

Transcript of Oral History Interview with Denise Pearson

Interviewee: Denise Pearson

Interviewer: Glenda McGann

Date: 05/23/2020

Location (Interviewee): Indianapolis, Indiana

Location (Interviewer):

Transcriber: This transcript has been provided by Otter.AI with a 2nd pass for accuracy and formatting provided by Bryan Paintiff, HST580 intern, at ASU.

Abstract: Denise Pearson is a kindergarten teacher in Indianapolis, Indiana. Denise starts by describing how they believed that COVID was going to blow over and not be as bad as the flu, but when people started to get sick and die, Denise knew it would be serious. Denise then talks about how the biggest concern with the pandemic is how it will affect the students in going from traditional learning to online and then back to traditional. Additionally, Denise believes that the news is giving the correct information related to the number of COVID cases as well as trusting that the governor of Indiana and the mayor of Indianapolis are doing a good job at keeping people safe. Lastly, Denise describes how certain children are having a hard time with online school and that an aspect of that is also due to the lack of social interaction while learning which many kids are used to.

Denise Pearson 00:00

Okay.

Glenda McGann 00:03

All right. Well, thank you so much Denise, for participating in the COVID-19 Oral History Project. And I do want to note here at the top of the meeting that you have signed, you've read and signed the informed consent. And could you please say what the date and time is?

Denise Pearson 00:24

Today is May, what is today's date? May 23 2020, and the time is 10:03.

Glenda McGann 00:39

Okay, thank you. I think we're all in the same boat about what day is it anyway.

Denise Pearson 00:44

Oh gosh.

Glenda McGann 00:46

And your name, please?

Denise Pearson 00:48

Denise s. Pearson.

Glenda McGann 00:50

Okay. And what are the primary things you do on a day to day basis for your job or any extracurricular activities?

Denise Pearson 01:00

My day to day basis, is what I do is I teach kindergarteners.

Glenda McGann 01:06

Are you doing anything besides that?

Denise Pearson 01:11

Well, I do yoga online.

Glenda McGann 01:15

Where do you live?

Denise Pearson 01:18

Where have I lived?

Glenda McGann 01:19

I'm sorry, where do you live?

Denise Pearson 01:21

Oh, I live in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Glenda McGann 01:25

What's it like to live there?

Denise Pearson 01:27

Oh, it's wonderful, I love it here in Indiana. And Indianapolis.

Glenda McGann 01:33

When you first learned about COVID-19, what were your thoughts about it?

Denise Pearson 01:39

Well, a little, not too exci- well not the word excited. But when I first heard about it, I just thought it was something that's going to pass quickly. I thought okay, well, the flu is probably a lot worse than it. And then when I started listening and hearing about people who were getting sick and dying, and then I thought, okay, this is really serious.

Glenda McGann 02:07

And so you've touched on that. But is there anything more about how your thoughts have changed since then? Since you first heard about COVID-19?

Denise Pearson 02:15

Oh, my thoughts is that we definitely need to get this in control. And could we had gotten any control, before it hit the numbers it has now? And then what are we going to do for the future?

Glenda McGann 02:29

What issues have most concerned you about the COVID 19 pandemic?

Denise Pearson 02:33

Well, my most -ly concern, and since I'm an educator is how it's affecting our students. And a lot of it I mean, this year, well, the past two months, it hasn't been too bad with most of my students, but I've heard other co workers saying that some of the kids are not getting their assignments done, and just how much that's going to affect them when school starts back or how it's gonna affect them in the future. Also, I've been hearing a lot about just the social effect, the mental effect, this is going to take on, with the students.

Glenda McGann 03:14

How has COVID-19 affected your job?

Denise Pearson 03:18

Oh, it has well just totally changed the way I teach. Just teaching online. So that's been a real challenge.

Glenda McGann 03:28

How has COVID-19 affected your employment status?

Denise Pearson 03:33

Oh, it's fine. I mean, I'm still working.

