

Transcript of Oral History Interview with Alyssa Fell

Interviewee: Alyssa Fell

Interviewer: Sanjana Shastri

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Abstract: This audio interview expresses Alyssa Fell's emotions and perspective on the pandemic throughout its course from March to now. The questions reflect her opinions and understanding of responses and changes due to Covid-19 in social, political, and financial regards.

Sanjana Shastri 00:00

Hi. I'm Sanjana Shastri, and I'll be interviewing Alyssa Fell. How are you doing today?

Alyssa Fell 00:06

I'm good. Thank you for having me. How are you?

Sanjana Shastri 00:08

I'm doing well. Do you give your consent to be interviewed for the COVID-19 Project?

Alyssa Fell 00:13

Yes, I do.

Sanjana Shastri 00:14

Um, can you please state the date and time?

Alyssa Fell 00:16

Um, it is currently September 18, and it is 4:24 PM.

Sanjana Shastri 00:20

Okay, let's get started. So can you tell me where are you from?

Alyssa Fell 00:25

I'm from Bergen County, New Jersey, which is about like 15 minutes from New York City.

Sanjana Shastri 00:30

When did you first find out about COVID? And when did this first impact you personally?

Alyssa Fell 00:34

So I remember first learning about COVID in my contemporary issues and leadership class in high school. Every day, we would discuss current events and watch a 10 minute news video. And when corona first broke out in Wuhan China, we start to follow it. But it didn't really personally impact me until school shut down and then I was quarantined.

Sanjana Shastri 00:56

So do you remember your last day before quarantine began? And if so, can you like, describe to me how did you feel?

Alyssa Fell 01:02

Yes, I think I always remember this day, it was just a very weird day. Um, so my high school had an open campus. So we were allowed to go home for lunch, me and two of my best friends went out to a restaurant to get lunch. And then we brought it to my house to eat. And I remember at that point, my dad, I believe, was already working from home. And I got in trouble for having people in the house. And I didn't understand why because it's never happened to me. And then later that night, my friends were going to another town to get dinner for someone's birthday. And I also wasn't allowed to go and my best friend wasn't allowed to go either. And we both thought that our parents were being very crazy. But we soon found out that they were making the smart decision.

Sanjana Shastri 01:49

So I know, you said that you felt like the restrictions that your parents were taking were were very strict. So how has your perception changed now that you are aware of the pandemic and how it's impacting the world?

Alyssa Fell 02:03

Um, now I think that they're totally being completely responsible, and that the actions they took were totally justified. At the time, I didn't understand the extreme. And actually, the next day school was cancelled, and then it all set in for me. So it was kind of just not a big thing in the United States that I knew of at the time. And then the next day, when it all hit me, I totally understood where they're coming from and why they did what they did. I just wasn't educated enough at the time.

Sanjana Shastri 02:30

It makes- it makes sense that after you experienced it you understood a lot more.

Alyssa Fell 02:35

Yes.

Sanjana Shastri 02:36

How did being quarantine impact you in high school and in your personal life?

Alyssa Fell 02:40

I mean, quarantine definitely impacted high school because instead of going to school every day, we would log on to Zoom, and we only had half days. So we would see our teachers for a certain class every other day. Prom was canceled, and graduation was initially canceled. And we had later went outside socially distance with masks. Um, personally, my family was very strict with the quarantine and so were my friends. So in the beginning, I wasn't allowed to see anyone. And we would just talk on the phone and text and watch movies. But over time, I was allowed to go outside with my friends. As long as we were distanced and wore masks,

Sanjana Shastri 03:21

it was probably very difficult, but how did this impact your call his decisions, and the ability to like feel safe wherever you went?

Alyssa Fell 03:29

So, feeling safe in college was definitely really important. Actually, when the pandemic first hit, I remember my dad talking about the first semester of college and maybe colleges not opening, which I thought was crazy at the time. My brother's college is actually closed for this semester, and he's totally online. So wasn't very far off. Um, so, I attend Northeastern University and I was admitted mid pandemic, I wasn't sure what the future will look like. And being in the city at the time was a scary choice. we avoided New York City at all costs. So Boston is also a major city. But I knew that this is where I wanted to be, I kind of started to think about it as, okay, this might be a semester or a year of my life, maybe longer. But I rather go to the place where I want to be for four or five years and base it on one semester or one year or a little longer than that. I was supposed to go abroad to London first semester and due to COVID. That was cancelled. But looking back, I'm happy with how it turned out because I feel much safer being a four hour drive from home that a plane ride if London were to shut down or Boston.

Sanjana Shastri 04:39

So far, how has your college experience changed due to COVID?

Alyssa Fell 04:43

I think it's safe to say that college this year is not how anyone imagined college to be. I think that Northeastern is handling COVID very, very responsibly as we're tested every three days and we all have to work mass social distance and we're not a lot of each other's work. Given that it is a year like any other, but that's just due to the state of the world and our nation right now. And it's important that we take all precautions. And it's a privilege to be able to come back to college and

to go to college period. And the fact that we're here, we have to be very responsible and try to stay here for as long as we can. Hopefully, everything stays good for the rest of the semester. But I know that some colleges were already sent home and some just not open this semester. So I think any precaution necessary should be taken.

Sanjana Shastri 05:36

So how did you feel about the future of the society and of your plans and goals in life?

Alyssa Fell 05:41

Um, I think it's really hard to say the future society right now. I think there's a lot of moments of hope and a lot of moments of despair and kind of using this despair to unify people. Um, I don't think that we're going to be able to predict the future until we see how the November 2020 elections turn out, at least in the United States. Um, for me, personally, I am a very big planner, I'm not in terms of my day to day life, but more in terms of like, I will have a 5-10 year plan. And COVID-19 definitely taught me that you can't plan ahead, because you never know what's gonna happen. And there's a lot of unknowns. And for me, that was a very, very powerful lesson.

Sanjana Shastri 06:27

Um, how do you feel about the national response of the United States government in regards to COVID?

Alyssa Fell 06:32

I do not think that the national government handled COVID well. They made health- the health and safety of others become partisan. While scientists were saying one thing and doctors were saying another thing, it seems that the current administration was saying the opposite. They wouldn't wear masks, or they would say that if we stopped testing, it would just go away, which is just not true. And as the United States is one of the most powerful nations in the world, and we're still in the midst of the pandemic, I think that the US should have done a better job and being a role model, and simply coronavirus is just down played by the national government. We did not set an example for the rest of the world and we are still in the midst of the pandemic.

Sanjana Shastri 07:17

I completely agree with what you're saying. I think there are a lot of decisions and steps that need to be taken. So it's very difficult to try and plan for a lot of people but it does make a lot of sense. Thank you so much for interviewing with us.

Alyssa Fell 07:32

Thank you, have a great day.