

Oral History Transcript

Maleny: Alrighty my name is Maleny Saucedo and today is March 8th, 2021. Uh today, we'll be discussing the experience of people during the Covid 19 pandemic. (pause) And obviously we will get more into that and if you could state your name please.

Alexis: My name is Alexis Gabriela Leija.

Maleny: Awesome. And then I am currently in San Antonio Texas while my interviewee is actually in.

Alexis: I am in Calvillo Aguascalientes Mexico (giggles)

Maleny: Boom. And you were born where?

Alexis: So, I was born in San Antonio Texas up to the age of like maybe four, or two or three something like that very young and then lived up till about twenty-two or twenty- three in Hillsborough, North Carolina but for the past two years I've been living in Mexico.

Maleny: And why did you move to Mexico?

Alexis: So, I left to Mexico with my husband umm because his mother was sick and so we decided to move over here. Umm he doesn't have papers, or he doesn't have legal entry to the U.S. So, we decided to come, and we recently just started our immigration process so we've been here in May will be two years.

Pause

Maleny: Awesome and right now currently in Mexico umm, do you have an occupation, or did you have an occupation in Mexico?

Alexis: I currently do not umm no my husband supports me.

Unknown background noise

Maleny: Okay when and how did you first hear about the virus?

Alexis: So, this was probably last year 2020 march. I actually bought an airline ticket because I was going to go back to North Carolina, and I think maybe like maybe a week or two before going back. Um my flight got canceled um because of the whole covid thing and everything was just like going to shut down this and that there was a bunch of rumors at first because it was kind of more advanced in the U.S then it was in Mexico. My mom was like hey have you heard about what is going on that there is a possibility that they might cancel your flight this and that and then that's when maybe like a week later. I want to say mid early March that I remember that's when people started talking about it here in Mexico and um, they basically said oh flights are going to get cancelled the boarders going to close. And then the stores here um I guess kind of took the same precaution as the U.S. but even more I guess they started closing stores down people stopped working and then mask were set in where a thing from like one day to

another but as far as I can remember it was like maybe early to mid-March when it was like corona virus. (giggle)

Maleny: Yeah, for sure. That was not fun. I know I'm pretty sure I got sick too during that time, but we'll never know because they it wasn't corona virus. (unknown background noise)

Alexis: Yeah.

Maleny: Until later okay and then can you explain how the coronavirus affected you or your family or friends and what has changed for you?

Alexis: Yeah, so as far as me and my husband I guess it didn't change much because it is just him and I so like we were ever to go out it would just be him and I. it was at first, I guess Mexicans being like it not true this and that like you don't have to wear a mask it not real this and that. Uh how do you say the word I want to say like skeptical maybe a lot of Hispanics here where like no it isn't true it just like a scam it's like a flu this and that um and I tried telling them no because I came to the point where my mom or dad would be like this person in the U.S got covid or this and this person got covid or like a person that we know of another person that we know was never like directly family until later this year but is was just oh this person this person got covid this person and this person got covid but like I would believe my parents but like Jarvis wouldn't believe like if I would tell oh this person that I know that my parents know got covid no it not true this and that so I felt like that was like the part where like its hard I guess they were very naive about covid I guess oh it not real this and that but

Maleny: Is he still like that till today?

Alexis: Yes and no so here in Mexico umm There's a whole bunch of rumors and things like that that supposedly for every case of covid that our town gets like the hospital or the clinics and stuff like that get a check for I guess like taking care of them or like saying that they have this many cases and this and that so what recently has been happening people who go to the clinic or to the hospitals and be like oh we have covid and now lo tenemos que entubar which means put the tubes in and it came like it came about where a lot of people were sick and I personally have noticed if it was like an elderly person or someone that already had like let's say something of like kidneys or something with the lungs it was like oh they have they have this they have covid put them in the tube and two three days later they were dead. So people were actually sensitive people here in Mexico seeking to go get help because they feel like something's wrong with them people were getting to the point where like they don't even want to go to the hospitals or they don't want to go to the clinics or nothing cause they're scared there like there gonna say it's covid and it's really not covid and that's where people think like oh the town the governor well they call it the presidente the president here the president gets money for every person who or case that they have here in the town or whatnot so everything comes down to it's a scam like it's not real the government is all about money because apparently they get money I don't know if that's true but apparently they get money and this and that so have instead of people actually going to go seek help at the clinics or hospitals or whatever everyone is actually scared to go so it's kind of sad to see that actually happen because I mean when you get sick you go to the doctor when you don't feel good you go to the doctor or your pediatrician you go see somebody you know something's wrong with you or your child you go and take them but people here actually scared to go because they might tell you that they have covid and in reality they probably don't but there's been several cases like here in my little I guess neighborhood people were like Oh yeah this person went in because they were sick of we don't know what and now their dead it's like who do you trust.