Glenda McGann 03:38

What concerns do you have about the effects of COVID-19 on your employment and on the economy more broadly? So first, you personally and then on the whole economy?

Denise Pearson 03:51

Me personally, as far as my job wise? So far, it hasn't affected my job. I mean, I don't have any reason right now to be let go because of it. And as far as the economy, I'm just really concerned about people losing their jobs, and how that's going to affect the economy as far as just having the economy grow. And how that affecting people, families without that income coming in.

Glenda McGann 04:26

How has the COVID 19 pandemic affected the employment of people you know?

Denise Pearson 04:32

well everyone I know hasn't lost their jobs. Now some of them I would say some of my students parents have and so they're still looking right now they're not totally concerned because they think that they will get back either get back to work later or find another job.

Glenda McGann 04:55

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

Denise Pearson 05:02

Well, just not being able to get out and go, have dinner lunch, socialize, but other than that, thank God for zoom. So we do communicate that way.

Glenda McGann 05:14

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

Denise Pearson 05:19

Pretty well. I mean, when I first, when we were off was sort of nice. Being able to just sleep in a little bit and then get up and do my lessons and, but now it just became just overwhelming.

Glenda McGann 05:34

How has the COVID 19 outbreak affected how you interact and communicate with friends and family?

Denise Pearson 05:42

Oh, can't hug. That's been, cause I'm a hugger. So that's been very difficult.

Glenda McGann 05:51

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

Denise Pearson 05:58

The challenges is just using all of the apps, communication through the computer, just you know communication.

Glenda McGann 06:13

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

Denise Pearson 06:21

Oh, we have some friends who do bingo, online, which was pretty cool. So that's what we've been doing.

Glenda McGann 06:32

How has the COVID 19 outbreak affected your community? And you can you can talk about as many different communities as you want clubs, your church, your job. Any or all of them or one in particular.

Denise Pearson 06:49

Ah, how has it affected or? What was the question?

Glenda McGann 06:54

How has the outbreak affected your community?

Denise Pearson 07:01

Oh, okay. Well, my church, we've been watching sermons online, livestream, which would make it nice, because we weren't missing a lot. We're just missing the togetherness. But it was still able to watch the services online on Sundays, and also during the week there for Bible study. And so that has helped. But yeah, it has affected just being there.

Glenda McGann 07:23

How have the opinions, activities and relationships of people around you changed in response to the pandemic?

Denise Pearson 07:41

I guess everyone's aware. And then like when I, my sister was stopped by, we would always say, well we can't hug, or have you been sneezing? and sort of in a jokingly way, but it has affected that way. But nothing really major because no one that in our immediate family has had it, but I do know of some people that have gotten it and even passed from it.

Glenda McGann 08:05

Oh. Self isolation and flattening the curve have been two key ideas that have emerged since the pandemic. How have you and your family and friends and community responded to requests to self isolate and flatten the curve?

Denise Pearson 08:29

Oh, definitely we self isolated. Didn't go out, gosh for probably three weeks, when it was first suggested that we do that. So we've pretty much been doing that.

Glenda McGann 08:42

That's good. In what ways has COVID-19 changed your relationships with family friends in the community?

Denise Pearson 08:53

I mean, not much. Just, I mean, we still communicate. I mean, that's one thing about technology, we're able to communicate, but just not closeness.

Glenda McGann 09:04

What has been your direct experience of you or anyone you know, with the COVID 19 outbreak sickness?

Denise Pearson 09:13

Well, I had a co worker who passed from it and that's been really hard. And some co workers family members had passed.

Glenda McGann 09:29

In what ways do you think that COVID-19 is affecting people's mental health and or physical health?

Denise Pearson 09:39

I think it's frustrating because my brother's mother in law was in the nursing home in Texas and it has been very difficult because they can't go and see her. So and I know his wife she I mean she cries all the time. She's finally getting and talking to other people because she can't go see her mom. In fact her mom ended up with the COVID. But thank God she doesn't have the symptoms. So that's been really stressful. And we're constantly praying for them.

