

## Oral History Transcript: COVID-19 Pandemic

Interviewer (Deane): Hello everyone, my name is Deane Jean Gumila and today's date is March 10<sup>th</sup> of 2021. Today we will discuss the experiences of people during the COVID-19 pandemic. So, today we are in Houston, Texas and I am interviewing...

Respondent (Sherellin): Hi my name is Sherellin.

Deane: When were you born Sherellin?

Sherellin: Um so I was born February 6<sup>th</sup> 2000.

Deane: Great, and where are you from?

Sherellin: I'm from Houston.

Deane: And were you born in Houston as well?

Sherellin: Yeah I was born here.

Deane: What is or was your occupation?

Sherellin: Um... right now I'm a student, but I also work at a restaurant... um but I quit, or well... I put in my two weeks notice so...

Deane: Okay, um when and how did you first hear about the virus and can you explain your experience?

Sherellin: Um... I think around January people were talking about how there was a virus in China and everything but I didn't really like... It didn't really register in my head. It wasn't anything like that big to me. And then, over spring break um last year, I was in Florida with a group of friends and none of us knew about the virus or like no- none of us had any information about it so when we came back... on our way back, we heard that their closing down the Rodeo and all of these things were happening and it honestly felt like an apocalypse because we were so far away from home um we had no information and we came back, and everyone was like... really far from each other and... we had to be careful around each other... there was no one on campus anymore um and then we heard that we had two weeks of spring break for some reason so... we kinda heard it late and it... was mind blowing.

Deane: Interesting... so can you explain how has coronavirus affected you and your family and friends and what has changed so far?

Sherellin: Um... at the beginning of the pandemic, my mom ended up getting it and it wasn't too bad. She just had... um she had fever she had some chills and she honestly felt like she was dying... so it was really hard for her. And then around winter break, I ended up getting it... and thankfully no one in my family ended up getting it um... cause I didn't know I had it and so I

spent Christmas with my family and... um yeah thankfully no one had it and... um yeah it like between me and my friend, we stopped- we kinda like- when some of the friends that I saw during that time period, that I had it... um but didn't know I had it, um a lot of them were kinda mad but like... I didn't know I had it so they couldn't really blame me and um we've been just kinda like social distancing... we'll wear a mask when we're with each other. Some of my friends ask us to get tested before we see each other um if- sometimes if we're going to eat out, we eat outside... like outside the restaurant... and yeah, so for the most part it's like get tested before you see each other or you just have to stay away or stay- stay far away.

Deane: And so... other than testing positive for COVID, what were your symptoms that made you realize that you had COVID?

Sherellin: Um... that made me wanna get tested?

Deane: Yes.

Sherellin: Um... I just felt like... bo- I had like a body ache and... I didn't really know I had it like... I didn't feel sick or anything but I definitely felt confused and out of it- I couldn't focus on things, and I had like these body aches. There were moments where I thought like- I feel- I felt like I had a cold. But then, I wasn't coughing, I wasn't um... I didn't have a sore throat or anything so it had nothing to do with like my- um... with my throat or whatever or my nose or whatever, I didn't lose any of my taste or my smell, so I thought it was just like being tired from work cause the restaurant that I work at is open at night so I thought I was just tired from work and I just felt like a small winter cold maybe...

Deane: So you've mentioned about how it's affected your daily routine um, can you elaborate on more how like shopping or groceries and spending time with family has affected-?

Sherellin: Um... so when I had- (audio interference)?

Deane: You kind of cut off a bit

Sherellin: Oh, um was the question when I had COVID or just COVID in general?

Deane: What was that? Sorry

Sherellin: No you're fine um was the question for when I had COVID or just like COVID in general?

Deane: Yeah (background noise) COVID in general, and then when you had COVID as well.

