

COVID-19 Oral History Project

Meghan: My name is Meghan Castillo. Today's date is March 9, 2021. Today we will discuss the experiences of people during the COVID-19 pandemic. Today we are in San Antonio Texas, and I am interviewing.

Jennifer: Jennifer Flores From Cotulla, Texas.

Meghan: When were you born?

Jennifer: I was born in San Antonio, Texas.

Meghan: Where are you from?

Jennifer: Was raised here in Cotulla, Texas.

Meghan: What is or was your occupation?

Jennifer: I am a 6th grade math teacher.

Meghan: When and how did you first hear about the virus? Can you explain your experience?

Jennifer: I heard about it last February some of it from the news obviously but my sister was going to school in San Antonio so she was the one that was kind of, when she would call home she would talk about it more I mean being from Cotulla we kind of just assume it's not going to reach Cotulla if that makes any sense we always just assume things like that stay in the bigger areas like San Antonio has their own thing going so we kinda just kept on with our daily routine we had our county fair coming up and now there was all these regulation that they were going to close it and we weren't going to have it because San Antonio was talking about this whole virus going on and we continued on with it because we just thought you know its not cotulla this thing is going to pass like the flu and we just went on with our everyday lives up until spring break and this was like midmarch and i get the email from work saying there closing the school cause of this virus so that's when you know you start thing like what's going on this can actually hit home I was probably 5 or 6 months pregnant at the time so ones they kinda closed school down I was just at home this whole thing kinda just it was very lonely boring and frustrating because I spent the last few months of my pregnancy at home without my family my friends it was kinda just me and than bring home a newborn into all of this mess and all the protcalls you had to follow at the hospital it was just a big mess first time mom going through this whole experiences there's already stress you know anxiety thats coming in to your mind and than with all this extra chaos that's around you and test that need to be taken and while you in labor and coming home and keeping baby safe it was just its been different yeah to say the least it's just been crazy.

Meghan: Can you explain how the coronavirus affected you and your family or friends? What has changed?

Jennifer: Aside from the regular hang outs at my grandmas we would just go there every weekend or having my friends come over to the house you know having my family and friends meet the baby at home was a big deal for me I really thought my first baby and I was going to have people were going to be able to not only just go visit at the hospital or come to the house and visit or I could take the baby somewhere and visit all of that stopped I didn't have any of that obviously safety for me but for the baby I didn't want him to get sick and then I had my family move in with me and my dad was diagnosed with stage 3 cancer is going through cemo kinda just being safe

around baby and my dad that was a big deal for everybody here just i guess not having the normal holidays and and just being able to go where ever you want without your masks now the mask is so normal that before you leave the house you have to make sure you have your mask or i keep one in my car or in my purse now you don't find it weird at first it was strange why do I have to wear a mask at the store people are going to think of us like that's so weird now I find myself looking at the ones that don't want to wear the mask with those wearied eyes what's wrong with them why are they not wearing it.

Meghan: Can you explain how COVID-19 affected your daily or weekly routine, like shopping for groceries and spending time with family?

Jennifer: Like for groceries it just been making sure I wear my masks sanitize my hands as soon as I get home or clean the items when I get home whole shopping even though I have my mask I still find myself you know separating myself from people in the aisles at the store if someone is wearing their mask wrong its been like a pet peeve for me because I just feel Like I have been following what they say is right wearing the mask right doing what I need to do and I just find myself doing that and trying to avoid others holidays not being able to celebrate with my family and only with those that live at home with you thats been different.

Meghan: Due to the pandemic are you able to work from home? Why or why not?

Jennifer: Yes from March of 2020 to May of 2020 we were able to work from home it wasn't as strict as when this school year started it was get what you can from the students since everything was so new some parents were in panic mode others were still concerned as too my child needs there basic routine of education so we kinda tried to stay as normal as we could sending not as much as we usually would with work but we didn't want to get so far behind where students were struggling in the upcoming year results were not really as good those couple months because it really wasn't on their minds at the time the students and the parents you know anxiety levels were kinda high because of this whole new things and I hate to say it but the priority wasn't school at the time ones the summer passed and people kind of you know either got it or knew someone who did get it they kept on trying to stay as safe as they could the anxiety levels went down people were a little bit at easy.

Meghan: Do you know anyone that has been infected with the virus?