Maleny: True. Do you know, how big the population is in Calvillo?

Alexis: So, I would probably say hmm more than like 100,000 yeah, it's a small town but it's a big, small town.

Maleny: And because of it how much is that affected like your daily or your weekly like routine like going grocery shopping or like spending time with friends and things like that in Calvillo?

(Ice-cream truck in the background)

Alexis: So, when it first came out as far as hanging out with friends, they were like no you know stay home this and that and everything was only to-go. My friends didn't hang out with me like we didn't hang out I would just say we hung out with like immediate family but even then everything was like cancelled so nobody was actually going out and seeing other people that they weren't already seeing every day so it was literally just seeing family and only family but were a big family here um but no one really I guess respected the stay at home thing and then as far as everyday things you go to a little store here you have to wear your mask um for example one thing I do like that they don't do in the US and I feel like they should in comparison to Mexico so in Mexico there is a store called the Bodega which is like a Walmart basically like a mini Walmart and umm here you can't all the stores only one person per family was actually allowed in the store so let's say you go to Walmart and you have all your kids and your husband the only person going to store is one adult which makes sense if the whole purpose is like taking care of ourselves and making sure we don't get sick and stuff like that is if like we keep the population of people going out and about. So I feel like it makes more sense like where you gonna go if you know you need to go get your groceries you're going to go to the store why would you take your whole family with you the only person that should be going out and risking themselves should only be like one person which I feel makes more sense in I don't know maybe and it's like that for all the stores and everywhere in the Plaza which is like our downtown is like that you got to go to one store you got to go to the bank you got to go anywhere it's only one person permitted um and I think even then the small little locales which are the little like stores it only three people max umm inside the store and everywhere else it's just one person per family that it so.

Maleny: Yeah, I was gonna ask if there was like a limitation like in our sense it's like we have a capacity that we have to go by so only a certain amount of people are allowed and like there's somebody literally like keeping count of how many people are in the store um but like you said, they kind of regulate it just by like having that one person per family do all that instead of them counting them each out.

Alexis: Yeah

Maleny: Which makes sense yah.

Alexis: Yeah, small little stores yeah small little stores I think it's only like three people and the big stores its only one person per family and obviously there's probably like a percentage, but I wouldn't know the percentage. I just know it's only one person per family.

Maleny: Right.

Alexis: Which makes sense cause why not?

Maleny: Yeah, that actually makes sense like you said there's really no need for more than one person to go grocery shopping because that one person obviously could do everything of course unless they're like handicap or something of course but even then, they usually get somebody to do that for them, so it makes sense.

Alexis: Yeah, so that's the only thing I wish yeah I think that's the only thing I wish they would done in the U.S that makes sense here in Mexico.

Maleny: And in Mexico like have you had any close relatives or families been you know diagnosed with covid?

Alexis: Um so recently um the neighbor that our technically our neighbor she apparently was um diagnosed I don't know how you say it she's currently apparently has covid, but I feel like half the time it's rumors. Oh this person says so they probably have covid this and that I feel like I want to say two or three people around our neighborhood have said that other people have covid but them themselves don't say that they have covid and so but personally here in Mexico umm no I don't think so a friend from the US came to Mexico and then her and her mom went to Cancun and when they got back to the US they had covid but I didn't physically see them and that wasn't until they got to Cancun that they got sick so I guess it kind of counts in a way yah I guess so two people technically yeah I guess two people technically yeah had covid that I know yeah.

Maleny: And that is including like the whole year up to now. That's actually reaching this one-year mark of covid.

Alexis: Yeah, that was actually that was actually back in December so um.

Maleny: It's been a while.

Alexis: Yeah, it's been a couple of months, but I mean for the length that we've been in covid or in this pandemic I think that was pretty good as far as like me technically knowing someone physically like actually relationship with them. That I think that was the very first person two of them it was a mom and daughter that I actually physically I'd talk to them they had covid from going to Cancun in December. Yeah, just two people.

Maleny: Gotcha. Yeah, that is relatively pretty low.

Alexis: Yeah, and they just got in December so we're almost going for a year or so they almost went maybe what how many months like nine months since it started that they got it so, but they took themselves, but they decide to go to Cancun, and they got they got infected.

Maleny: Yeah, I think everybody is just trying to find a little mini vacation here and there.

Alexis: Yeah. Yeah, and they were really cautious. But I but I do not know.

Maleny: Yeah, it is still pretty risky.

Maleny: Well, obviously you are not in Texas, so you weren't affected by the winter storm but actually you were in Texas. You said you were in Dallas.

