 25:46:

Through the delivery, yeah.

Christian Smalls 25:49:

It's a breeding ground, it's a breeding ground.

Peter McCormack 25:51:

Yeah. Interesting, interesting. Okay, what happened next?

Christian Smalls 25:55:

Yeah, I came to work Saturday morning and around nine o'clock, that's when one of the managers came, the same manager who terminated me, the same one who called me on the phone, we'll get into that. But he came, pulled me

out the cafeteria and he told, "We got to put you on paid quarantine." I say, "Okay, cool. No problem. I told you y'all that from Wednesday." But I said, "All right. Y'all finally doing it. Okay, cool. But what about my employees?" "No, it's just you." "What about the person I ride to work with every day?" "No, it's just you." "Okay. Something's wrong here, but okay." I left. I went home with my colleague. And we were like, "Yo, there's something wrong. We got to get these people out of there. What are we going to do?"

Christian Smalls 26:42:

That's when I started mobilising my walkout. I said, "If they not going to save these people, I'm going to at least try. I got to do something. I'm not going to sit here." These people were like my extended family, I work with these people 40, 50 hours a week for years. I'm not going to sit there and watch my family get sick. So tried to do something. I tried to get these people a voice and draw some attention. I put my career on the line, it cost me my career but guess what? I'd do it a million times over. And here we are, they're trying to put the... Amazon versus Chris Smalls, but it's not about me, it never was. It's Amazon versus the people, that's what they going to have to answer-

Peter McCormack 27:31:

Talk me through the walkout. What actually happened with the walkout?

Christian Smalls 27:36:

Everything I did was strategic, everything. I planned it down to the T. The timing, the way I did it, I was always two steps ahead of them. Amazon think they... these people think they're smart, but they don't know who they dealing with, they really don't. As you could see, they think I'm pretty stupid but it's really the other way around because on... I'm going to go back a little bit on Friday, it was just me, the general manager in his office and head of HR, around three o'clock in the afternoon. They called me in the office and they're like, "Here's the CDC guidelines." They printed out for me to read. I had to read them. I was like, "I don't care about this. I'm not here to read this. I'm telling you these guidelines are not working, I'm not reading this whole packet right now in front of y'all. What is this?"

Christian Smalls 28:30:

But I did, a little bit. I did skim through it a little bit and something stuck out to me at the bottom. I don't know why, it was all these things on this thing and I just seen something stick out that was very, like a mental note I had to take. At the bottom it said, "If somebody test positive in your business, you don't have to close your business down. But you have to reduce your workforce by 75%." So I said, "Hmm, okay."

Peter McCormack 28:59:

Okay.

Christian Smalls 29:00:

"You don't have to close it down, reduce your workforce." That same day, guess what they started doing? Reducing the workforce-

Peter McCormack 29:08:

Hiring?

Christian Smalls 29:08:

No. Not really. But-

Peter McCormack 29:11:

They did? By 75%, you're talking about a good, what 4,000? Is that by 4,250?

Christian Smalls 29:17:

Well, you got to think, they all got in there at the same time. You know what I mean?

Peter McCormack 29:22:

Okay.

Christian Smalls 29:23:

Throughout the week, 5,000 people come in and out that building, is what I'm saying.

Peter McCormack 29:27:

Oh, okay.

Christian Smalls 29:27:

You know what I mean? So different shifts had different numbers. But anyway, like I said, that's what they started doing that day. Because they kept trying to probe what am I doing, "What is your plan? What is everybody planning on doing?" Because I brought up the Kentucky building. The Kentucky building, some people protested and the government shut them down. And I told them, I said, "Is that what it's going to take? For us to protest?" So they was like, "No, no. We're trying to do everything we can. We're on the phone with the regionals. But what do you guys plan on doing?" And I was like, "Don't worry about it. Don't worry about it." So they were suspecting us to protest, so they started to prepare. They tried to play chess with me.