Jennifer: Yes So one of my best friends from El Paso had it single mom she said even know after a few months she still has problems with her breathing and I asked her what would you do how were you able to stay away from your son and just prevent him from getting it and she just kinda mentioned that they were masks around the house she was just trying to be extra clean, cleaning after him and after herself they wouldn't have lunch or dinner at the same time she would make sure he would eat while he would go play she would have her meal just so they wouldn't have their masks off at the same time kinda thing. But she did have it for I guess like 2 weeks and even sometime after it was just getting back to her breathing was just off I guess shortness of breath and stuff like that I've also had a friend here locally in cotulla that she's had it and I mean being in cotulla coworkers have it my parents friends have had it my sisters friends some of my friends we are all so close here that its we find out through facebook or going to the store or we will just hear oh so in so has it and we kinda just keep up with one another if they are one of our friends so yeah like i was saying one of my friends here had it and she had it twice the first time around it hit her pretty strong and when she had it with her daughter and her granddaughter ans she got it cause her daughter had it at the time she was kinda helping her daughter out making sure her granddaughter was kinda away her daughter got better than she got it they both got better then she got it again so I didn't think it could hit you twice and so quickly cause she had gotten in in such a short amount of

time like she had just got rid of it and a few weeks later got it again or maybe she just never got rid of it i'm not sure but we hear about it all the time here we've even had deaths here in cotulla not sure the count anymore but I know there was this family that had the grandmother and grandfather pass away within a week of each other from covid and this past week we had one we had one of our little older women that works at a local restaurant she had been sick she passed last week we had a funeral for one who passed Im assuming everyone has their own health conditions to add to this, some can just get better quicker than others and some just don't make it through it is definitely still very much around and still around here in Cotulla.

Meghan: How has adapting to the virus affected your work/school work responsibilities affected you?

Jennifer: Well the whole dynamic at school has really changed obviously. We want our kids well I want my kids to catch on with everything we're going over every year but this year that kinda wasn't their priority at the beginning it was kinda just getting rid of the fear some parents didn't want to send them to school getting them comfortable with that and then everything is online meetings, parent conferences, or over the phone this year it feels so I mean obviously different but i'm ready for the normal to come back it has definitely affected some of my coworkers it's draining and it's your trying so hard to make sure they understand everything you need them to understand like oh gosh I can't even think of the word right now but you want them to know whatever they need to learn academically and this whole thing.

Meghan: How has adapting to the virus affected your work/school work responsibilities affected you?

Jennifer: I guess the main changes at school are the meetings so all the staff meetings we do on zoom or goggle meets we are all online as well as just switch up what we can do with phone calls or meetings that's really been all the students are kinda getting use to their technology and we still have our moments but this year has been a year to learn what we can with all this technology i really give props to these teachers especially the older generation teachers cause they had to step out of their comfort zone to get comfortable with all of this it wasn't just a basic Microsoft word that they were used to it's like now all everything meeting with parents sending work and calling students things like that it's definitely been a year of learning for all of us.

Meghan: Question for Texans affected by the winter storm: When you were hit with the February's winter storm did you think about the virus? Why or why not?

Jennifer: Honestly I didn't for those few days here in cotulla here at my house not everyone was out of light and water some of the in the outside of cotulla like out in the ranches and things like that they all still had power so water and light wasn't a problem here at my house so lucky I had a fireplace that helped out a lot but the water stopped probably first day it stopped came back so we did a lot of filling up buckets and the spare bath tub just to have water for the restroom but honestly during that time the virus was not on our mind keeping the baby warm was my main priority food wasn't a problem for him because he has every little jar of baby food here but for us it was kinda like staying warm and yeah and just trying to keep each other company I guess what helped was since there was no power there was no news so we weren't hearing about the virus honestly when you turn on the news that's the first thing you hear. Those few days of not having TV on it was actually kinda not realizing cause we didn't have power or water we were kinda at ease during the whole thing we were just thinking about when is this power and water going to come on we want to shower and get comfortable again.

Meghan: What would like to tell future generations about the pandemic?

Jennifer: It was an eye opener it really shows you what to appreciate it shows you the true colors of people it shows who whose willing to care for others and who want to be selfish and I mean that by those who aren't wearing mask or those still going to parties or just being out and about especially when we were told not to I kinda feel like numbers would have gone down if people would have taken it seriously from the beginning we could have kept it under control a little bit I mean my opinion but it really it shows you what you just take for granted and it was a lot of time you were family the ones you live I dont think Ive spent so much time with my family I dont think Ive ever spent so much time here at home with them which i appreciate you notice how much you take for granted gsgbwvsznbx Just being able to get up and go to the store comfortable it'll definitely be something I sit down and show pictures and talk to my son about since he was born during this time I mean him people didn't even notice I was pregnant towards the end of my pregnancy because I never left the house I still have people that see me at the store or see me at work and I was like you have a son I've never even seen him kinda thing it's different but it will definitely be something that I mention you were born during this time oh gosh what a mess.