Alexis: Yes, I think wherever that accident happened of the videos all on Facebook where all the trailers and cars were piled up. It was early in the morning because I had just gotten there, and I remember being at the airport and people were like very like weird and what's going on? And these ladies like um it was super super cold and that's all I remember I was like Dang it's Texas but I was in north Carolina it was normal for North Carolina be cold but I figured by then okay like it's February like Texas where's the heat and no it was actually very cold and I remember our flight actually got delayed too because there was so much ice that they had to put um I actually have a video to they had to put that spray stuff on the plane so the ice doesn't stick on top of it.

Maleny: Oh okay.

Alexis: And so we were getting ready to board and this lady was like yah did you see the accident she was like I barely made my flight because of some accident that happened and I was like no I don't know what you're talking about she said it was really bad she was like we just barely missed it so I guess she passed or I don't know what she meant by that but she said that she barely made her flight and that flight was from was it Dallas or Houston I don't remember I can even remember where I was but anyways I know it's the 11th or the 12th that day was the day of the accident and then I get to Aguascalientes which is probably like a two hour flight from uh Texas to here and I remember I was like um I was on the phone and then I see this video of the storm and all the snow and this and that and the huge car pileup and no wonder that Lady like people were so weird like kind of like everybody was like very antsy like very shook and I was like what's going on so then I kind of put two and two together and that's what the girl is talking about in the video and I was like Dang cause I got there maybe like 8:00 o'clock in the morning and I think that happened maybe around 6:30 or 7:00 o'clock in the morning and I was like dang that's so sad to see but yes I did see the storm they delayed my flight an hour because of the ice and the snow but we actually still left and I mean I guess we made not technically our time frame but it was only an hour delayed so it wasn't that bad.

Maleny: With everybody in the airport where they're like taking their precautions like we're in their mask and things like that or was everybody still like kind of laid back about it or everybody was like following protocol.

Alexis: No, I feel as far as.

Maleny: and like social distancing and masks and.

Alexis: Yeah. Yeah I see a lot of videos on social media like people getting kicked off the plane and this and that but um the times that I've flown cause I went this this year in February and I went last year in August and I don't know both times I guess people are like why start something like we all want to get to the same place so let's just like do what you got to do and just follow the you know the only thing I do not like which I flew with um American Airlines, which I think is good but the part I didn't like is like people mostly guys had bandanas instead of actual masks and then um up until we were getting ready to board they were hey you need an actual mask not just a bandana and they actually that is the part I did like that the flight attendants or the lady up front was like here's a mask and he's like OK thank you and he would put it on with no problem but I feel like everyone on the plane is on the plane for the

same purpose to get to somewhere else and just comply with what their rules are and you get there and everything and goes right and you could go about your day and that's it but yeah everyone pretty much did everything that they had to do wear their masks um yeah the only thing I don't get is the the social distancing with your placed with two other people in the same aisle. (laughing)

Maleny: Yeah, this is true.

Alexis: On the plane but.

Maleny: Like complete stranger.

Alexis: Yeah.

Maleny: Mind you yeah.

Alexis: Yeah, it's like social distancing but there's like four people in one aisle and two on the other OK but yeah, I guess I guess you're safe I guess if you're wearing your mask within the two-hour time period, but I wouldn't know I don't know what the statistics are of how you could get sick.

Maleny: Yeah.

Alexis: Hmm yeah everything went smooth at the airport no crazies.

Maleny: Even though there was a whole winter storm. About Texas.

Alexis: Yeah, I just think yeah, I can just see people acting really weird like worried but yeah everything was everything was normal I guess everyone was trying to get to their place maybe a lot of people didn't even know what was happening because of the snowstorm I think everybody was just kind of like oh we're getting our flight delayed because of snow got it.

Maleny: Yeah.

Alexis: They were all pretty much adults about the situation.

Maleny: Right, they all had a adapt and would you how would you say like was the biggest like adaption? I guess that you would you made with the whole corona virus going on personally.

Alexis: Me. Hm.

Maleny: Or do you still feel like you still living basically you're pretty normal day to day life.

Alexis: No I mean I guess the first year when we lived here in Mexico it was kind of like oh we're happy to be here go out you know drink and whatnot and now that this year December's a pretty big celebration month and January too like Christmas and New Year's so it was just kind of weird this year it wasn't the same vibe like there was no parties like downtown they usually have artist and bands come

out every year and sing and stay up all night and stuff like that and there was nothing this year there was no taco stands, no food trucks, no tacos, no rides, no music, no nothing, so it was just kind of weird but I guess it's starting to become normal now, so I don't know I think covid living life in covid is starting to feel or has felt normal it doesn't feel weird to walk around with a mask anymore it doesn't feel weird doing the things you used to do cause now it's been for so long you just kind of like

Maleny: It's normalized now.

Alexis: Adjust.

Maleny: Yeah.

Alexis: Yeah, you adjust to how you have to live. Yeah.

