

Transcript of Oral History Monologue by Salvador Tumamait Ambriz

Interviewee: Salvador Tumamait

Interviewer: Self

Date: 12/12/2020

Location: Central Valley, California

Transcriber: Lily Crigler

Salvador Tumamait 0:00

Today's date is December 12, 2020. The following will be a recording of a university student's initial reactions and information pertaining more on the beginnings with the coronavirus or COVID-19. So in the beginning, before coronavirus became a worldwide pandemic, myself [unintelligible] students whom live together, we hadn't heard virtually nothing about the virus within the months of January through February. until mid February. Until one day, we were sitting in our psychology class. And we had- at the beginning of the class the professor interrupt everything and discussed to us about a virus within Wuhan, China, from which we had no idea where Wuhan was, but that it was spreading rapidly throughout the region in rural China. And he had said to us that it's a very contagious disease, respiratory disease, but that you shouldn't worry too much because it's exclusively in China. And there aren't any case the United States as of yet. Come later on into mid February, where we had now a few cases from the United States, they had warned us to be wary of people who have been traveling overseas and to maintain a social distance and that's- that's first time we ever heard that word with social distancing. We had no idea what that meant. In terms of today's as a- as a full blown pandemic, is this today what it meant. Come March, we had now heard that the disease was spreading rapidly throughout the United States and- and that closure of public facilities and events was soon to be imminent, including our own very school. We were to be sent home and- and to shelter in place until they get a grasp on how dangerous or potentially lethal this disease is. And so we did such at the end of March, we all had went home and we all had stayed within our confines. But before that happened, I would get echoes from back home warning me that, to stock up on hand sanitizer and toiletries that within the stores people are buying out much of these supplies in a panic. It was quite what you would see within a Hollywood film, the pulse- the pre apocalyptic kind of response, people buying everything up, preparing for the worst. And as we went home, we would see a lot of cars, a lot of movement within the main intersections, highways. That would soon change about a month later, when the pandemic had been full-blown in scale and people have really stepped back, stepped- stepped back and stayed inside and really just didn't take any risks. You'd see the streets empty on the news. I remember seeing the highways of LA being empty. And within my hometown, it was virtually a ghost town. Nobody was outside besides essential workers and those maintain a law. They had like an apprehensive kind of posturing about them whenever they would see other people walking on the street. A bit of apprehensiveness. This is in the San Joaquin Valley of California, Central California. Later on, after what I assume people have- after what I assume people have become fatigued about staying inside and maintaining distancing. Soon after our hospitals began filling up rapidly and within my county, it's not a very large county, we're quite small and rural as opposed to say, Los Angeles County or- or Orange County, what have you. But our numbers were quickly rising in comparison, similar to the next metropolitan kind of area near us, which would be Fresno. And then I knew that this might have been something that might stick around. That this could potentially be dangerous and that we should be somewhat worried about it. Of course, I haven't thought it would last for this long. But

nonetheless, life seemed to go on as usual, for the moment. New recommendations and guidelines on wearing masks and distancing have now been announced. And for the most part, people in Central Valley did not adhere to them. When schools closed up about two months later, there's already talks about reopening the schools, about who's gonna teach the kids, health care and whatnot. as the hospital beds are filling within our major cities that... there was now a sense of urgency, but not on the part of people concerned about health for themselves. So it was more on- it was more on the side of what the, what the future holds. People were more concerned about going outside and small businesses rather, they didn't comprehend that these guidelines could be adhered to and have business open as we have now with strict regulations. And within the news, it was very much downplayed by the former administration, former Trump administration. And by such, the Central Valley being a very Republican influenced and in a right leaning region, they had listened to- to the former president and followed his kind of rhetoric and followed his lackadaisical approach to the disease. And that proved costly for the Central Valley much later along the lines, so much so that it'd be- we were making world news. But that'd be later. But as of now, talks of reopening schools very early within the pandemic, I'm talking about June and July, before the summer had ended. Sports had ceased, any leagues had ceased. But for the Central Valley, all that had changed was some places closed. Those who cared genuinely about the pandemic and what- what's now what we call a pandemic, some of those, some places closed, other stayed open, you'd see some bars still open. Matter of fact, 'till this day, you still see bars open within very, very red leaning districts and cities. More- more backlash would occur. And on top of that, protests for Black Lives Matter, after the murder of George Floyd, would spark more protests on the street. Further adding more instability within the Central Valley. You would have a prominent left leaning, very concerned populace protesting against a very right wing and very aggravated populace. You would see within Bakersfield, someone had been hit by a car and other cities it would be similar events, conflicts, near brawls in the streets. That would occur for a few months, but not as sporadic as say, Missouri, or other regions of the United States. It was very flash in the pan in the Central Valley. It occurred somewhere early for probably two weeks, yeah, two weeks. And then that was it. Later on in the year, the tier system that came out for the state of California, whereas some counties would have more privileges based on their numbers they had submitted to the state of California. And of course, the Central Valley and within my county alone had scored very poorly and we were immediately in the highest tier and we still have been even till this day, December 10. And we would stay that way for a very long time. Then schools began petitioning to the California Supreme Court to reopen specifically private schools and some public schools within very red-leaning districts. Initially, they had failed to make any improvements to- to try to state the case to reopen. But later on in the year, they were approved with guidelines and limitations. As it stands now, at the end of the year, the Central Valley still is in the highest category of severity for coronavirus. Our ICU beds are filling up. Within Fresno County, the percentage is zero capacity for ICU wards and within other counties it is steadily reaching zero as the holidays from Thanksgiving, October, from October to December, from Thanksgiving, Halloween. There has been a jump in numbers specifically within our area, within Central Valley that's within Orange County and LA County. The outlook is uncertain. But for the future, one major, I guess, glimmer of hope would be that the vaccines come in soon. As it stands now, the Central Valley, so that's really Fresno, Tulare, Kings, Kern County, they're in what seems to be a tier four of the priority for vaccine, to which my knowledge is a second highest priority. I'm not sure how that works. It hasn't been explained very thoroughly. So that's what stands now. We await vaccines. Recently,

we've had a state of emergency declared for states that- stay inside, coronavirus is spreading rapidly through the air. Do not leave your house, only for essential tasks. Yet, we still see within Central Valley, our friends, family holding events, superspreading events as they're now called, superspreader, that are just irresponsible and dangerous. Within a small town nearby, it's where I live called, Hanford, California. There was held a few rave- raves, R-A-V-E-S, raves, that's right, that hosted, the first one was several hundred people within a warehouse, an abandoned warehouse for reasons unknown, I guess. This occurred a few times. But nothing really severe. No real severe punishments had occurred. Recently within Riverside Sheriff's Department, the sheriff there had refused to adhere to and enforce the regulations brought on by Governor Gavin Newsom to stay indoors and to practice you know, basic health precautions for the virus. As it stands now, it's very, very relaxed approach within the Central Valley. So as of now, we're just waiting on vaccines, and that's where we're at at this moment. Thank you for your time. And goodbye.