

Oral History Questions for Nicolette Douglas

Sydney: My name is Sydney Rodriguez and today's date is March 3rd, 2021. Today we will discuss the experiences of people during the COVID-19 pandemic. Today we are in San Antonio, TX and I am interviewing... (respondent says their own name)

Nicolette: Nicolette Douglas

Sydney: Mrs. Douglas, when were you born?

Nicolette: I was born May 12th in San Antonio, TX.

Sydney: And where are you from?

Nicolette: I'm from San Antonio, TX.

Sydney: What is your occupation?

Nicolette: So I'm currently a high school counselor.

Sydney: When and how did you first hear about the virus?

Nicolette: I remember it was before, it was in March. Actually, there were some news articles before that about a mysterious virus occurring in China, and that people were getting sick and some people were passing away. And I remember I had a vacation in March and we were going to California. At the time I was nervous because I had heard maybe one person or a couple people had it in California and that people were getting it from traveling. So I remember being a little nervous at that trip using sanitizer and brought wipes on a plane. I mean all that was new to me, but then after that I think we had spring break at school. Then that's when we were all kind of sheltered in place.

Sydney: Can you explain how has the Coronavirus affected you and your family or friends?

Nicolette: As far as family, for the most part, I just hang out with my immediate family. Before there were times when I would visit my cousins. Like I have cousins in Mexico and we would go visit them, but you know because of the pandemic and we haven't been able to cross the state line and go into their country. And as far as friends, I feel like my work friends have become more of my friends because I need to see them. But friends that I have actually grown up with I have a group of friends from high school and I haven't seen them since the pandemic like we've been really good to kind of just stick with our families and not mingle and we're waiting patiently to finally hang out again.

Sydney: Can you explain how COVID-19 affected your daily or weekly routine like shopping for groceries?

Nicolette: So with COVID-19 at first I didn't want to go to the store, I was afraid. I mean as soon as COVID-19 was around San Antonio we didn't bring our children to the store. For maybe a few months I was just using curbside so I would just order through HEB. I've never sanitized my hands so much and just wearing mask. As far as the daily routine, after spring break we were all asked to work from home. So then my children were asked to do their work from a computer at home then we were all kind of working from home. So it was kind of different, you know it's kind of nice sometimes to make breakfast, but then kind of juggling making breakfast and washing dishes. But then I need to get back to work so it kind of seems like we're working at all hours of the day in different increments instead of going to work for 8 hours a day. And I also felt that with my son when he was doing his work, instead of doing, you know, 8 hours at once we would do a little here, take a break and then kind of just stay at home for the most part.

Sydney: Due to the pandemic, are you able to work from home?

Nicolette: So in the very beginning in March, I was able to work from home. We were told let's extend it another week, let's extend it another week and then all of a sudden with the cases going up we ended up working from home the whole year. Now this school year in the summer we were going in, we were going in a couple days out of the week. But this school year we decided as a school that the students were coming back. So in preparation for them coming back after being gone for nearly a semester, we decided that the best thing for us to do would be to work from school.

Sydney: And I know you mentioned you are a counselor, but during this pandemic how do you help support students during this difficult time?

Nicolette: So as a school counselor, we reach out to the students about their social-emotional health about their academics. You know, especially seniors we're on top of seniors making sure they can graduate, but with this pandemic it's been hard to reach out to them. You know now we're using technology, we use Google Meets, we use email and if those forms of communication don't work then we call home. Then many times you know the parents are also working from home or going to work so then it's hard to get in touch with the student. Sometimes I'm calling home the parents number to try to get ahold of a child, but if the parent works then I can't get ahold of the child. So instead of just sending a runner to go get a student, it takes double even triple the time just to get in contact with the student. So I feel it's made more difficult.

Sydney: Do you know anyone that has been affected with the virus?

Nicolette: Yeah, so actually at first my husband's nephews got affected. And you know it was always a scary thing like oh I heard so and so has the virus and you know maybe my husband was around him or the nephew was around my mother-in-law. So we had many little scary moments throughout and then I feel like a few family members got it. We actually got infected and what we feel like is, my husband's niece works at a nursing home and her nursing home had been pretty good this whole time through the pandemic. But it seems like they finally had an outbreak and with the outbreak I think within the rush of moving patients from one corridor to

another maybe I think she was exposed to it. So she brought it back to my mother-in-law and it seems like we got it from my mother-in-law and so my husband and myself both got it.

Sydney: How has adapting to the virus affected your responsibilities at work?

Nicolette: So at work, I find myself using a lot more technology. So before I never knew how to Google Meets or set up a presentation online and invite people, and I feel like it's given me more confidence. So every time I use some new technology I feel like it's making me step out of my shell at work and growing at work. And right now just getting ahold of students like right now I'm just trying to get ahold of seniors that are needing to graduate. They're failing their classes and we've already tried to get them to come to school in person so we're having to do already up to 40 phone calls a day just trying to get ahold of the seniors. I feel like all this like just having meetings through Google Meets and having presentations online, I feel like all that will help us once we get through this pandemic and once we're actually together because it'll just give us another way to communicate with our students and our families.

Sydney: When we were hit with the February's winter storm, did you think about the virus at all?

Nicolette: Yes, because every day we were kind of waiting for the news to see what's going on. And then we would hear, you know from our resources at school or from the news that school is going to be closed again. Okay so then the next day we were kind of waiting like what's going to happen and once again we hear from school or hear from the news that school was being closed again, and that's how I kind of remember COVID was. What was also very similar is that with COVID we stayed at home. Especially in the very beginning like we're sheltered in place, you're not allowed to go anywhere unless it's for necessity for to get groceries or for to get food, but you're not supposed to be out and about. And kind of with the winter storm as well we weren't supposed to be out and about, and once again like it was dangerous and this time it was dangerous because of the snow. They didn't want us getting into accidents and especially you know, some people lost power and water. I mean we were lucky that we didn't, I guess the only difference is that we did have family members coming over to stay with us because they didn't have any power or water so the house was more full.

Sydney: What would you like to tell future generations about this pandemic?

Nicolette: The pandemic is difficult to live in for sure. We've had to adapt and not only at work or at home, and I feel like we've also had to had to grow especially with the technology. I feel like this within the past year like technology has just boomed and grown and people have learned to use it. People that were afraid to use it have learned that technology can be a good thing. And all these students like I feel like the school setting especially is going to be different in the future because now students will use technology to learn and to do homework. I feel it's going to be much easier to be incorporated into school and you know into their future jobs as well.

Sydney: Well, this concludes our interview. Thank you for allowing me to interview you today, Mrs. Douglas.

Nicolette: You're welcome.