Maleny: I know do you ever like watch the TV and you're like why don't they have their mask on.

Alexis: Oh my god I say that all the time.

Maleny: Yeah, I am like oh wait they're not in covid like this was recorded like years ago.

Alexis: Why don't they have their mask on. Yeah, yes I'm like that I even like my husband and I are always watching Netflix and I'm like why don't they have a mask on and I'm like of God Jesus we go crazy.

Maleny: Yeah

Alexis: But we're being mask mask precautions.

Maleny: Yeah, for sure.

Alexis: Yeah, so yeah so that's what I do notice too.

Maleny: And then for future generations like what would you tell them about this pandemic that happened to us?

Both: (Laughing)

Alexis: I think they're gonna think it's a joke.

Maleny: (Laughing)

Maleny: Yeah, we could say like will will put it even more like dramatic our future kids what would we tell our future kids about this pandemic.

Alexis: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, will probably say that we were dying of thirst and hunger and we had no money, and we were dead broke living on the streets and no I don't know I don't know how you.

Maleny: Over dramatize it.

Alexis: Yeah, get these kids scared I don't know I think I think will have to like tell them how like technically did struggle I guess in a way cause you had to in fact figure out a new way to adapt to like the normal but I feel like it has I feel like it hasn't been impossible I feel like as long as you have people with you who are like I guess supportive or as cautious as you are it's not that hard but I think will just tell generations like this is what happens with germs. This is why you wash your hands. (laughing)

Maleny: Yeah.

Alexis: Yeah And I think probably then we'll be doing things that we do now like putting gel or wear gloves or wearing mask often will be like this is yeah this is the era where that started like (laughing) this is where mask this is where mask become normal because if you think about it how long will it take for people to stop wearing mask so there will probably be a good time span where people will actually be wearing mask a lot of things like historical things you got to keep in mind to like people are going to be wearing masks like like in textbooks and stuff like theirs going to be pictures of people rioting the president a whole bunch of stuff you know what I mean that happened this past year and this year and everyone's going to have gloves gloves everyone's going to have masks.

Maleny: Yeah.

Alexis: Well gloves too I know some people some people wear gloves too, but

Maleny: Oh yeah.

Alexis: I think it's going to be very like people are going to be like that really happened? and I'm like yeah that really happened.

Maleny: It was intense.

Alexis: Yeah.

Maleny: I think that's all I have to say.

Alexis: Yeah, there's gonna be a lot of pictures like ten twenty years from now we'll look back and it's like who's that we don't know they had a mask on.

Maleny: Yeah, and it's so weird cause like you just see their eyes obviously but like once they take off their mask like they look so different like it's crazy.

Alexis: Yeah.

Maleny: It's weird it's like you're not fully seeing the person. Your seeing like half of a person.

Alexis: Yeah, it's weird like um yeah, the other day we're driving downtown and someone you know we're in the car, so someone waved at us and I was like who is that and my husband was like I don't

know. I don't know who that was you just wave back its kind of a guessing game like that could've been this person or, but you never really know because the mask, but it's became the new normal.

Maleny: It really has. Well, anything positive that you've taken away from Covid like. I don't know me personally.

Alexis: Um.

Maleny: Like I've obviously saved money and that's nice.

Alexis: Yeah um something positive hm I'd say hm be grateful to like me personally, I haven't gotten sick this whole time and no one in my family has either I know a lot of people have lost a lot of family members so I guess I'm just grateful you know that I took care of myself and my husband has been taking care of himself my mom my dad and my sister so I guess I'm just thankful it didn't affect us personally to the point where like we had or lost someone so and also just to being more cautious be more cautious about how nasty we really are like you know what I mean.

Maleny: Yeah.

Alexis: It makes you open your eyes a little bit more like okay, maybe that used to be normal then but if you think about it now, like why don't you do that before? But it's actually I guess it kind of benefited us in a way to look at things differently look at life differently germs differently. Everything.

Maleny: Yeah, be more cautious.

Alexis: And not only for like yourself but for other people too around you.

Maleny: Oh, yeah. I think that's the biggest adjustment honestly that people have to come to realize that it's not just you. It's everybody. You know, you're somehow, you're interacting with somebody every day that you don't know. So, it's like taking care of yourself but you're also taking care of that other person, you know.

Alexis: Yeah. (dog barking)

Maleny: Alrighty I think this concludes our oral history of covid-19 and just ended I forgot to ask you in the beginning, so I just need to for you to give me the thumbs up to like, obviously it's giving me permission to record this oral history.

Alexis: Yes.

Maleny: Okay.

Alexis: My name is Alexis Gabriela Leija, and I give Maleny full permission to use my voice and my answer to all of her questions about COVID-19.

Maleny: Awesome. Alright thank you so much.

Alexis: Thank you.