

Jana: My name is Jana Lima and today's date is March 11th, 2021 and today we will discuss the experiences of people during the COVID-19 pandemic. Today we are in San Antonio, TX. and I am interviewing

Pryce: Meshach M. Pryce Sr.

Jana: Mr. Pryce when were you born?

Pryce: February 14, 1986.

Jana: where are you from?

Pryce: I'm from the United states Virgin Isles.

Jana: Why did you move here?

Pryce: I moved here after the two major hurricanes Maria and Irma. It's kind of devastated our islands back home, and for me it was OK but for my mother she was kind of down and out. It destroyed the house; it was basically messed up space and destroyed. To see her in the state she was in, depressive stage. I prefer to get her away from that. So, I just spoke to my siblings and I gave her the ruff decision of picking where she wanted to go, and she chose Texas. So, we came here and, Texas OK good choice.

Jana: What is your occupation?

Pryce: Right now, I'm a teacher's aide.

Jana: How long have you been a teacher's aide for?

Pryce: I think more than 15 years now. I was a teacher's aide back home. I was also an assistant and I also did some security work as well.

Jana: Nice. So now I'm going to talk a little bit about the virus. When and how did you first hear about the virus, and can you explain your experience?

Pryce: Well, I first heard about the virus right before March started, because we weren't at spring break yet and it was just this topic that was done to be like spread you know, it was just becoming happy news you know the COVID and you know the China here and China there. Where it was, but it didn't become more of a reality to me until I came back from spring break, when everything started to get shut down you know where the mask protocols and stuff started coming to place. That's when it became more reality. So, that's like after spring break in March is when I started to hear about it, when it came to me more of a serious situation

Jana: Can you explain how this coronavirus affected you and your family or friends and what has changed since?

Pryce: Well, it affected me deeply. I nearly lost my life to coronavirus and by the underlying definition that they gave my mom. She died from a heart attack it's called Cairo metricity, but they underline that still technically had COVID, but she didn't die from COVID, but they want to say I guess it becoming present in her in her system kind of how fast she died OK, so I lost her, I lost several good friends as well. For me it was rough because I was out every day for cold no one helping out, I was part of the pre-K first community mass distributions and I was working everyday being as safe as you know, I think I could be. We started these distributions April 2020. I was good all way up until September, and then it was I think around the 19th or the 20th of September when I got called out of work and I was told by HR to go take a test, and that following week I got my results, they said it was positive, and from there was just the downslide. So, after I found out that I had COVID, about a week or week and a half into COVID my mother passed away.

Jana: Wow! I'm sorry to hear that.

Pryce: And then ended up being hospitalized as shortness of breath and I guess just when everything else that started to happen my system broke down even more. I couldn't breathe, properly on my own.

Pryce: I was in the hospital for about 3 to 4 days and it would be longer but luckily, I had a decent Doctor who had compassion knowing that my mom had passed away. We were kind of holding off with the funeral and burial and everything because my siblings wanted me to be able to attend. So, my doctor gives me the option of being able to finish up the therapy and take the rest of the medication because everything was taken into an IV basically could have been taking in a pill form, but I still had to isolate myself for another two weeks after I came out of the hospital because I was on steroids, and I was taking antibiotics. It was just not the right time for me to try to be out and about.

Jana: Wow. Yeah, well that sounds like it must have been really hard for you especially.

Pryce: You don't you're no longer yourself. I mean aside from the breathing like when it first started for me, I had all the sweats. I would have to like through the night change my clothes at least 3 to 4 times. I'm talking about like everything changed, everything because it would get that bad where I would just sweat, it was hard to sleep because every time I sleep it will be like my last breath, so I'll be turning around like gasping.

Jana: Wow!

