

# Stephanie Oral History 07/17/2020

**Interviewee:** Stephanie [REDACTED]

**Interviewer:** Kiersten Camby

**Date:** 07/17/2020

**Location (Interviewee):** Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

**Location (Interviewer):** Spartanburg, South Carolina

**Transcriber:** Sally Velez

**Abstract:** Stephanie [REDACTED] lives in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania and works part time for the Hershey Chocolate Company. She lives with both her mother and brother. At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, Stephanie requested to work from home due to underlying health reasons. Stephanie is not working from home but is struggling with the set up. Stephanie is also craving a sense of community during these stressful times, especially since Pennsylvania isn't friendly to those not from the area. Stephanie and her family has taken the proper precautions to stay safe and are only leaving the house when absolutely necessary.

**Kiersten Camby 00:03**

All right, so we're gonna start with our questions. But before we do, I just wanted to go ahead and ask you while we're recording which consent form that you wanted to, or that you did submit, and you were okay with.

**Stephanie 00:16**

I am okay with the license that grants full, full permission.

**Kiersten Camby 00:22**

Okay, perfect.

**Stephanie 00:23**

Yeah, that's fine

**Kiersten Camby 00:25**

So we're gonna start with background questions. And the first question is, what is the date and the time?

**Stephanie 00:31**

So the date is July 17 2020, and it is 6:52pm.

**Kiersten Camby 00:39**

Alright. What is your name? And what are the primary things that you do on a day to day basis?

**Stephanie 00:53**

My name is Stephanie. And on a day to day basis, I work and I take care of my two cats. And I helped to fix up my mom's house.

**Kiersten Camby** 01:14

Where do you live? And what is it like to live there?

**Stephanie** 01:17

I live in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. It's an interesting place to live. It, it's nice.

**Kiersten Camby** 01:28

Okay. When you first learned about COVID-19, what were your thoughts about it? And how have your thoughts changed since then?

**Stephanie** 01:35

When I first learned about COVID-19. I kind of had flashbacks to like SARS, and how it got close, but didn't really affect us too bad. Like, as things kind of changed, I became a little bit more worried about it. Especially because I have asthma. And I tend to have an immune response that is leans more towards inflammation. So the more I learned about it, the more I realized how much I'm at risk for it. So it's been kind of terrifying for me.

**Kiersten Camby** 02:20

Mhm.

**Stephanie** 02:22

As things have developed and continued on, and, you know, then there's a lot of other social issues that have kind of come up around it. So definitely went from, you know, watching it to being very, very concerned about it.

**Kiersten Camby** 02:41

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

**Stephanie** 02:48

I think, besides like the health concerns what's also concerned me a lot is kind of the, the ugly parts of our culture that, you know, we all kind of knew were there, but it's definitely made them far more acute. And so those parts have kind of concerned me because, you know, it's something that we're going to have to work through and work on. Because we're not going to make it unless we we learn to outgrow, you know, people's individualistic selfishness and, you know, the anti-mask and things like that. You know. So, those issues definitely concern me.

**Kiersten Camby** 03:41

Okay, I move into, into employment questions, has COVID-19 affected your job? And if so, in what ways?

**Stephanie** 03:53

it, it's greatly affected my job. I started working at home on March 17th. I actually requested to go home because they were going to have me continue working in the building for a little while longer, but with my asthma, I just I couldn't take the risk of being there. So I requested to go home a little bit earlier. But it's definitely affected my job because I develop recipes for the Hershey kitchens department. And a lot of my job requires me being in a kitchen all day. And my mom's kitchen is just not suited for my type of work. You know, we don't have central air in the kitchen and as it's gotten hotter and hotter, it's been more and more difficult to test recipes. My main job was developing recipes, but right now there's really no call for any kind of development, that's all been put on hold. And so I'm trying to, you know, work around a kitchen that we use to live and also a kitchen that I'm having to work out of. So I'm, I've got Rubbermaid tubs filled with, you know, Hershey's chocolate chips down in the basement. And, you know, I have to kind of pull my entire work setup out every day and then break it down every day. So it's been it's been quite a challenge. One I've never really faced like this before.

**Kiersten Camby** 05:42

I think you kind of answered the second question when you said that you've been home since the sixth or since March?