Glenda McGann 10:13

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

Denise Pearson 10:18

Oh, TV, CNN, MSNBC.

Glenda McGann 10:23

How have your news sources changed during the course of the pandemic?

Denise Pearson 10:28

I think a lot of, it's almost overwhelming too. I know we need the information, but sometimes you just have to turn it off because it becomes too much.

Glenda McGann 10:42

What do you think are important issues that the media may or may not be covering?

Denise Pearson 10:52

Hmm, seem like they're covering mostly everything. Yeah, I mean, I think they're covering I mean, I pretty much trust the media to an extent, but I think they're covering everything. You need specifics about how many people have the COVID? How many are dying, or? I mean, we're getting the information I trust they're giving us the correct information.

Glenda McGann 11:21

How have municipal leaders and government officials in your community responded to the outbreak?

Denise Pearson 11:29

Oh, I think they're doing an excellent job. Governor Holcolm this excellent job. I really admire him and our mayor Hogsett. They're doing an excellent job. Keeping us informed and making sure that we're emphasizing social distancing, they just keeping us up on everything.

Glenda McGann 11:51

Do you have any thoughts on the differences in response among local state and federal leaders to this crisis?

Denise Pearson 12:00

No, I think they're all doing a great job. I mean, Holcomb, with a Hogsett is doing it pretty much Indianapolis and I still respect his position on all of this. So yeah, I have no complaints on either one, either side.

Glenda McGann 12:18

And the federal level?

Denise Pearson 12:21

um, well, federal, it's a little iffy there. Really hard to say, but that's coming from the higher higher up, what the federal can do and what they can't do.

Glenda McGann 12:36

And just a final few questions about the future Denise.

Denise Pearson 12:40

Okay.

Glenda McGann 12:41

How has your experience transformed how you think about your family, friends and community?

Denise Pearson 12:49

Oh, well, yes. Probably just looking into making sure hopefully, they're following the rules as far as washing hands and sanitizing and keeping our social distancing. And how long we have to do that, is that something that we'll have to do for years until they find a vaccine, and even after the vaccine, how do you know, they've had the vaccine? So it's going to be different.

Glenda McGann 13:18

Knowing what you know, now, what do you think that individuals, communities, or governments need to keep in mind for the future?

Denise Pearson 13:27

Um, probably the mental health of people definitely and how this is going to affect them. And making sure everyone has what they need to get through it. As far as jobs, medical, healthcare, [inaudible] will people be able to afford the vaccine? Or if they're in the hospital, Hows that going to be covered? Just the whole healthcare system.

Denise Pearson 13:58

You've touched a little bit on the your kiddos as a as a kindergarten teacher. How have the children that you teach adapted to the COVID 19 pandemic?

Denise Pearson 14:12

Most of them as far as when you know I was speaking to my parents, they coped a few of them, I did have to talk to this mom. But some of the parents were saying they just need to have their friends with them. It's just hard for them to learn online, which I can understand because how many hours can you be on a laptop doing work and doing activities and some of them are just just broke down. And they just some of my really smart kids, they just need to have that social interaction, and they weren't having it.

Glenda McGann 14:48

Any other thoughts at all that you would like to add?

Denise Pearson 14:53

No, just just bored we're just thinking about the beginning of the school year. I mean, read some of the information the suggestion from the CDC about how to start school, and it's almost some of the things that I was reading, it's almost impossible and how we're going to do that. So it's going to be a whole new look for education. So that is the that's sort of the part of that sort of scary or just the unknown.

Glenda McGann 15:28

Well, Denise, if there's nothing else you would like to add, that concludes the questionnaire.

Denise Pearson 15:33

Oh, that's it? Oh, I was expecting an hour and a half?

Glenda McGann 15:37

I know. Well, it just kind of depends. I did have one interview that ran about an hour, but most of them are about 30 minutes.

