

Interviewee: Christina (Chris) Twing
Interviewer: Emma Garcia (pseudonym)
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Abstract: Chris Twing is currently living in Leander, Texas after having moved from Ohio. Chris is currently in the graduate program at Arizona State University working on her master's in history. She is currently interning for the Journal of the Plague Year archive. This interview was conducted as part of her work on the archive and conducted for the archive. Chris lives with her husband and her teenage son, and her mother lives in an attached home. In this interview Chris discusses her unhappiness with government response to COVID-19, her hopes and worries, and describes her community's response to the pandemic.

Emma Garcia 00:14

Hello. We're going to do an oral history. Here. Thank you for being here. This is Chris Twing with as the narrator and Emma Garcia is the interviewer. And we'll be discussing COVID It is 12:33pm in California and 2:33pm in Texas where Chris is, and we're online. Thank you for being here.

Chris Twing 00:48

Sure.

Emma Garcia 00:50

Okay, so I'm going to ask you questions, and I'm not really going to respond too much to your answers to, so that I get your, uh, your thoughts. And um, alright, let's uh, let's go. Um, first of all, what do you do on a day to day basis?

Chris Twing 01:16

Um, so I usually spend a couple hours in school, a couple hours, or at my own school, a couple hours schooling my son, a couple of hours getting ready for his next school year. And then just taking care of all the household stuff. Because now that we're all home, there's lots and lots of cooking and cleaning.

Emma Garcia 01:42

All right, where you live in, where do you live, and what's it like to live there? Mhm.

Chris Twing 01:50

So I'm in Leander, Texas, which is a northern, Northwest suburb of Austin. So I'm in Central Texas. Which Texas is right now a Republican state, though the nearest big city Austin is very democratic, out in the suburb, it's very Republican. And now that we're into summer, our high this weekend is like 106. So it's hot where I live.

Emma Garcia 02:18

Oof. All right, um, when you first learned about COVID, what were your thoughts on it? And have those thoughts changed since then?

Chris Twing 02:31

So I actually first heard about COVID, um, one of the last weekends in January. I was at a genealogy conference in Salt Lake City. And I wasn't watching the news, because I was in the conference, um, stuff all day. And my husband was telling me about this. And I was like. What are you talking about? And I was like, yeah, that'll be like Ebola, or any of these other crazy diseases, you know, that happened elsewhere in the world, but they don't ever come here. So initially, I thought, okay, well, that's bad, but not a big deal. I live in the US. And now obviously, we know that to not be true.

Emma Garcia 03:18

Okay, um, what issues have most concerned you about the pandemic?

Chris Twing 03:25

The fact that, you know, initially when something like this shows up, nobody knows what to do. But in short amount of time, it's studied experts, get some information and, you know, all levels of government, and just people in general, then learn what to do and act on that. And this time, that has not been the case. The general public is very split on what they should and shouldn't do, or haven't don't have to do. As well as every level of government seems to not be doing a whole lot.

Emma Garcia 04:16

Um, how has COVID affected your job? I know you're homeschooling your son, um, how has that been impacted?

Chris Twing 04:25

So, it didn't affect his homeschooling too much as far as his academic parts go. But what people most people that don't homeschool don't know is that you're never home very much. Your home to do some book work now and then, but you're often, you know, at an event, you know, so usually we would be home in the morning and then we would be out, you know, most afternoons, or maybe three afternoons a week. And we can't do any of those outside activities. And my son does take one, his English class is done in a small group setting with a teacher. So he normally goes one day a week. And then they do all of their work at home. But those all moved to online. And then my husband works in the game industry. And luckily, they very quickly sent them. I think he's been home since March 13th. They sent them home. And as of the latest one, I know, they're not going back until at least October, November. And they pretty much said they could work from home indefinitely.

Emma Garcia 05:45

Okay, um. Has it changed your employment status, or I guess...?

Chris Twing 05:54

So didn't change mine, obviously. And my husband has been lucky enough that he is in a field that not only has survived this, but it's thriving, because people are stuck at home and need entertainment. So the games that he works on are things they can do from home. My brother works in the game industry, but he works on physical. He works making physical slot machine games, and he was laid off, and just went back about two weeks ago.

Emma Garcia 06:33

Okay, uh, what concerns do you have about the effects of COVID-19 on your employment and the economy more broadly, I guess on your husband's employment?

Chris Twing 06:44

So we are...