Christian Smalls 30:15:

"Oh, yeah. What are you going to do, Chris?" "I'm not going to do anything, don't worry about it. All I know is, if y'all don't do something, something will happen." So I kind of played with them. I'm like, "Yeah, something will happen." So they started reducing the workforce. I have it in black and white conversation. They started VTOing, VTO is voluntary time off. So you're telling me, during the pandemic, and we're the most essential business right now, we're shipping out, we're in high demand, got to have us at work, you guys sending people home, voluntarily now? Mind you, we're on mandatory overtime. On mandatory overtime, you're voluntarily sending people home? Something very, very wrong here. And you're doing it during the most crucial time right now, people need stuff. But you're sending people home, reducing the workforce.

Christian Smalls 31:09:

When I mean like reducing it, they were reducing it. You never really send people home at outbound. That's the department before you send the customer orders. Now customers' are not going to get their orders if you're reducing the workforce. I say, "Why they doing this? It's Friday, it's a Friday." Friday's a busy day and people like to order a lot on Fridays for Amazon. They're reducing it on a Friday? So it like, they don't realise, I'd been around for years and I know how it works. I'm like, "This is not normal." Nothing they were doing were normal. And then, the icing on the cake was, my direct ops manager was telling the supervisor to lie to the employees, to lie to them. "If the employees ask, "Why are we being sent home?" Or, "Why are y'all offering VTO?" Don't tell them that there's no work, tell them that there's no trucks."

Christian Smalls 32:03:

All of a sudden, we ain't got no Amazon trucks? Like, "What the hell?" I'm like, "This is crazy to me. This is absolutely insane what they're doing to keep operations going but they're going to reduce the workforce so just in case the health department decides to show up, y'all meet the guidelines that y'all talking about." I knew that's what they were doing. I knew that. I was two steps ahead of them, two steps. You know why? I planned my walkout. I planned my walkout at a certain time on purpose. It's a Monday, it was on Monday. But I did it at lunchtime. Let me tell you something, I had to do it in 24 hours. You got to think about it. I got quarantined on Saturday, I had one day to plan for it.

Christian Smalls 32:53:

So I had a couple people that was still onboard that worked there over the weekend. So under their noses they was passing around notes in the

bathroom. I had the cleaning crew tell them, "Don't throw away notes if you see any notes that's saying walkout at Monday at **12:30**, don't throw those away." Everybody had a position. I picked up some poster boards and then a union organisation decided to support us. The same union organisation that was out there previously. They decided to jump in and help support. I figured the best way I get attention is through the media. I called every media outlet in the tristate trying to get attention. Nobody responded, except for one. Thank God. That one article I got out was enough to start off a snowball effect.

Christian Smalls 33:55:

Because soon as they hear Amazon in Staten Island, because this building has so much controversy, they were calling my phone up, blowing my phone up, "Are you striking tomorrow? Are you walking out?" "Yep. I sure am." "How many people?" I lied, "About 100, 200 maybe." "Really?" "Really, 100, 200 people." "Oh my God. What time?" "**12:30**." I had nobody, I had no idea how many people was going to show up. But I did in a sense because I know at **12:30** it's lunchtime. And at lunchtime, I checked the weather, it was going to be 60 degrees, nice weather. Everybody's going to be outside enjoying lunch. So everything I did was planned.

Peter McCormack 34:43:

Right, so this was like a coordinated plan to create some publicity-

Christian Smalls 34:46:

The perception, exactly.

Peter McCormack 34:50:

Yeah. Okay. That's interesting, interesting. How many did walkout? I read 15 officially walked out.

Christian Smalls 34:53:

About 50 to 60 people, probably. A little less than 50 to 60. And I know they downplayed it, they downplayed it, yeah.

Peter McCormack 34:56:

Okay. So what happened during the walkout itself?

Christian Smalls 35:00:

"Only 15 people was outside." That's a lie. We all know that's a lie. You could tell by the pictures and video it's a lot more than 15. That's what they do, they downplay, sugar coat everything. They always got to be right.

Peter McCormack 35:14:

Yeah. It's the PR. Okay, so listen, the walkout happens, then what?