**Stephanie** 05:47

Yeah. Employment status hasn't actually changed. Yeah.

**Kiersten Camby** 05:52

So, okay. What concerns do you have about the effects of COVID-19 on your employment and the economy more broadly?

**Stephanie** 06:09

I do have concerns about my limit. As I know of right now, I'll be most likely working in the situation that I am right now, from home until at least January, if not longer. Because of the way that Hershey is being very cautious, which I'm grateful for-

**Kiersten Camby** 06:31

Mhm.

**Stephanie** 06:31

100%. But it's also you know, it's stressful to know that I'll be continuing on in the situation that I am right now. It'll get easier as the fall comes in the kitchen starts to get cooler. But you know, I do have some concerns on whether or not they'll think that we're worth the money come January, because I really do rely on my job at the moment. The economy, I, I think that I have concerns about it. But at the same time, there's so many social issues that are, you know, coming up and really starting to get a foothold right now that when it comes to the economy, I don't know if pandemic is going to have as much effect as a lot of other social issues. So it's really difficult to actually like take a stance on how, how I feel about that. So because there are things that I'd like to see change, but then, I also still want it to be there.

**Kiersten Camby** 07:39

Yeah.

**Stephanie** 07:40

So it's a difficult question.

**Kiersten Camby** 07:43

Absolutely. Has the COVID-19 pandemic affected the employment of people that you know? And if so, in what ways?

**Stephanie** 07:52

That's greatly effected the employment of people I know. I, I have a lot of people I know from the restaurant industry, either through work through working at Whole Foods for five years, or alumni from the Culinary Institute of America. I know that there are people who they've been working this whole time, putting in 18 hour days, seven days a week, which isn't too different from, you know, their, their usual working schedule.

**Kiersten Camby** 08:34

Mhm.

**Stephanie** 08:35

But at the same time, they're also having to deal with all the stressors that go along with being out there and being exposed. I know that there are some people who I'm friends with who have quit their jobs and just decided that, you know, unemployment was safer.

**Kiersten Camby** 08:54

Right.

**Stephanie** 08:55

And to do that in the restaurant industry. You know, it's not just a decision to kind of walk away for a little while, that can damage your career for years. Because you know, people it's a big community but its a small community at the time and people talk and people know each other and it just so it can be really difficult to come back so that they decided that that was a safer choice for them. So I've, I've seen it effect a lot of people's employment.

**Kiersten Camby** 09:33

I'm gonna move to family and household questions now. Again, as you mentioned earlier in the interview, if you're not comfortable answering any of these, just let me know and we'll skip to the next question.

**Stephanie** 09:44

Okay.

**Kiersten Camby** 09:44

Has COVID-19 affected you or any of your family's day to day activities?

**Stephanie** 09:51

Definitely has. I'm, I'm a pretty outdoor person. I like to go hiking, I like to take trips, day trips and stuff. So it's definitely made us have to stop. But then also, because I have the health concerns that I do, my mom with, who doesn't have as many, even though she's older, has had to take a lot of the responsibility for going outside the house on I've slowly started to take back some of that responsibility as well. But it was kind of her leaving the house and neither my brother or I, just because our health is not as good as hers. So that's, that's definitely been something that's very different for us.

**Kiersten Camby** 10:53

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

**Stephanie** 10:59

We've kind of gotten in a system at the moment. My mom and I will go grocery shopping together about once a week, then we, that's more than what we were before we were going about every other week. Like day to day activities, we, we're trying to keep as normal as possible. But we just really don't, we don't really leave the house. We don't go out side as much. You know, I haven't really gone hiking or anything like that. Yeah, possibly could, but also the allergens have been a lot higher. So that would compromise me even more being outside.

**Kiersten Camby** 11:45

Right. Has the COVID-19 outbreak affected how you associate and communicate with your friends and family? And if so how?

**Stephanie** 11:55

It really hasn't. So all of our family is out west. We don't have any family here in Pennsylvania. We live here because this is where my stepdad is from. And when he passed away, he left the house to my mom. So there was a place to live and come back to, but friends as well. They're also all out west. And my best friend is he lives in Georgia. So a lot of the communication has remained, you know, texting and video calls and stuff like that

**Kiersten Camby** 12:42

Okay. What have been the biggest challenges that you have faced during the COVID-19 outbreak?