Emma Garcia 06:51

Oh, sorry, cutting out a little bit.

Chris Twing 06:53

Oh, um, but I was saying, as I know that we're one of the lucky people, but that's not most people. And I worry about poverty, and social justice anyway. And this just makes all that worse.

Emma Garcia 07:16

Mhm. Um, how's the COVID 19 pandemic affected the employment of people? You know, and in what ways?

Chris Twing 07:23

Yeah. My mom works in a grocery store. So it was first there was, you know, everybody loved grocery workers because they were feeding America and they were heroes. And now that Texas has instituted mandatory masks. It's a constant fight for her at work. People don't want to stand on the dots they put on the floor. They get mad because they have to wear masks, they get mad because they have to wait.

Emma Garcia 08:04

How has COVID-19 affected you and your family's day to day activities?

Chris Twing 08:11

We took the stay at home order very seriously and stayed home entirely. In the first several weeks, we went to do curbside pickup for groceries and that was it. Um, we didn't go out to eat not even curbside or anything. Um, we did go for a walk some but you know if we saw the people we would cross the street and that kind of thing. Um, I would say probably the middle of May we started doing curbside, you know, often probably two to three times a week, plus our curbside grocery. But aside from that, and we went to a park I think three times we figured in the four months we've been home. But again we stayed far away from people when at an off time, things like that. So we've, we've stayed home a lot.

Emma Garcia 09:17

How are you managing day to day activities in your household?

Chris Twing 09:22

Well, since I have a teenager he likes to stay in his room. And my husband luckily has an office so he can work in there. So that leaves me the rest of the house to kind of putter through, and you know work on this thing or that thing or the other thing.

Emma Garcia 09:42

What have been the biggest challenges that you've faced during the COVID 19 outbreak?

Chris Twing 09:46

I never before, you know. Immigration has been a big thing, politically here for ever. And definitely Donald Trump in office, it's really become big again, you know, he stands that we shouldn't let people in. And it doesn't matter how terrible things are. And I look at them as human. And, you know, I've often thought, well, what if I was the one that needed to get out of my country and go somewhere else. And now that's something I seriously consider, because he's doing nothing. And if he were reelected in November, I, you know, people joke about it all the time, but I've seriously considered it as an option, come November. But the problem is, is that the borders are closed, we can't go anywhere, because we're such a hotspot.

Emma Garcia 10:52

What have you or your family and friends done for recreation during COVID-19?

Chris Twing 10:59

We take drives from time to time, just to get out of the house. But that keeps us away from people. Um, I volunteer with the local Historical Commission. And so we're going to take pictures of historical markers and things to put on the website. That's like, our new excitement.

Emma Garcia 11:24

Okay, um. And how about your community? How has the COVID-19 outbreak affected your community?

Chris Twing 11:34

Well, we don't go out a lot so I'm relying on Face- you know, Facebook posts and other social media and what I see from my car when we go to get cur-.

Emma Garcia 11:45

Uh oh, you cut out a little bit.

Chris Twing 11:50

Okay. Um, initially, people were good at staying home. And then once the Texas governor opened the state at the beginning of May, and then opened very, very quickly. And our numbers were not that high in Texas. Everybody was like, okay, well, no big deal. We're just gonna go back to normal. And I think that's why we are a hotspot now.

Emma Garcia 12:17

Uh, how are the people around you responding to the pandemic?

Chris Twing 12:26

Uh, like the people in my house?

Emma Garcia 12:29

Like, um, yeah, I guess your neighborhood, your, your, your neighbors in your community, uh?

Chris Twing 12:38

Yeah, so we take walks now and again. Now that it's really hot, we've stopped, but, um, initially, it was kind of mixed. Like some peep- you know, we would be at the mailbox, getting our mail, which is not by our house, and somebody will come walking around the corner, and I'm like, wait, you have to stop, we can't move, we're getting our mail, you have to wait, you know, but they will just keep walking. So I felt like I really needed hurry. And I felt weird to say like, 'Hey, you need to stop and wait.' But at the same time, that's, you know, what I wanted them to do. Um. And it quickly, you know, that- I have little girls that live next to me. And there's about six of them on the street and they run around together. And initially, they were playing together a whole bunch and then they stopped for a little while and now they're all together again.

Emma Garcia 13:35

Um. Have you seen people around you change their opinions, day to day activities or relationships in response to the pandemic?