Sherellin: Um... (audio interference) COVID in general, I'll like- whenever- (audio interference) and like I forgot my (audio interference) this one time, and I didn't have my mask cause I forgot it so that could happen um... and then... just when- (audio interference) I'm like getting fruits or something or just whenever I touch something I feel bad for touching it cause I don't wanna make other people feel uncomfortable so I'll put on a plastic bag on my hand, and then grab the

fruit or something and then if I accidentally touch a fruit, I'll just buy it like I don't (giggle) I don't wanna make anyone feel uncomfortable um... and then, for when I did have COVID, I didn't really go out when I had COVID um just to be safe and I also just like during the time period that I didn't know I had COVID, like I said I was very confused so driving was not a good idea so knowing that I had COVID, I didn't leave my house.

Deane: And so um due to the pandemic (background noise), are you able to work from home in terms of schoolwork? And why or why not?

Sherellin: Um so right now my classes are online except for my labs, and I'm in nursing school (audio interference), I know you know but, I'm in nursing school and so all of my lectures are online, so of our labs are in person, and some of our labs are online. (Audio interference) I'm able to go to class um online, it's just that certain things like check offs for like- for things that we have to actually do in person, we'll do those on- in person and then we have to get tested before we come um... yeah and then I also- I also work at a restaurant so... I also go to the restaurant I can't do that online (giggle).

Deane: Other than your mom and yourself, do you know anyone that has been infected with the virus?

Sherellin: Um... I don't think so, I know my- one of my aunts had it and unfortunately she passed away from it, but other than that... she's the only person I know.

Deane: I'm so sorry to hear that.

Sherellin: Thank you.

Deane: So how has adapting to the virus affected your work and schoolwork responsibilities?

Sherellin: Um... I guess like, since I'm- I'm at home and I can't really like go to class in person, or actually meet my classmates, um so at the beginning of- at the beginning of nursing school, it was really hard because we were all online... none of us really knew each other and like... focusing in class is kind of hard if it's just you and you're a laptop um but... since we started having in person classes, just like if you want in person classes, I'm able to make some friends and that's been helping a lot um so I had to adapt in that way. At the beginning it was hard, but after a while, we kinda just got used to it and... yeah it's been difficult but we're getting there.

Deane: Okay so, when you were hit with the February winter storm, did you think about the virus? Why or why not?

Sherellin: Oh yeah I definitely- like so during the winter storm, I didn't really go out because we couldn't really drive or anything but I was also thinking about all the people that um... needed like warmth because I know they had shelters and I'm just like thinking about how risky it is to go to the shelters and um... during a pandemic like, the winter storm on top of the pandemic, I'm sure it was very difficult for other people and thankfully I didn't have to be displaced and be in a shelter, um but I know it's definitely hard for other people.

Deane: Yeah definitely um, I know a lot of people were displaced because their power went out and they didn't have enough water or anything so that was very-

Sherellin: Yeah...

Deane: ...so that was very sad

Sherellin: I had um... like I had some friends that would- like, not necessarily break quarantine but they would go to other people's houses and stay at their places, and like in that situation like, you had to do what you had to do you know like, if you trust the other person, you can come in and it's hard but like the winter storm could've killed them so...

Deane: That's true. What would you like to tell future generations about the pandemic?

Sherellin: Um... I don't know (giggle) I guess... just to... I- okay honestly, in my opinion, I think that... we need a better like public health system, and if the future generation can keep that in mind, like promoting hand hygiene um... and like, like decreasing the amount of ways that we can just spread infections because a lot of people don't take it seriously and that's just a problem in America and hopefully the future generations will take it more seriously. Hopefully in some way um we'll start to promote public health more, but the pandemic I feel like... could've been- it probably wouldn't have been this long if people had taken it seriously- taken public health more seriously, and um... because- at the end of the day, our health is really important and that's what brings our future so if people aren't taking it seriously, then yeah...

Deane: I very much agree with you. So that last question concludes our interview for today. Thank you for your time, Sherellin and I hope you have a great day.

Sherellin: Thank you. You too.