

## Final Transcript

Tienda, Madison. 2021. Interview by Alyssa Tienda. San Antonio. April 3.

AT: My name is Alyssa Tienda, today's date is March 26, 2021 and today we will discuss the experiences of people during the COVID-19 pandemic. Today we're here with Madison Tienda and we're in San Antonio, Texas. Question one: When were you born?

MT: February 16, 2001.

AT: Where are you from?

MT: San Antonio, Texas.

AT: What is or was your occupation?

MT: I'm a student.

AT: When and how did you first hear about the virus, and can you explain your experience?

MT: Okay, I heard -- I had speculation about it, but I most notably remember it being brought up during my second year of college -- my third semester. During my digital media class, we were discussing how we were going to go on a field trip to the museum, but we might have to postpone it because of a virus that came to America from Asia, and that was -- I was just confused. Since then my first, like, direct correlation with it was going to the grocery store with my mother, and walking into a -- seeing a bunch of people in there. And it was, like, straight out of an apocalypse movie. Everyone was stocking up on cans, and all the aisles were . . .

AT: Empty?

MT: Yeah. And I didn't know it was -- I didn't know it was that serious. And, yeah, we just stocked on a bunch of stuff, and, for a while, it did seem like a movie. It was pretty crazy.

AT: And did you feel scared or did you feel, like, "Oh, I think people are overreacting"?

MT: I think it was overreacting in the beginning when it came to, like, toilet paper stuff but I realized -- I understood the, like, the intensity of it.

AT: Yeah.

MT: Because if I could do anything to prevent any spread, of course I'm going to, you know, stay safe and go by -- take my precautions. But yeah, so I did take it seriously, but there were some times where I think people, like, believe it's the end of the world.

AT: Yeah, mm-hmm. And can you explain how has the Coronavirus affected you and your family or friends -- and what has changed?

MT: So I do have family members who are higher risk, like you, and our dad, who have compromising immune systems. And so it was scary (enough) to get me to adjust to not going to school anymore, and sometimes our parents had to work from home for a little while and after months, months go by, they eventually had to go back to work for a few days, and that was scary because we don't know who they're interacting with, and that can be brought back to the house -- to you guys. And it's just a different environment. I had to compromise for that, like, for like a different mindset. At school, I go in and then I'm in a headspace where I'm there to do what I'm supposed to do. When I come home, this is my safe space, and so bringing that environment in here took some adjusting to. It was very distracting, and I couldn't get into the proper work ethic that I'm used to. And, you know, every day it's wake up, do school, and stay in the same house. And it's been like that for, what? Like, a year now already?

AT: Yeah, over a year.

MT: Yeah, and we rarely go outside. When we do, it's mostly to go on our weekly walks three times out of the week, for, like, forty-five minutes to an hour. And that's the majority of our outdoor time, and so when we come back in, it's the same thing. We wake up, eat, do work. I don't know -- it's just -- it's, like, repeated so the days are very much blended together,

AT: Reliving the same day every day?

MT: Yeah, so it's -- it's getting to me a little bit now. There's not much more I can say or do about it. I don't know.

AT: Well, that leads me to, like, exactly what you're talking about which is how specifically has it affected your daily or weekly routine like with shopping or -- well, shopping with, like, school, and spending time with family. Like, how has that?

MT: Well, now I'm constantly with you guys. I mean, at least, before, I would have some separation for a little bit, right? We came back and we're all back together at the end of the day and we can talk about what we did. But now, we're always, always with each other and --

AT: There's, like, nothing to talk about!

MT: There's nothing to talk about besides, "Did y'all eat already or something?"

AT: Literally, yeah! 'Cause it would be --

MT: "Did y'all finish school?" "Did y'all finish your class?". It's the same topics every day, and it's -- like I said, it's just

AT: 'Cause there's no separation?

MT: It's so repetitive, it's, like, nothing we've -- like it's so bad that I look forward to taking a shower.