Chris Twing 13:45

Most people, you know, stick to what they think. There aren't many people that, that changed their attitude. You know, they either seem to be this is no big deal and get on with it. Or, they seem to be this is a big deal and do everything they can. I saw one person that kind of changed their tune when Disney closed.

Emma Garcia 14:17

Hm, how, how did they change their tune?

Chris Twing 14:21

Well, they were still planning summer vacations. Um, and still pretty much intending to do everything they had, you know. were going to do, and once Disney closed, then they started taking it seriously. Um, and I've seen this kind of ebb and flow as the days have progressed. Um, once Texas open they started doing a few more things. Um, taking their kids, bowling tournaments, and, and you know eating out like in the restaurant and things. And then when things started to get bad again, they backed way off.

Emma Garcia 15:08

Um, have you or anybody, you know, gotten sick COVID-19?

Chris Twing 15:16

My brother did. Um, he does. He works for an architect. He does CAD drawings and things. And when Texas went into lockdown, they sent them all home and they were working from home. And the impression I got was that they could continue to work from home, but they really wanted everybody in the office. And so they brought everybody back in, in May once the state opened back up. And, he was

sick. I think within two weeks, there were four people in his office that got sick. And he was sick for five weeks total. He just got a clear test day before yesterday. Um, he had a lot of headaches and body aches, he did not have trouble breathing. But he had symptoms that sort of seemed like heart attacks. So he went to the hospital for that once. And then he went twice because, um, that, like his appendix, or what you would normally think of appendicitis symptoms he was having problems with. And they did a couple of CAT scans and things and said his appendi- appendix was enlarged from COVID. But it didn't need to be taken out. And, you know, just kind of deal with it. Oh, he did.

Emma Garcia 16:41

He's doing better now?

Chris Twing 16:42

Yeah. And then before that the lady across the street from us. Um, she's 63. And she died. Now her, she went to the hospital on a Sunday uh, with flu like symptoms, and they tested her and it was negative. And by Wednesday she had a car- event, and was put in to a coma, um, like a medically induced coma. And by that Saturday, she had no brain function. And they pulled her off life support. So I'm pretty sure that was COVID.

Emma Garcia 17:22

Oh my gosh. Um, did you know her well?

Chris Twing 17:28

I didn't know her very well. But the gaggle of little girls that play outside one of them, um, is her granddaughter.

Emma Garcia 17:36

Hm.

Chris Twing 17:36

And so I was really worried about all those little girls because her son actually lives two doors down from us two they live across the street from each other.

Emma Garcia 17:56

What ways do you think that COVID-19 is affecting people's mental and our physical health?

Chris Twing 18:03

Terribly. Um, I'm not a super exerciser person anyway, but I've still gotten way more sedentary. Um, and so definitely on the physical side for things like that. Um, I know there are also people that because they're unemployed, or because their kids are not at school, they're not getting food that they need. So their nutrition is very low. Um, and mentally, it's really hard on everybody. Even if you have a good support system, and have all your physical needs met and are not stressing on surviving. As far as food, clothes, shelter, you know, you have enough money and things it's still stressful because humans are not meant to be locked up in a box. Um. And we do pretty well I would say about once every week

or 10 days I have a day that I'm just like, What the hell, and I can't do this anymore. And this is never going to end. You know, and that's largely because seems like people in charge aren't doing anything.

Emma Garcia 19:18

Mhm. Um. What have been your primary sources of news during the pandemic?

Chris Twing 19:32

Um, CNN is kind of the daily but we know, I mean, I'm a liberal person anyway, and they're liberal news outlet but I know they spin really hard. At times, I think they pushed it too far. So we, I always listen, I'm an NPR podcast listener. So I get that which is little more centrist and then from time to time we'll watch BBC because then we're getting, you know, an outside the country view and get some news about what's going on in the rest of the world.

Emma Garcia 20:10

Um, have your pri- news sources change during the course of the pandemic?

Chris Twing 20:16

Initially, it was just CNN and NPR. And then we added the BBC.

Emma Garcia 20:28

Lets see. What do you think are important issues that the media may is or is not covering?

