

# Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Marc Ayers

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library  
*Tumultuous 2020* Oral History project

Interview # T20-A-L-2021-064

Marc Ayers, Illinois State Director of the Humane Society, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Tumultuous 2020* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: November 17, 2021      Location: ALPL Recording Studio, Springfield, Illinois

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Amanda Riggenschach, *Tumultuous 2020* project manager, ALPLM

Transcription by: \_\_\_\_\_

Edited by: \_\_\_\_\_

Transcript being  
processed.

Total Pages: \_\_\_\_\_      Total Time: 2:19 / 2.32 hrs.

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The interview is archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

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## Abstract

Marc Ayers, *Tumultuous 2020*, T20-A-L-2021-064

**Biographical Information/Overview of Interview:** Marc Ayers was born in July of 1985. He was raised on the far west side of Springfield, Illinois, and attended Pleasant Plains High School, graduating in 2004. He went on to Lincoln Land community College where he studied biology, physics, and chemistry. A college trip to Belize changed the trajectory of Ayer's life. Though the trip was supposed to deepen his love for biology, it helped him find a passion for political science. He transferred to the University of Illinois-Springfield where he graduated with a degree in political science. He worked in a variety of places with a specialty in public policy before being hired as the Illinois State Director of the Humane Society.

Ayers' mother, Candace, was a longtime sufferer from rheumatoid arthritis and was being treated with Rituxan infusions. These infusions made her severely immunocompromised and when the COVID-19 pandemic became relevant in the Midwest, the family took every precaution to ensure Candace would be safe. Due to the closeness of their relationship, Ayers would meet with his parents and sister often but outdoors and further apart than six feet. In the beginning of 2021 when the vaccine became available to the family, Ayers describes the excitement they all felt as they reunited.

In late June, Ayers' parents began planning a trip to Mississippi, once receiving the okay from their doctor. While on the trip home, Candace began to show symptoms for COVID-19. Within a couple of weeks, Candace's health continued to decline, and she was admitted to the COVID-19 ward at St. John's Hospital in Springfield. Marc outlines Candace's severe illness, including being put on a ventilator, contracting sepsis, and then passing away. In Candace's obituary, Amanda Ayers blamed Candace's death on those not vaccinated. The Springfield newspaper, the *State Journal-Register*, wrote an article about the Ayers family's story. Public attention grew and soon Marc was being interviewed by international news outlets, even going on Good Morning America. At the time of the interview, the public attention, including the number of harassing messages, has slowed down. Ayers describes the way the loss of his mother has affected him and his family.

**Subject Headings/Key Words:** COVID-19 pandemic; vaccines; loss of family; COVID-19 death; Springfield, Illinois; immunocompromised; vaccine hesitancy; social media

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