AT: Yeah, exactly! Cause there's no, like, you never -- there's no separation, and, like, cause when we would go to school, we would be able to have our experience at school, and then come home and be like, "What did you do at school today?" and that would be our conversation. But now, we know what we've been doing this whole time.

MT: Or, well, I mean, not that I didn't look forward to weekends before, but now, the best thing that could happen during weekend is that our older sister comes over -- who, by the way, takes her own precautions so she's fine -- but I look forward to her coming over now, and like that's it and we don't really go anywhere. And when we do go out . . .

AT: It's in the car.

MT: Yeah, we're usually in the car the whole time. Just like -- we like -- literally, they will approach us like, "Y'all wanna take a drive?" -- just so we can get out of the house! That's it. Yeah, it's that. And with school, they gave me assignments where I have to do, like, a daily journal and write down what I did that day.

AT: Yeah.

MT: And it's every day of the week, like Monday through Friday. Yeah, and I just -- at this point, I don't know what to write anymore! 'Cause it's, like, I had to think so hard about what could possibly be distinctive from the previous day that -- I don't know. 'Cause I literally do the same

thing every day. And it's getting to the point where I'm getting annoyed by it, or I don't know what they want from me. What do they want me to say? I'm pretty sure everyone's writing down that they -- like, once again -- woke up, either went to school or did some homework, ate, watched TV, lounged around the house, saw the same four walls in their house, and that's it -- and they went to bed and they did the same thing again tomorrow.

AT: Like, I can understand that teachers would ask students to keep a daily journal to, like, keep them busy, especially, like, because we're at home all the time and we need to like keep ourselves occupied from going stir crazy, but also, it's a lot to ask because, not -- like, our lives are not nearly as eventful as they used to be. So, like, what are we gonna write about? Or what?

MT: Like, I can put in that . . . I don't know, maybe that I'm . . .

AT: "I wrote down in my journal today."

MT: "I wrote down in my journal the same thing I did last time. I wrote it in less neat handwriting."

AT: So that -- about homework. So, due to the pandemic, are you able to work from home? Why or why not?

MT: I am. It's not at all the ideal situation I would want, but, you know, I did make a conscious effort to separate as much as I could, while in the same -- while in my house. Like, we have that spare room up here -- upstairs, where we have our desk, which is usually where I do my artwork, right? But -- you know, I don't have a designated desk to do this kind of thing, so I just moved that over there -- moved over my laptop and my schoolwork over there. So, during the day when I do have to do (homework), I get out there, so I come to my bedroom, I don't have to have that kind of energy disrupt the safe space that I built for myself -- 'cause I have done that before, where I've brought it in here and I was just staring at it. It just ruins -- it ruins the entire mood. Yeah, I did that and it is limited -- it limits the distractions. It does. I realized that I can take more of the academic courses online, but when it comes to, you know, like, my major -- I'm an art student, I'm an art major -- hands-on things like my drawing classes, my painting classes, or even my digital art classes -- my digital media stuff. That is -- I can't -- I don't get any type of fulfillment from those courses through this experience. And that's why I'm considering next semester . . .

AT: Going in person?

MT: -- to go in person for those classes. 'Cause I adapted to being okay with doing online. I experienced it for the first time, both synchronous and asynchronous. And yeah, just -- I don't know, I was just adapting to it, seeing how it works.

AT: But it wasn't, like, effective for you at all?

MT: A little. Yeah, it was alright.

AT: But it just wasn't enjoyable?

MT: No, it was not! Yeah, no, and I said not the ideal at all, especially for the stuff that I care about.

AT: Yeah, exactly, that's like, literally taking the soul out of everything that you do.

MT: It really does and I feel bad because I can like, when I submit my work for my art classes, I wish that I was there to talk to him about it -- especially for critiques, I hate writing critiques on a discussion board. I hate it. I like the idea of, you know, having a discussion and really just watching everybody else do their work. I like having, you know, I'm very much an interactive, visual learner, so being inside and, yeah, online, it doesn't always work for me.