Chris Twing 20:36

They seem to only be able to focus on one thing at a time, when bad things out there that need to be covered. I agree, the pandemic is definitely deserves the most time, but they don't seem to be able to talk about anything else at the same time. Rather than, you know, spending the first 15 minutes of an hour on the pandemic, and then spending another 45 minutes on all the things that are happening, they just spend an hour, you know, and essentially 24 hours talking about the same facts with, you know, a different expert or a different pundant. Um, and that was really evident when George Floyd was killed, and the Black Lives Matter protests happen. It was like the pandemic no longer existed. Um, they even had different, uh, like, screen backgrounds and edges that they've had on for all the pandemic news. And those completely went away, the counters, the case and death counters weren't there anymore. And they focused on the protest, which was fantastic. But then we started seeing spikes of in the South, especially in the West. And they went to focus on that, and now they're not focusing at all on the protests that are still happening, or anything else.

Emma Garcia 21:58

Um. All right. And, uh, let's talk about the government how have municipal leaders and government officials in your community responded?

Chris Twing 22:18

Lee-um, you know, as most of the country shut down schools and did a stay at home order, those things happened. And people are, were okay with that for a little while. Once the governor reopened the state, then all bets were off, people did whatever they wanted, including, you know, the, the local

leaders didn't do much. Um, the mayor of Austin has done a little more. Um, and generally, once Austin or Travis County where Austin is does something, it trickles into my area. But, uh, like last week was a city council meeting. And they had 140 people signed up to comment for during the public comment time. And they said, Okay, well, that was on a Thursday, we're gonna move on to public comment time tuesday, instead. And then on Tuesday, they cancelled it.

Emma Garcia 23:22

So they never heard back from those people?

Chris Twing 23:25

So they never had public comment time. And their excuse was that the governor put out, um, a mandatory mask order, and has basically said he will not shut the state back down and will not allow the localities to shut the state- to shut themselves down. So there was no point in hearing any of the comments.

Emma Garcia 23:47

Okay. Do you have any thoughts on how local, state, and federal leaders are responding differently?

Chris Twing 23:59

I think they're all doing bad. I would like the grown ups to come back.

Emma Garcia 24:11

Alright, and let's see, how about the future? Has your experience transformed how you think about your family, friends and community, and in what ways?

Chris Twing 24:23

Um, to a degree, it just added to my thought that most people don't care about other people. That most people are selfish. And the only people that really matter to me are my husband and my son. You know, even my, you know, parents brothers, things like that, like, I don't know. You just shouldn't really count on people, they mostly suck.

Emma Garcia 24:58

Okay, uh. Then we're getting to the last few questions here. How does your pan- how does this pandemic compare to other big events that have happened in your lifetime?

Chris Twing 25:14

So 9/11 was big. The Challenger explosion was big. The 2008 recession was big. But this is a whole different level of big. And I think if we were in the situation that much of Europe is in where, you know, the pandemic arrived, it was horrible. They learned, they put things into place, and they've watched cases, slow down, and they've resumed a more normal life. It wouldn't seem like a whole different level of big.

Emma Garcia 26:00

Uh, what do you imagine, your life will be like in a year?

Chris Twing 26:06

I'm hoping in a year, we might be starting to go back to normal. st-amount of time to get there.

Emma Garcia 26:20

Okay. What do you hope your life will be like in a year?

Chris Twing 26:26

I just would like to be able to have people over and go places again. Um, like most parents, I worry that my kids isolation is really going to hurt him. Uh, he is an introvert and likes to be online anyway. So he's still connecting with his friends that way. And even before the pandemic, you kind of have to force him to go out and be with human beings in real life. And he's realized that he does need that. So maybe it'll actually be better, and he'll be more willing to go out.

Emma Garcia 27:08

And knowing what- this last question. Uh, knowing what you know, now, what do you think the individuals communities or governments need to keep in mind for the future?

Chris Twing 27:19

So it kind of goes along with our last presidential election. I don't know if it's my age that I just became more aware or-uh, you know, it's reality is that people have a view of history and government that is not based in reality. And I would really like to see civic education and history education. You know, be better, so that when things like you need to wear a mask come up, it doesn't become politicized. And a point of, you're taking away my liberty and my freedom by making me wear a mask, because we make you wear pants, and that seems to be okay. Um. So.

Emma Garcia 28:14

Hm. Alright. Well, thank you very much for your time. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Chris Twing 28:21

No, I think this was good, because I got to kind of yell about all the things that have bothered me.

Emma Garcia 28:28

All right. Well, thank you very much for your time.

Chris Twing 28:30

Thank you.

Emma Garcia 28:31

Good to end here.