Denise Pearson 15:46

Oh, okay.

Glenda McGann 15:47

It kind of depends on what people have to say.

Denise Pearson 15:51

Okay. Well, that's interesting. Okay, so you just turn that into the AI? Is it IU? Or is it just, it's it's

Glenda McGann 16:03

IUPUI. I'm a volunteer researcher for the IUPUI Arts and Humanities Institute,

Denise Pearson 16:11

okay.

Glenda McGann 16:11

But they are partnering with Arizona State University, and George Mason University. And what they're doing is creating a pool. So all of the interviews that are happening all over the country, and I think it's international now too, are uploaded into a common database. And then I won't even have to transcribe our our conversation. That will be done automatically by artificial intelligence.

Denise Pearson 16:43

Oh wow.

Glenda McGann 16:44

And then what they're hoping is they can use metadata for, like policymakers or artists to learn from this, learn from people's real everyday experience, and maybe help set policy to go forth. So it will be an online collection, and you'll be able to access it, I'm just not quite sure how all of that is going to work out. I think they're building a brand new database for that. So I will take your informed consent

document and upload that, and your demographic information and upload that and then I'll take this file of our audio and visual of this interview and upload that to the database.

Denise Pearson 17:37

Okay,

Glenda McGann 17:37

so they'll probably, uh, you know, collect data about what parts of the country responded to it and all sorts of things.

Denise Pearson 17:46

Okay.

Glenda McGann 17:46

So if you know, anybody that might be interested in being interviewed, or you can even go to that website and tell your own story. They're encouraging, they're encouraging people to participate.

Denise Pearson 17:59

Just go, to, tell their own story.

Glenda McGann 18:00

Yeah.

Denise Pearson 18:01

Okay. Well, it sounds really interesting. Yeah. Great.

Glenda McGann 18:06

And then there's a chat room, I don't know much about it. It's called slack. And it

Denise Pearson 18:11

slack?

Glenda McGann 18:12

S L A C K. And it's got a lot of different components I'm just learning about but that's, the researchers go in there. And they ask questions. And I noticed yesterday that someone was talking about having teacher training, so that they can interview their kids. So if I learn any more about that, I can shoot you an email.

Denise Pearson 18:34

Okay, please do if you hear anything out there, that would be interesting.

Glenda McGann 18:38

Yeah. Cause I think there's, from what I'm gathering, a lot of kids are struggling with it. And then there's the whole issue of access. I mean, it's really great if you live, you know, in the middle of a city and you have oops, Are you there?

Glenda McGann 18:38

Yeah, I'm here.

Glenda McGann 18:56

Okay. I'm sorry. My screen went dark I had something pop-up there. Anyway, that the issue of access it well, broadband, for example, in rural areas, I mean, it's not a given and some kids don't have, you know, there's one iPad and five people in a family sharing it. So there's some real issues around that, that are emerging.

Denise Pearson 19:20

I know one of my co workers, and she's our social worker, and she has a daughter, who's in Westfield. And she was like a high honor student said that she literally was failing, because she just could not do the online work. I mean, it was just too much for her. So. And then her younger one, who was pretty much she said was an average student was excelling in it. So it's just like, wow. So she's worried about her older daughter, who's going to be a freshman next year. How that is going to affect her too. So now, now Wow.

Glenda McGann 20:00

Well thank you for your time on this beautiful Saturday

Denise Pearson 20:05

I know.

Glenda McGann 20:07

memoreal Day weekend.

Denise Pearson 20:08

I know, I still can't believe us Memorial Day.

Glenda McGann 20:11

I know. It's so weird without the race in Indy.

Denise Pearson 20:15

Oh, it is. Well, you and John, enjoy your weekend.

Glenda McGann 20:20

Thank you Denise. Take care.

Denise Pearson 20:22

You too. Bye bye

Glenda McGann 20:23

bye