**Stephanie** 12:57

I think it's for me, dealing with health issues during the COVID-19 or during the pandemic has been really difficult because you know, as scared as everyone is and as frightening it is, it is to go out and be exposed like that. You know, people like me, we don't magically get better. We still have to go to doctor's appointments and we still have to go to have things done. And unfortunately because where I live not a whole lot of people wanting to do like telehealth so I've actually had to go in physically to doctors offices, and I watch myself pretty closely for the two weeks after just because it's really stressful. And you know, I've had a lot of health challenges through these last couple of months. And so it's it's definitely been something that you know, I've had to you know, face my fears a lot about.

**Kiersten Camby** 14:12

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

**Stephanie** 14:19

Watching a lot of (inaudible) a lot of my time it's either spent working or working on the archive I've also been kind of watching some older, older shows, you know things that are a little bit more lighthearted. I binge watch the entire you know, series of Voyager Star Trek Voyager. Now watching an old series from from England, just things that are a little bit more lighthearted, a little like you know you escapist kind of thing. And then I've also been following my favorite artists Miyabi. Online, he's been doing a lot of online concerts. So it's been really nice to kind of watch him perform and kind of get lost into, you know, what I would have been doing if the pandemic wasn't happening. And that's like going to concerts being out there, and it's kind of a break. So.

**Kiersten Camby** 15:33

How was the COVID-19 outbreak affected your community?

**Stephanie** 15:41

It's difficult to get out here. We don't really feel a part of the community. Pennsylvania is not exactly the most welcoming to people from out of state. So we don't have a really huge ties of community. But at the same time, I'm kind of seeing it from an outside perspective. And seeing how it, it's really been hard. Because people around here just don't want to think that it's real. And I've seen even my neighbors, you know, they went from being very serious about it, and, you know, taking all the precautions, and then about a month and a half into it a couple of them just decided it was over. And you know, started having parties in the neighborhood. And, you know, I've seen that with businesses around here. A lot of restaurants have lost licenses, because they opened ahead of schedule, the way that they were rolling things back. So I think people around here got really, really stir crazy quickly. And they just wanted it to be to be over

**Kiersten Camby** 16:59

Okay. How are people around you responding to the COVID-19 pandemic?

**Stephanie** 17:09

Well, immediate family, my mom and my brother, they're definitely taking it seriously. You know, they, they its affecting, like, how they feel about going out and stuff. A couple of my neighbors are definitely taking it seriously, as well. But then, like I said, there's, there's some of my neighbors who, you know, they've just decided it's, it's over. People in general around here, it's like, they kind of come in two camps, they're either taking it very seriously or they think it's a joke.

**Kiersten Camby** 17:50

Mm.

**Stephanie** 17:51

and get really close to it just makes it a lot harder to, to kind of do the things that you need to do when you're out.

**Kiersten Camby** 18:01

Have you seen people around you change their opinions day-on day to day act-activities or their response to the pandemic in their relationships?

**Stephanie** 18:12

Yeah, I'm definitely like my neighbor, you know, they've, they've kind of created a group of people who, you know, are over it. I guess the best way to say I've seen a few people who weren't taking it seriously take it more seriously. But that's more like online.

**Kiersten Camby** 18:35

Mhm.

**Stephanie** 18:37

I don't really see any, like changes in relationships due to the pandemic, but more just like kind of the people around me responding.

**Kiersten Camby** 18:52

So self isolation and flattening the curve have been two key ideas that have emerged during this pandemic. How have you, your family, your friends, or your community responded to the request to self isolate or to flatten the curve?

**Stephanie** 19:08

Um, I, I would say that my my friends and my family have definitely responded well to self isolation and, you know, doing whatever we can to to flatten the curve. I had one friend who thought that she might have COVID And she isolated herself for two weeks, kind of checked everything out. You know, made sure that she stayed away from people I don't think she ever did get tested. But it was really difficult at that time to get tested.

**Kiersten Camby** 19:44

Mhm.