AT: Yeah that sounds like, the literal worst -- the opposite.

MT: It's the opposite of what works for me.

AT: So the next question was, how has adapting to the virus affected your work/school work responsibilities?

MT: My goodness.

AT: Has it made you more productive than you were or less productive?

MT: I would say more productive in a way where I get burned out. Not productive in a way where I'm like, organized and scheduled -- that's not at all how it is. I'm easily burnt out. It's not easy to sit behind a computer all day, right? And at least when I go in person, I know I have designated times for each class. And sometimes my classes are between -- there's time to have, like, an hour between them and I could do something -- I don't know.

AT: I know exactly what you mean.

MT: And in my head, it's all planned out, and when I get home, I usually can just shut that off. But here, I feel like there's always something I need to do.

AT: Yeah, it's all hitting you at one time.

MT: Yeah, it's all -- and it probably is because I could be using my time management better. But then again, that's -- I feel like I constantly have something to do. When I don't have something to do -- oh my god, I just melt. And not even in a good way, but we're -- we literally joke about how, like, we can't wait to just disconnect for a while. It's -- I don't think there's ever been a day where we're not talking about how much school . . .

AT: It burns us out. Bad.

MT: Yeah, it has been like, really -- what's the word . . . I -- You know what I mean.

AT: Yeah, I know you mean but I can't put it into words. Yeah, like I would say -- it's not traumatizing, but it's definitely an experience that affected a lot of aspects of my health. But it's not my interview. This is moving on to a more sensitive topic. Do you know anyone that has been infected with the virus?

MT: Yeah, I do. Maybe not super -- well, no. I take that back. A couple family members from either side of my family -- well, my mom's side and my dad's side. Some have led to, you know, death. And that's -- it was really sudden.

AT: It's been really hard to process.

MT: Yeah, it's hard to process, I mean me -- I could see the hurt in my parents when they hear that news and even when they were told that this person was infected and they're in the hospital and we're waiting to see what happens -- like, seeing that worry in their faces. And they're so anxious to hear what happens next and that only builds up more fear in them and wanting to amp-up the precautions, right? I mean, you can tell that our dad is very, very --

AT: He's, like, the most cautious out of all of us.

MT: -- The most anxious and most cautious about it. And, you know, that experience didn't help.

AT: If anything, it really amped it up, big time.

MT: Yeah, it really amplified that. And I can say that definitely changed his . . .

AT: Perspective?

MT: Yeah, his personality has shifted since COVID.

AT: -- To more cautious -- a lot more cautious. A little anxious.

MT: Yeah, definitely, and you know, that worries me because I feel like he has lost some kind of liveliness.

AT: That's so sad.

MT: It is sad.

AT: I noticed that too.

MT: Yeah, yeah, I noticed that. Yeah, it's just -- it's sad because I -- you know, because for a while he thought -- before COVID happened -- he was given some news that he could be potentially -- have some health issues.

AT: Yeah, it was already -- it was a health scare there

MT: Yeah, that was already a health scare and he would go into changing his habits . . .

AT: His diet.

MT: Yeah, and everything. And then when this happened, oh my god.

AT: Oh my god, literally, like, if things could get any worse, they got worse.

MT: So seeing how that affects his personality -- his way of living . . . it's sad because it's like, he can't fully enjoy weekends or seeing people, and planning events.

AT: Yeah, it's changed a lot of -- especially our family because we're very family-oriented and we have a lot of get togethers like on Sundays, especially for like "Football Sunday" and we have, like, so many people over to the point where we asked, "How many kids are gonna be here?" and now, like, that's . . . we don't know if it's gonna be a thing anymore.

MT: Yeah, it's not only that, but the days that we do want to go out and we do want to be outside, he's like -- I don't think he's fully, like, in the moment, he's always thinking about like "Is

someone gonna come by?” or like -- I don't know, I feel like it's always on his mind. Well, I mean, it's on everyone's mind. But at the end -- it's especially on his mind.