Christian Smalls 35:19:

Two hours later I'm terminated over the phone.

Peter McCormack 35:22:

Right. Two hours?

Christian Smalls 35:24:

Two hours, less than two hours.

Peter McCormack 35:25:

Were you still outside the building or were you at home at that point?

Christian Smalls 35:29:

I was home. I was home.

Peter McCormack 35:30:

You're home.

Christian Smalls 35:32:

Same person who quarantined me, the same person that terminated me. But didn't quarantine anybody else. So yeah, it's phasing.

Peter McCormack 35:43:

Right. Okay. On that phone call, what did he say?

Christian Smalls 35:48:

I say nothing, I hung up. I hung up on him. I was like, "You know what?"

Peter McCormack 35:55:

Did he give you a reason?

Christian Smalls 35:56:

Yeah, the same reason they gave to the public, I violated safety protocol, dah, dah, dah, dah. Really, just me? I put teams at risk? Just me? I'm the only one that put teams at risk? That's what they're saying.

Peter McCormack 36:15:

And the accusation is that you violated social distancing guidelines and you'd received several warnings and you had been ordered to stay at home for 14 days with full pay. Is that incorrect?

Christian Smalls 36:29:

Totally incorrect. Where's the several warnings at? Where? Where? When did it happen? Y'all see me every day of the week. What did I get warned about? They were praising me throughout the week. "Thank you for doing this. Thank you for keeping everybody calm. Thank you for communicating with the team. You're so passionate about it." These are the things they were telling me. Oh, don't worry. Don't worry, I got the proof. I got it.

Peter McCormack 36:57:

Right. Let me ask you a question.

Christian Smalls 36:58:

Mm-hmm affirmative.

Peter McCormack 36:58:

Did they give you any kind of severance in the situation or do you lose... you instantly without pay, without medical, at a time where you really do not want to be without medical?

Christian Smalls 37:10:

I think you keep your medical for like 30 days, that's it.

Peter McCormack 37:16:

Okay.

Christian Smalls 37:17:

After the 30 days you're done.

Peter McCormack 37:17:

And what's the impact has this been on you and your family?

Christian Smalls 37:24:

What do you think? I'm unemployed during a pandemic. What am I supposed to do? They don't care about people. That tells you right there, they don't care about people. I got three kids-

Peter McCormack 37:37:

After five years.

Christian Smalls 37:38:

Right. I got three kids to feed. I'm a single father, three kids. Think about it.

Peter McCormack 37:46:

Five years service. Yeah, yeah. Five years service as well.

Christian Smalls 37:49:

Right.

Peter McCormack 37:49:

And that's quite long. But based on what you said earlier, five years is quite a long time at Amazon.

Christian Smalls 37:55:

Right.

Peter McCormack 37:55:

You weathered the tough times. All right.

Christian Smalls 37:59:

I've been through a lot. A whole lot.

Peter McCormack 38:01:

All right, listen, Christian, let me read you something. You're going to know this from probably within two, three words but, "He's not smart or articulate and to the extent the press wants to focus on us versus him, we'll be in much stronger PR position than simply explaining for the umpteenth time how we've been trying to protect workers." So what did you think when this came out? Because this is kind of like... this was the internal meeting that actually included Jeff Bezos-

Christian Smalls 38:30:

Jeff Bezos.

Peter McCormack 38:32:

... was in there.

Christian Smalls 38:33:

Yeah.

Peter McCormack 38:34:

And let's add to that, "We should spend the first part of our response strongly laying out the case for why the organizers conduct was immoral, unacceptable and arguably illegal, in detail. And only then follow with our usual talking points about worker safety, making the most interesting part of the story, and if possible, making the entire face of the union organizing movement." So you will have seen that come out. That's from Amazon general council, David Zapolsky. When did you first read this or hear about this?

Christian Smalls 39:04:

I knew about it way before the press got hold. I got email early in the morning yesterday. Somebody sent it to me.

Peter McCormack 39:08:

Okay.