**Stephanie** 19:44

You know, we've limited how we've gone out we we don't we didn't do any kind of like hoarding of anything. But we definitely started a you know, a pantry in response and started to make sure that we have certain you know, items on hand, just in case, we have to kind of do more of a self isolation again. You know, wiping things down, just being as cautious as possible.

**Kiersten Camby** 20:19

Has COVID-19 changed your relationship with family and friends and in the community?

**Stephanie** 20:26

I'd say not really it's kind of forced me to go outside, like a little bit more into like, I guess the online realm of trying to find like community that was one of my goals this summer was to kind of find friends.

You know, like being an outsider here and stuff, it's difficult to make friends. And so it was kind of my goal to like, get my, you know, introverted self out there a little bit more. But because of Cona-COVID-19, that is not going to happen. So kind of trying to find community, any way I can, to kind of be around people. But as far as like family, and friends, nothing's really changed.

**Kiersten Camby** 21:22

I'm gonna move into some health related questions. And I'm gonna preface that again, with if you're not comfortable answering those, just let me know and we'll move on. Have you anyone, you know, gotten sick during the COVID-19. outbreak? And what has been your experience in responding to that?

**Stephanie** 21:43

No one I know, has, like, positively gotten COVID-19. Like I said, my one friend thought she might have it. So I really haven't had a whole lot of response to the sickness. Besides, like, just, you know, what everyone else has been responding.

**Kiersten Camby** 22:04

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

**Stephanie** 22:12

I think it's definitely negatively affecting people's mental and physical health. You know, partially because we're you know, so used to being social, and we're so used to just being out there, we don't realize how physical we are, when we're not at home. I've definitely seen a change in myself, because, you know, I'm usually standing for at least six hours a day. And before this all hit, you know, I was working out like five days a week, and I had my routine. And that's been completely disrupted. So it's definitely like taking a massive hit to my mental and physical health for that. And then I also see it with other people, you know, people talking about their stomachs hurting, not sleeping. I know it's affected my sleeping habits, even more than I had difficulty before. So I can definitely see where it's just, you know, it's really taxing on everyone right now.

**Kiersten Camby** 23:32

I'm gonna move into just some general information, questions. What has been your primary source of news during the pandemic?

**Stephanie** 23:42

Kind of look at different news outlets, although a couple months into it, I stopped really watching the news, it became far too much.

**Kiersten Camby** 23:55

Mhm.

**Stephanie** 23:55

I'm a hypersensitive person. So seeing all of that all the time was just far too much for me to handle. And I still avoid the news as much as possible. But I would say like my primary sources would be like



the CDC, New York Times, some of the bigger news outlets, and then I definitely check like multiple different ones and and cross examine-

**Kiersten Camby** 24:30

Mhm.

**Stephanie** 24:31

What information they're giving me. Like, right now, I'm kind of on a news. Like I don't know what the, I lost the word for that. But yeah, I'm not really watching the news unless I have to do anything for the Internship.

**Kiersten Camby** 24:50

Right. And I think that answers our next question, was you kind of taking a purge from the news?

**Stephanie** 24:55

Yeah, yeah.

**Kiersten Camby** 24:58

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

**Stephanie** 25:02

I really think that they're not doing as great a job as they could, as far as like covering more at risk communities.

**Kiersten Camby** 25:02

Mhm.

**Stephanie** 25:17

I know that mentioned it, but I don't think they've really gotten into like the underlying reasons why communities, people of color, and indigenous communities are being hit harder.

**Kiersten Camby** 25:30

Mhm.

**Stephanie** 25:32

And we've heard a lot about, like the Navajo being hit by COVID. But we really haven't heard about the other tribal nations and how they're dealing with it. So I think, you know, we're kind of getting a one sided view, a lot of the times as far as when it's affecting those communities.

**Kiersten Camby** 25:55

Absolutely. I'm gonna move into some government questions now. How have municipal leaders and government officials in your community responded to the outbreak?

**Stephanie** 26:09

I would say that Governor Wolf, and his team definitely responded very well, we were able to flatten the curve and start reopening pretty quickly. Even though now it's starting to go back up. So I think I think he did a really good job, but we also have a lot of, I hate to say like Republican leaders in municipalities and stuff that are definitely spurring and stirring the pot as far as like anti mask and believing in the hoax. You know, encouraging businesses to open using dangerous, you know, dangerous tactics long before they should.