AT: That reminds me of -- not to take any attention away from dad -- but when we went walking the other day and I forgot my mask, I literally -- it's affected me so much that I felt so uncomfortable even though we're, like, really distanced from anyone that would pass by. I hated the idea of walking around without wearing a mask.

MT: But you know what, that's something I've noticed too that the times that we do go outside -- in public like the last time -- like last week, I went in public like the very first time -- like, really in there. Yeah, I went to an arcade, which is probably the worst place you can go, honestly. But, you know, I try my best not to touch too many things and I even brought, like, some disinfectant stuff to use for the stuff that I did touch, but when I was in that environment, I was like, “Why are there so many freaking people in here? There's so many people!”

AT: Because it changes -- it literally changes, like, your perspective on those things.

MT: Yeah, yeah. And, like, it was bad, too, like we had we had to squeeze between, like, everything -- everything! And I was like, “I'm so close to this person's shoulder right now.”

AT: Oh no.

MT: Yeah, it was -- you would have died, you would not have wanted to be there, but you know, we weren't there that long, honestly. We left pretty quickly 'cause . . . yeah, it was getting pretty crowded -- really crowded, like, as if it wasn't crowded already.

AT: Yeah, that was smart, but I'm at least glad that you wore your masks and stuff and I bet a lot of people there were wearing masks anyway.

MT: Yeah.

AT: The next question is regarding the snowstorm that hit last month.

MT: Oh gosh.

AT: So, when were you hit with February's winter storm, and did you think about the virus at the time, or was it just about the storm?

MT: Ha! I think it was like, “if we weren't already in our houses.”

AT: And it was your birthday!

MT: Yeah, it was! Yeah, okay. Well, first, it must have happened -- like, the first time -- it was on the 14th -- Valentine's Day, at night. I remember I was working on a project really late at night.

AT: It was! I remember 'cause we were both up that day because I was working on my thing.

MT: Yeah, and the lights went off, and I was like, "What?" It was literally, like, at least two in the morning, it was already dark.

AT: And we were both like -- I remember that, wow.

MT: And I thought it was the blackout, whatever.

AT: Because that happens a lot when it's windy.

MT: And so the next day, I go downstairs to see everybody in the dining room table, sitting down and our aunt and uncle live next door and they come across the street and they are sitting in there, too and I'm like, "What is happening at like 10 in the morning right now? Like, why is everyone over at the house?" And on top of that, there's wires through our house. There's wires!

AT: Yeah, coming through the front door, through the dining room . . .

MK: And everyone is like -- there's extension cords everywhere and people are charging their phones and I was like, "What? Huh? What?" and they're like, "Yeah, the power went out and it's been out all night. And -- oh my god! Wait -- on February -- on that same date, it snowed that day! On the 14th, it's still that day and we were outside at -- yeah, that was crazy. It snowed like crazy. And so it was the first time we've seen snow -- that much snow.

AT: For years, it's been years.

MT: No, it was more snow than we've ever seen, ever.

AT: It was literally like -- it was a lot. And it snowed twice!

MT: Yeah, it snowed twice. And in the morning when I saw the wires, it was *still* snowing outside, and I was like, "It's still snowing *and* the powers out?" and I'm like, "This is crazy." and it was like "Oh my god, snow day!"

AT: Yeah, and you were like -- you were really excited because you were like, "It's my birthday week and it's looking good so far." That's what you were saying.

MT: "Yeah, my birthday's tomorrow! It's snowing? What?" -- But I wasn't too concerned about the power outage because we've had those plenty of times before and we seemed prepared, but we were not expecting it to be that long.

AT: Yeah, that was the actual ugliest thing.

MT: The only good part about that for the next like two days -- or three days that we didn't have power, or that was really spotty -- was the fact that everybody was in our house. All of us were home. Our aunt and uncle who live next door were at our house and we were all talking -- I loved that we were all talking.

