

Transcript of Interview with Daniela Lin by Nicole Ribakoff

Interviewee: Daniela Lin

Interviewer: Nicole Ribakoff

Date: 09/18/2020

Location (Interviewee):

Location (Interviewer):

Abstract: Daniela gives us an inside look at what it was like to be a high school senior during COVID-19. She also talks about what it was like living in California during the pandemic. Daniela takes us through her experiences with graduation, prom, friends, and just generally what her life has been like living through the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Nicole Ribakoff 00:00

Hi, my name is Nikki Ribakoff, and I'm interviewing Daniela Lin for the COVID-19 archive project. It is September 18th at 5:14pm. Do you give consent to be interviewed for the COVID-19 archive project?

Daniela Lin 00:14

Yes, I give consent.

Nicole Ribakoff 00:16

What is your experience when COVID-19 started to appear in the media and when things started to shut down?

Daniela Lin 00:22

Well, my first-time hearing about COVID was probably in mid-January, there was one positive case in my hometown Irvine, California, at a local community college. So, this caused a lot of us to be anxious, and we were fearful. But eventually this died out because it was just one case. In early March, my sister was forced to come back from college, she went to the University of Washington, Seattle, and there are several outbreaks there. So, my dad had her sent back as soon as possible, and she was sick, but she tested negative for COVID. But we still quarantined her in her room, and then this was when things started to step up, and as things got worse, in early March, I went over to a friend's house to plan a summer trip. My friends from church and I were supposed to go for a global conference for high schoolers in Poland. But we didn't buy the airplane tickets because part of us knew that it probably wasn't doable anymore, and then in March, I remember my last day of high school was March 13th, it was a Friday, I had an open sixth period. So, I went home earlier, during lunch, and that was when the district sent out the email saying that school was going to be canceled until further notice. So, I actually was really sad because I had an open six, I felt like I was missing out on the last period of high school ever, even though they said they would go back, part of me knew we wouldn't, and that night was actually one of my friend's birthday, we were supposed to go out to eat at a restaurant for her

birthday dinner. But we decided to stay in instead because a lot of parents weren't comfortable with this. This ended up being our last time all being together for the last time before we all went on to college and moved on, but we didn't know it at the time. So, at this time, a lot of my friends were saying, Oh, we would all go back to normal life. But part of me knew that my senior year in general had come to an end, not just school, but just like, seeing my friends, going to my youth groups and all that and sports, I was generally pretty worried about bringing COVID back to my parents and I was also anxious because my oldest sister was living in LA still, and she does have some conditions and the cases were starting to spike there.

Nicole Ribakoff 02:33

So, in the end of the summer, when this all started to die down, did any of your youth groups or activities go back, like with masks and social distancing, or were they just kind of over in March, when they—everything set down?

Daniela Lin 02:46

They were pretty much just over everything became virtual. So, we would have all these things on Zoom, even my conference that was supposed to take place in Poland, we had it over Zoom. It was super weird because they had to accommodate a different time zones, so being in California, I wasn't able to attend about half the meetings. So, everything became in a virtual world, it was pretty nice being able to still see everyone's faces. But eventually it did get a little old, and it was still pretty disappointing that we couldn't be anywhere in person, and I did get Zoom fatigued.

Nicole Ribakoff 03:17

What were some of your experiences in quarantine?

Daniela Lin 03:21

So, like I said earlier, I live in Irvine, California, which is in Orange County, and even though at first Orange County was doing pretty well in terms of COVID, it spiked up because people stopped taking it seriously, they thought it wasn't a big deal. It was actually one of the worst counties in America, and it was on the watch list. So, my parents had a very strict view towards COVID, which I understood and appreciated for the safety of my family and others that we might affect. But I had a hard time with this because they wouldn't let me go out with my friends like at all even socially distanced. So we would very much limit our interactions with other people and even just going to the store, you would take one big Costco haul like once a month, wipe all the groceries down and then like avoid going anywhere, do online shopping, we had to quarantine our packages, disinfect everything, and most of my friends were also pretty much on lockdown. Their parents were strict about it, but when graduation came around in June, that's when pretty much like everyone started to break quarantine and social distancing rules. So, my friends took their grad pics together, and then my parents didn't want me to let me go, so that was really hard. But I was able to take socially distanced pictures, which were super awkward, with two of my best friends. But yeah, overall, I was pretty much locked up, and all my friends were

always talking about how strict my parents were, and this went on for five months. So, it was pretty hard, not being able to see my friends.

Nicole Ribakoff 04:49

You talked a little bit about the graduation pictures, but what was your actual graduation like and your last few months of high school?

Daniela Lin 04:56

Yeah, so we did not have an in-person graduation. There was a pre-recorded video that we were given to watch, there was no Zoom meeting, and it was supposed to come out and be available at 7pm. But it crashed and though it wasn't working, so that was very interesting how even for the video, there are problems. I remember sitting in my family room with my family, wearing my cap on my head and then when the ASB president was giving the speech, she said to move our tassel, so I did that, but it didn't feel like I graduated whatsoever. And yeah, we had to go back to school in person to return our textbooks to get her cap and gown, and they gave us a little goodie bag. That was really nice, but it was also pretty sad because they gave us silly string, which was usually used in one of our traditions - on the last day of school, you would run out and scream and spray your silly string on each other and throw your papers in the air at the oak tree. So yeah, they tried to maintain some of these traditions, but it obviously wasn't very much possible.

Nicole Ribakoff 06:03

Did you have a prom? Or did some of your friends like get together in their prom dresses and take pictures?

Daniela Lin 06:09

We did not have a prom and my friends also didn't get together to take pictures because at this point, I think we were still trying to limit the interaction even though it was broken during graduation. Our school district, so like maybe five, six high schools in Irvine, did a virtual prom. I did not attend, but there were some raffles for like different prizes that I signed up for.

Nicole Ribakoff 06:33

Thank you so much for your time.

Daniela Lin 06:34

Yeah.