**Kiersten Camby** 27:04

Mhm.

**Stephanie** 27:06

You know, allowing restaurants to have indoor seating and no masks and things like that, just because they've taken a political view on it. And I definitely think that that's, that's hurt us as a community and trying to overcome this.

**Kiersten Camby** 27:23

Okay, do you have any thoughts on how local, state, or federal leaders are responding to this crisis differently?

**Stephanie** 27:32

Um, I definitely think that it shouldn't be a partisan, you know, thing, because it affects all of us. And, you know, it's not going to jump around and and decide which party line is going to hit the hardest.

**Kiersten Camby** 27:51

Mhm.

**Stephanie** 27:51

You know, it's the virus. And I think that right now trying to use it as you know, campaign points and kudo points for different political parties is definitely not the right way to go. Because a lot of people have gotten sick from, you know, businesses opening too soon. And, you know, not following the proper precautions and inciting anger with people, so.

**Kiersten Camby** 28:24

So we're gonna move into the last set of questions, which is just regarding the future as we go forward. Has your experience transformed how you think about your family, your friends and the community? And in what ways?

**Stephanie** 28:39

I think it's made, made me like appreciate people a little bit more, you know, not being so caught up in day to day life and trying to really make sure that we're working, communicating. And also, like I said, trying to, you know, find community in any way that I can. Because, you know, not always being physically with someone is possible. So, trying to find people who you can connect with, you know, online or through, you know, shared interests, even if they're in states away is important.

**Kiersten Camby** 29:32

How does this pandemic compare to other big events that have happened in your lifetime?

**Stephanie** 29:37

Um I kind of feel like a lot of the incidents from my past have like kind of, you know, trained me for this moment. I've experienced extreme isolation before. I lived in, im Yosemite National Park for six months. And just like Pennsylvania and stuff, they definitely are not like, very welcoming to outsiders living there. And so no one talked to me really for six months. And that would, that, you know, definitely affected me mentally. After that, and then I also had to deal with, you know, my dad's sickness with ALS. And we had do a lot of precautions to make sure he never got sick when he when he was already sick.

**Kiersten Camby** 30:37

Mhm.

**Stephanie** 30:38

So I, I kind of feel like, while this is much bigger, and this is more widespread, I see a lot of echoes of things that I've experienced in the past trying to deal with this. Which is, in a way, it's good, because even though it's affected me a lot, physically and mentally. I think if I hadn't been through those other things, I would be in a much, much worse place right now.

**Kiersten Camby** 31:08

Right. How can you imagine life in a year?

**Stephanie** 31:15

That one's a tough one. I try not to think about it too much, just because it's like, you know, I would like to see it to be positive. You know, returning back to work, being able to go to concerts, again, to be able to go hiking, without having to worry about who I'm going to encounter on the trip, still like worried who your encountering on the trail, but not because of, you know, a pandemic or virus. So, I definitely would like to see, you know, people working together more and being more considerate of other people. And being, you know, just more caring for each other. I'd love to see that in a year.

**Kiersten Camby** 32:16

Like would you say that's the same as the next question as far as what you hope life is going to be like, in a year?

**Stephanie** 32:21

I think so.

**Kiersten Camby** 32:24

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

**Stephanie** 32:32

I think they need to keep in mind that, you know. Caring about other people is not, you know, political thing. It's not, shouldn't be along party lines. I think that we need to work on you know, celebrating people's individuality, but also celebrating people's common, you know, friends, but in the right way. There's a lot of things that are going to, you know, be coming, or are coming out because of the pandemic and the protests, and everything. So I'm, I'm really hoping that, you know, in the future, they'll kind of see what we've struggled through, and use it as a tool to continue to move forward. But I definitely think that, to keep in mind is, you know, science is not something that you can ignore, and it shouldn't be on political party lines. And that we need to just trust in what experts say and trust in you know, that they have our best interests in mind, and then care about other people.

**Kiersten Camby** 34:01

Awesome. That's all the questions that I have, and I thank you for taking the time to answer them for me. I'm gonna go ahead and stop recording now if you're okay with that. It's 7:25pm.