AT: Yeah, that was fun. I like the little community we have.

MT: I liked that. But I always liked -- Yeah, I always like when we have family over and we're just talking -- and especially 'cause we have no electricity, we were really forced to do other things.

AT: But it was fun! We had, like -- we adapted to, like, playing games.

MT: We had the board games out and that -- oh my god, I loved that so much. So we really got time to spend time together, but on top of that we were listening to so much of The Cure -- I was *in it*. But when it-- the really bad part was how freaking cold it got.

AT: *Insanely* freakin' cold.

MT: Yeah, it was crazy, it got really cold. Luckily we had water, still.

AT: Thank god.

MT: Yeah, we had to sleep in the same room!

AT: Yeah, you're right, uh-huh.

MT: We had to sleep in the same room

AT: For one night because that was the only night I could take it.

MT: And that was probably the worst sleep I've ever got in my entire life. The worst sleep -- ever.

AT: Oh, I remember you telling me.

MT: Yeah, no, that was bad. But no, I was not thinking about the virus. I mean, I knew it was still happening but I was not thinking about it because I was more focused on how cold I was.

AT: Of course! We were cold, so it wasn't like we were outside being cautious and -- we were more isolated than we were.

MT: That was an experience.

AT: That was -- it was like an actual, like, "Did that even happen?" moment.

MT: It just -- it's like these experiences -- these things just keep adding up, it's *crazy*.

AT: That's like when last week when we were listening to Phantom of the Opera -- like, that was its own moment.

MT: Yeah, but these are, like, bad moments.

AT: Yeah, well, you know what I mean.

MT: "It can't get any worse," -- Yes, it can.

AT: Well my, -- that's -- my last question is, what would you like to tell future generations about this pandemic? What would you tell them? Like, what advice would you give them?

MT: Ha! Like, I don't want to be that person, or that parent, or that whatever, to tell, like, "Well, you see, in *my* day," or like, "You guys have it easy." Like, I hate when people say that stuff to me. I just -- I hate it. But I will tell them that how -- I will mention all these things to them because I just think it's a wild experience, and like I can't believe it.

AT: It's living history.

MT: Yeah, I can't believe all this happened, it's all jam-packed into 2020-2021

AT: Oh my god.

MT: There's so much to unpack from that anyway.

AT: There is so much to unpack.

MT: But I *can* tell them that if there's a day where they want to go out, or they can't do something for one day, I will tell them that I was inside for a whole year.

AT: A whole year!

MT: I can use that against them, but then again, I hate when people do that to me.

AT: Yeah, well. Yeah, it's not even gonna seem real!

MT: I wish -- there's times where I wish that I, like -- I mean, I mentioned that I *am* doing a journal, but that's just like -- there's times where I wish I would write down things are the most, like, stuck out to me. Like, for instance, the storm -- the winter storm. I wish I wrote that down because the thing with that -- I need to tell somebody later on!

AT: That's like the "Day three in the chamber, they ain't found me yet, but when they do they gon' be surprised." Like, wow. But you know what . . .

MT: But this will go down as probably the roughest . . .

AT: One of the worst two years in --

MT: But I *can* say that even though this whole thing has been really tough and crazy new and just a whole, whole experience-- a whole moment in history, that I've changed myself so much too. Like, I have gone through the most growth, and the most physical change that I've ever had before, and weird because it contradicts, like -- everything's going so bad, yet I'm -- I look like I'm doing good.

AT: Well, that happens --

MT: I look better than I ever did before!

AT: Well, a lot of people thrive after really bad experiences like this.

MT: Let's hope so. What if things start going back to normal and I go back to being disgusting and ugly?

AT: Please, don't jinx this. Please don't jinx it.

MT: Knock on wood.

AT: Yeah, knock on wood. Well, that is the last question and that ends the interview, Maddy!

MT: Wow, thanks! Thanks for having me.

AT: Thanks!