Pryce: So many nights were basically sleepless nights I just stayed up and just kind of like a zombie in itself you know like if I could get two hours in a day and that's not a consecutive 12 hours but if I could get 2 hours in a day that was that would be great. Most times I would even get that much it was hard even though my appetite to eat wasn't there and I didn't really lose too much of my taste but appetite to eat it just was gone for me. just weaken body to walk up and down stairs and not home great hardship for me. I would have to stop several times just to try to catch my breath while just walking, walking up and down the stairs

Jana: Wow

Pryce: It was rough and you know it had its own traumatic experiences, where like being at home and trying to sit at the table to eat just a bowl of soup and then I fell off the chair because I couldn't breathe you know having your mother home to see that you know you know she wouldn't say but I know it was kind of terrifying for her to you know just watching a child on the floor you know just like trying to get, I don't know what. At that point my side was already hurting you know my lungs hurting you know trying to see if you could hold on to your dear life you know it was rough.

Jana: wow I can almost picture it you know what I'm saying it's just like traumatic.

Pryce: I had so many bad days, like I collapsed, I didn't black out, but I kind of collapsed in the shower. This was like earlier when I had it. I didn't realize that being in the shower and taking a shower when I pulled up your course you you're in the bathroom so you close the door and you pull across the shower curtain because you taking a shower but I believe that the I don't know if it's the steam or what but I couldn't catch my breath and I had to I stumbled out and fell out the tub trying to reach for to the bathroom door to open so maybe two months or more I never closed the bathroom door and never pulled across the show curtain because it was just really terrifying to know that you know I'm going to take a shower and I might die taking a shower. It's a lot, I'm not even going to lie I mean let's talk about, it was a lot. We try to live normal, but you know every morning, you know, we know, that I know for myself, I know that could be it. After the first two collapse, I was like well whenever or I don't know when it's my time, but I was trying everything else trying taking vitamins, trying to still be at least healthy. Most could have done was drink some water, some juice, jello, that was really the most of my food intake. Nothing else would be appealing to me, to eat a sandwich I would have to take apart a sandwich at 1/2 of a slice of the bread that would be basically it.

Jana: Well, thank you for sharing your experience. I mean, I know it's not something you want to remember but...

Pryce: But they are one of those things that I wish never happened. I kind of feel if it didn't happen, I might have had the possibility of still having my mom. So, I would prefer not to have had to have this whole COVID. I kind still do blame myself for everything that happened. If I wasn't out working, if I was home you know she might not have had to endure and see half of what I was going through. So, I don't know... nobody wants me to blame myself, but the reality is she had to see the low part of my life in COVID. Any parent seeing their child like that hurts. I don't know if that's what also triggered or escalated what was going on with her. Before that she was fine. She wasn't sick and everything happened to me and then not even two weeks after she was gone.

Jana: I'm sorry to hear that. I'm going to kind of change the question here. The next question is how it affected your daily or weekly routine, but I think we kind of already covered that. Due to the pandemic are you able to work from home and if so, why, or why not?

Pryce: Well, I personally think that our job the job that we have we should be able to work from home. Being as it is PreK, I do understand that parents have to work, but the reality is that with everything that is going on with this pandemic; Unless you're like first responders, I understand like you have to keep the law in order or if your work in the food industry, or the shopping marts or the gas stations most business or companies really don't need to have people out and have them being at risk of likely expose to pandemic. Unfortunately, for me I still have to go out to work. With my job, I don't see that we should, and I don't see the necessity. I think it more goes to who is in charge of my job, is why. Because there is staff that is home. There is staff that is doing remote. It's not that you can't or even rotate and cycle so that everyone has that opportunity to be safer or feel a little safer with being at home for a while than having the same bodies everyday coming out. Studies have shown were being out every day takes a toll on people lives. So, I don't condone the whole concept of us having to be out on a daily basis. I don't think that's right. I personally think that if anyone takes a real look at what's been going on people more or less will realize that there is no need for us to be outside. I understand that right now the governor lifted the requirements for mask, like I said. I don't see why he needed to.

Jana: I agree. I think I'm on the same boat with you on that one. Let's go ahead and move on to the next question How has adapting to the virus affected your work or work responsibilities affected you?

