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Pandemic Life Oral History

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Interview with: Amelia Adcock

Interview by: Amanda Rose Allen

Transcribed by: Amanda Rose Allen

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Amanda: My name is Amanda Allen, I'm here on March 3rd, 2022, with Amelia Adcock here in Albuquerque, New Mexico. So, we are going to be talking about your pandemic life. I first want to talk about how did you initially react when the pandemic struck?

Amelia: (short laugh) Probably not well, no. Let me think, how did I initially react when the pandemic struck? I think to some extent just trying to, I think like what you said, just pretend like everything was somewhat normal. Like, "Oh we dealt with this before, there have been epidemics and outbreaks," but for me something did feel different because I had a lot of friends who were in countries where the pandemic was already really taking off and they were already kind of contacting me and talking about how it was affecting them. By the time that we had got to quarantining in the U.S., by the time that UNM (University of New Mexico) went online in the U.S., I already had a pretty good dose (1:00) of paranoia and really kind of hearing that, "this is not going to be something that just goes away," and also kind of understanding how much most countries weren't accurately being able to test to see how much of their population was being affected. I think I kind of already was assuming that was going to be a thing in the U.S. too

but I didn't understand or anticipate the extent of which it would take off here more than it had anywhere else.

Amanda: Do you think your contact with people on the outside really changed your opinion? I know previously when it was first, "just something in China," and it wasn't even near us. How do you think that influenced that kind of reaction?

Amelia: I had friends sending me videos and messages on this app called Weibo, which is like Chinese Facebook. (Short Pause) Basically there were all these different videos that were really getting through the "Great Firewall," (mimics air quotes) I guess you could call it or the censored Chinese internet, that were showing videos of people (2:00) being dragged out of apartment buildings and shoved into trucks because they were suspected of being infected and things like that and just really alarming footage of things that were happening in hospitals, of lines outside of hospitals, of people dying outside of hospitals, that I was getting in January and February before things really took off. So, I know that I kind of was the paranoid person in my friend group (short laugh) for a while. I was like "no guys my friends are sending me these videos." So I think, for me, by the time March rolled around I was just trying not to focus on that. I was focusing on the fact that life in China had become somewhat normal again and started to become hopeful that we would be able to get back to that but then it wound up turning out that, in a lot of ways, the pandemic there recovered more quickly than it did in the U.S.

Amanda: That's wild. It must feel like a horror movie (chuckle) seeing all that.

Amelia: (Chuckle) Also, just fulling understanding that the data we were getting from out there was not only, they weren't really able to accurately (3:00) estimate how many people were being

affected in their population and also you couldn't really trust the data that you were getting unfortunately but kind of just going with what you can get.

Amanda: So, I know earlier you mentioned the virtual education, not to total "left [field]" here (short laugh).

Amelia: Oh yeah, no lets (gestures to the left) (inaudible).

Amanda: Virtual education, how did that really impact the way you learn and your schooling?

Amelia: So, I actually have this autoimmune disease called ankylosing spondylitis that causes me to have a lot of mobility issues, and this was before I got diagnosed, I got diagnosed after the pandemic started. So, I was in school already and I was having a lot of trouble getting to my classes and I was having to skip a lot of classes and I was also late to a lot of classes because I couldn't walk to them quickly enough. So actually, for me, and I know for a lot of other disabled people, the pandemic presented this really weird [contrast], where it's obviously horrible but at the same time it's kind of like I can finally fully participate in class (4:00). I can fully participate in day-to-day life and work and things like that because I don't have to leave my house. I can just sit in a chair, in my space and access information in a way that I wasn't able to before. This was the first time I was able to really go to all of my classes everyday and not get behind on schoolwork, which was actually really nice. Everything else was obviously really awful (chuckle).

Amanda: Well, going on that, would you be comfortable talking about how people are reacting more currently and how a lot of the news is saying, "Hey, Covid is over," but people who have disabilities and [are] immunocompromised are basically being thrown under the bus.

Amelia: Yeah. So, I take, now that I have been diagnosed, the medication that I take does make me immunocompromised which means that the vaccine isn't very effective for me. I've had three vaccines, but I know I am someone that is in that (small pause) group. Because of my age and everything I'm not too worried (5:00) about it, but I am someone where even if I get a cold, I'll be sick for like a month, that's just how it is you know. I'm lucky I haven't gotten Covid yet, I think mostly because I'm young, I am assuming I have some degree of immunity but I have a lot of other family members who are very immunocompromised and I think from the beginning, because my mom is very immunocompromised and my sister even more so than her, my sister has a lot of health problems, it was extremely frustrating and disheartening to watch friends of mine and roommates of mine not care, at all, about how any of this was effecting people with family members whose immune systems might not be as able to defend themselves against Covid. (Short pause). How much to get into that? I think I also (short pause) I don't know if it is too much to [talk about]. (Short pause) I also had some events in my life leading up to that that sort of made me more aware of (short pause and redirect). (6:00) I don't know, sort of made me a little bit more paranoid, I think, about what was happening with Covid. I experienced some death in my family that kind of led into it. I don't know, I think it was just extremely disheartening, frustrating. I think if we kind of fast-forward to now, for me, I think it has just become really important to look at infection rates and not only infection rates but also mortality rates from Covid and things like that. About the mask mandate I guess, because it has recently lifted, I am glad in a lot of ways that it's lifted, I am also really glad to see some people still wearing them because to me I think to me it is good to give people the option but at the same time I also really appreciate people who are still kind of going out of their way to do that. Probably got off on a tangent.

Amanda: No, you're good. We are approaching our time limit, but would you like to add any final comments (7:00). I know we left off on a darker note (chuckle).

Amelia: Oh yeah (small laugh). I don't know. Add anything else? I guess that kind of sums it up. I think I will probably just pair it [with] what you said about it (comment refers to Amelia's interview of me). I just never anticipated the extent to which this was going to change my relationships and the things that I valued in my relationships, the things that I looked for in people, friends, and partners and anything like that. I think has been that way for most people. For a lot of people where it's really just changed our value systems. Not even necessarily along political lines, just in a lot of different respects.

Amanda: Well, thank you so much. I appreciate the interview (End 7:42).