Christian Smalls 39:10:

I didn't even read it. I don't give a damn about these people. These people don't do nothing for me. People want me to respond directly to him, I have nothing to say to that man. He never did anything for me in my life. I never met him, don't want to meet him, don't care about him, don't care what he got to think about me. That just tells you who we work for. Jeff Bezos is sitting there, what does that say about Jeff Bezos? Now we all know, minorities, blacks, Hispanics, minorities, the company should be alarmed that you're working for somebody... I'm not going to say that word, but we all know what that means. We all know when you insult somebody like that. That's a general statement right there about how you feel about people and how they feel about their employees.

Christian Smalls 40:16:

"Y'all worried about Chris Smalls instead of your people with no PPE." "Oh, don't worry about PPE right now and the rest of my employees. Don't worry. We got enough money, we'll ship them out. Don't worry about it. They can wait. They can wait. Don't worry. Let's focus on Chris Smalls right now." Like, "Really? That's y'all... Really?" No. I'm not going to fall for that trap. Because it was never about me and that's what they fail to realize. So we'll see who's really smart and articulate. They don't know who they're dealing with. They really don't.

Peter McCormack 40:54:

Interestingly though, I did see that mayor De Blasio ordered the city's commission of human rights to investigate whether the dismissal was retaliatory. Have you actually spoken to the mayor or has anyone else contacted you regarding this? Do you know what's going on here?

Christian Smalls 41:06:

No, no, no. I mean, I heard about it and all of that. But my lawyer, they're working with the attorney state general with the State of New York. If anybody else want to open up civil cases against them on my behalf, they really can't do that. But if they want to open up a civil case, they have every right to do that. And I encourage them to. I mean, I won't be the last time they get in legal troubles. They just opened up the whole can of worms on themselves. They made this bed, not me. All I was asking for was a simple solution, close down the building, sanitize it, pay your people. You failed to do that. So now you're trying to blame me for whistle blowing? It doesn't make sense. It doesn't make sense.

Peter McCormack 42:03:

Wow.

Christian Smalls 42:04:

None of this would have happened. None of this would have happened at all if you could just give us what we were asking for.

Peter McCormack 42:12:

Are you still in touch with any of your... well, you must be still in touch with some of your colleagues.

Christian Smalls 42:18:

Absolutely. Absolutely. I'm getting calls from the U.K. Trust me, people are reaching out to me from the U.K., from Canada, from Brazil. And I'm supporting everything. You want to walkout? You tired of that? Walk the hell out. Walk the fuck out. Excuse my language. Don't work for them.

Peter McCormack 42:37:

You Tweeted out also, "This morning we were informed of additional positive COVID cases at my former Amazon warehouse."

Christian Smalls 42:44:

That was yesterday.

Peter McCormack 42:46:

JFK8 please help me close the site immediately." You believe still that this site should be closed down and sanitized?

Christian Smalls 42:53:

Absolutely. I believe every site in the world should be closed down. Every site.

Peter McCormack 42:59:

Every Amazon site, globally? I would question that. Wouldn't that be better based on data per site? Because would you not consider that part of what Amazon is doing is key worker, support. I mean, look, I saw some guy outside one of the buildings say, "Can people stop ordering things that aren't essential? We've got to get out essentials. And dildos are not essential." I don't know did you see that video?

Christian Smalls 43:22:

Dildos and fire sticks and echo dots? Those essential to you? No.

Peter McCormack 43:29:

Of course not.

Christian Smalls 43:32:

And think about it, just think about this, this is a scary thing. Is 800,000 employees worldwide.

Peter McCormack 43:38:

Uh-huh affirmative.

Christian Smalls 43:39:

God forbid we all became carriers, then what? This virus spreads to two and a half people. People better wake up. That's food for thought. People better wake up. They need to shut down this Amazon network immediately or more people going to die, millions. Millions of people. And that's what the bigger picture's about. It's not even just about my building. My building's priority because I'm personally attached to it, but I'm trying to spread a broader message. The entire network for Amazon will be infected. It's not a matter of how, it's when. It's when.