Pryce: It has because I was on short term disability from basically October until December, and I really only came back in December because I wanted to see if could have managed to stay up, if this would be okay because my lungs were not still at one hundred percent and breathing with a mask for eight hours straight is a challenge for me. That is huge a very huge challenge. How I do it at work is hard. I wouldn't even lie most days I'm at work luckily, I work outside so, a lot of times I take my mask off so I could breathe, otherwise I couldn't even do that. That was one of the major things my Dr. was checking on like if you're going to be outside you might have the ability to be more comfortable than being inside the classroom. That's one of the reasons he was more okay, a little skeptical about it, but he was okay with me going back to work. He was like if you could at least be outside and you try to take your breaks and pull down your mask you can at least breathe. Interacting with the kids and doing some of the daily task for my job title my position of being outside. I'm doing outdoor learning even that has been affecting. I can't move, run as much as I would with the kids. I have sometimes lost my breath and I just have to stop and catch my breath, so a lot of times I just tell the kids, I'm taking a water break but in reality, I'm really needing to pull my mask down and try to catch some air. And the same with lifting and moving stuff, my last Dr.appt., I'm only supposed to try to walk, not lifting weights. I can't go back to none of that yet. I was told not to rush to try to get back to that yet. That can actually put me back at regression, so I have to wait it out and change my life because I'm a person who is way more active dealing with how COVID had hit me. I'm lucky to still be here at the rate of how often I was taking all the steroids. I was just trying to get my lungs back up. To be discharged from the hospital I had to take the Pneumonia vaccination. They felt that my lungs still that critical that if I go out and get cold and it comes my way, I would have taken a hit one time.

Jana: So, it sounds like this virus has some long-term effects afterwards.

Pryce: I technically had COVID from Sept to February and March. I was still not one hundred.

Jana: It's good to know that you're on the road to recovery.

Pryce: I'm trying my best I wish it would have been a little faster, but you can't rush certain things.

Jana: Were going to take a quick turn here on the subject. When you were hit with the February winters storm, did you even think about the virus? Why or why not?

Pryce: Yes, that was big on my mind. I saw family, friends taking pictures, posting pictures being out in the snow playing in the snow. I can't do that. If I even, try to attempt to that would be really catastrophic. In my mind I was not trying to go back where I was. I saw that being a reality. I wouldn't even dare go back there, and try to say yeah, it's okay you're a hundred percent, that's just a lie. I know how hypothermia works. I've seen people pass out and die from it. So, for me I was like no that's okay. I don't want no part in it. I stayed in I wouldn't even lie to anyone. I stayed in my house all the time. Didn't matter with water without water I didn't care. I wasn't going anywhere. That was my reality there, I was like no will wait

Jana: Well, you were a true survivor for that.

Pryce: I don't know I saw people enjoying it having like a blast, but I was like no that's not for me. That not what I need. I don't need to enjoy that right now. Right now, like how my life was, there is other things to worry about.

Jana: Understood. Our last question is what would you like to tell future generations about the pandemic?

Pryce: Don't take it lightly. Don't underestimate it, don't think that your brain is so big that you have this all under control. You know what to do, how to do, when to do. Show sympathy, show concern because today you might be looking at a lot of families and tomorrow or later today it's your family that it affected. This pandemic isn't over. Stay safe, be safe, understand what the governor is saying. Well, I really don't agree with what he's saying, but keep wearing your mask, if you got gloves wear you gloves, if you can stay home or if you can advocate to your job, to be remote, do so. Minimize how often you have gone out, especially if you are going to high-risk areas. Think about it, and you might say that I'm a single person, I don't need worry about things that I'm not affecting anyone. But, if you know that your someone who normally visits family or friends or anything like that, then you should not want to be around anyone outside your house on a regular basis when you know you can stay home. Just be safe, I can't stress that any more than that, just be safe.

Jana: Well, I definitely take that advice thank you for your advice and your time and your story and I'm glad that you're on a road to recovery. Thank you for your time Mr. Pryce.

Pryce: Your welcome Mrs. Lima