Peter McCormack 44:20:

Do you not see though Amazon like, we still need the supermarkets to be open for food and food delivery. Do you not think there's aspects of Amazon that are critical and that perhaps they should remain open but with better procedures in place? I've been to the supermarket this morning, there's a queue outside-

Christian Smalls 44:37:

Let me ask you something?

Peter McCormack 44:38:

Bear with me, we're two meters apart. All the staff are wearing gloves. Every single time they... they've got masks on as well. There's reminders over the speaker of how to operate. Do you not think there's a way these facilities can operate carefully?

Christian Smalls 44:55:

You got to think, people do not realize. What was we doing before Amazon?

Peter McCormack 45:01:

You would head to the shops.

Christian Smalls 45:03:

I was alive for what? 30 years, 31 years, right? I remember just going to the grocery store. What's the problem with going to the grocery store? And we got these billionaires with billions of dollars, if the Amazon network is shut down they could support the medical field right now. They could support the grocery stores right now. Why not? Why do you need Amazon? You don't need it. You don't need it. You don't need it right now. The world will be okay for a few months without Amazon, it's just a few months until the flattening of the curve. And then you start to bring back the Amazon network. That's what people need to realize. You don't need Amazon. Amazon's a fairly new company, until about what? 25 years or less. It's fairly new. You don't need it. Sometimes you got to revert back to the old ways of life. When I grew up as a kid, I liked to be outside in the park, all day long. You had to beg me to come home. Now, our kids these days, what do they do? Fortnite, all day.

Peter McCormack 46:16:

Christian, what happens for you now?

Christian Smalls 46:19:

I don't know. I mean, I have my faith in God, that's it. I'm being guided by God right now. I don't know what day to day holds for me, all I know is that I could just spread the knowledge that people need to wake up. And hopefully people like yourself, I mean, that's why I talk to everybody I can, to shed light on what's really going on. If we don't do something, God help us, we might be ending the world right now, all I know.

Peter McCormack 46:50:

And if people want to find out more, Christian, about this movement, how do they find out more? How do they follow what you're up to here?

Christian Smalls 46:57:

Well, yeah. Follow me on Twitter, stay in contact with me, reach out, help support me. Support me. Get the word out there. Get the word out there. You got to get in contact with your government and the government has the power to do the changes, the government. These billionaires and CEOs, if they're not willing to shut their own businesses down for their own greed, the only way we could shut them down is to stop working for them. That's what the workers need to realize. The workers need to realize, stop working for them. Y'all the ones that's making them richer and richer. For what? They got enough money. What do you need billions of dollars for during a pandemic? What are you going to do with that? Nothing's open. You got everything you want in life. For my workers that's in the retail, delivery service, stop working for these billionaires, walk out. Go home. Then what? What are they going to do then? What are they going to do? They not going to go and pick and pack a box themselves, they damn sure ain't going to do that. People got to think. Take action, take action.

Peter McCormack 48:15:

All right, Christian. Listen, look, I appreciate you going through something quite difficult here. And I appreciate you coming on to talk to me about this. It does sound concerning, there are things in there which make me pose some questions about things I've not considered. But listen, thank you for coming on. Appreciate what you're doing.

Christian Smalls 48:31:

No problem.

Peter McCormack 48:31:

I wish you the best with your lawsuit, I hope this all pans out for you quite well. Hopefully we'll catch up maybe few weeks, maybe a couple of months and find out that things have all settled for you. And look, stay safe. You're in New York right now, and look, New York is going through some tough times. London is here, but I know New York is particularly looking quite scary right now. So look, stay safe and health and I wish you all the best my friend.

Christian Smalls 48:53:

You're in London?

Peter McCormack 48:54:

Just outside of London. Little town called Bedford.

Christian Smalls 48:57:

Okay. I want to come out there, so I hope that we do return back to normal. I really, really want to come out there. So yeah, stay safe and stay in contact. Stay tuned, because it's going to be a wild show. Some deep stuff.

Peter McCormack 49:13:

All right, my man. You take care.

Christian Smalls 49:13:

Take care.