

Transcript of Oral History Interview with Radhika Barot

Interviewee: Radhika Barot

Interviewer: Julia Norton

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Location (Interviewee): New York

Location (Interviewer): Boston, Massachusetts

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Abstract: This interview gives insight into Northeastern student's transition as a high school senior to college and her experience in dealing with COVID-19.

Julia Norton 00:00

I'm Julia Norton a here interviewing Radhika Barot. Do you give consent to be interviewed for the COVID-19 archive project?

Radhika Barot 00:11

Yes.

JN 00:14

Okay. It is-

RB 00:16

It is September 20th, Sunday. It is 11:00.

JN 00:20

All right. So, what kind of community did you live in? Urban, suburban or rural? And how do you think that affected the community response?

RB 00:31

So, I grew up in the suburbs, I grew up in a relatively big town. Our initial response was just to shut everything down. A lot of local places shut down. It was hard at first because there wasn't a lot of places that we could go to, to like, buy groceries, or just do everyday things. So yeah.

JN 00:54

Did you work at all during the pandemic?

RB 00:57

I did, actually. So, I worked at Dunkin'. And I tried taking off because I lived with my high-risk grandmother. But my boss, like really needed people because all of his workers were stuck in Queens at the time, which had like stricter rules. So yeah, I worked from March onward.

JN 01:12

Okay. Did you see as an essential worker, did you see any kind of different treatment from customers?

RB 01:20

For sure, I think, at first, everyone was scared. So, it got really slow where I worked, and as people started to come in, there's like this new like, respect for us that we didn't really have before. People tipped a lot, people were a lot nicer. And then obviously, like, April, June, when people really started getting sick of things. You know, people were rude, and people didn't want to put on masks. So yeah, it just kinda differed from time to time.

JN 01:50

Did you see a difference in the response in your community, versus the national response?

RB 02:00

I mean, the town I grew up in, the political views are very similar to that have like the national response, if that makes sense. Yes, things did shut down. But like my town really did rely on small businesses and like local businesses. So, people started getting really sick of that. And just like people didn't wear masks, people didn't want to social distance. They were parties. I live right on the beach to the beaches, we get packed every day. So yeah no.

JN 02:32

So, what kinds of activities did you do to keep yourself busy during the isolation stay at home time, besides working?

RB 02:44

Luckily, we got a dog two months before. So, during the whole quarantine, we kind of spent time with the dog. I had a lot of schoolwork to do. And then me and my mom and my brother tried to focus on like getting into the arts, we worked out a lot. We went on walks, and then just reading, just things that we didn't have time to do before.

JN 03:04

Mm hmm. Did you see like any kind of change in yourself or even like your perspectives towards other things when you had all these time, all this time?

RB 03:14

Yeah, for sure. I think being in high school and always being busy all the time. And being with friends, especially just senior year, like I don't think I was home any like weekend or any day of the week, and then having to transition from that to being constantly alone. Like granted, you're with your family, but you're still alone. I think it taught me how to be alone, which I just think is

like a lesson that we all need to have in our adulthood because obviously, like college is gonna teach you how to do that. And then also, it helped me focus on like, my own health, what I take for granted and just like yeah.

JN 03:52

Did you find it hard to transition from-? Even though the restrictions kind of loosen as time went on, did you find it hard to transition from kind of staying at home for the majority of the time, to coming to college where everybody is out all the time trying to socialize with classes?

RB 04:13

Ah, yeah, so I think I took it seriously, for the most part at home, I tried limiting my social gatherings, although, like, I did go out with like a close-knit group of friends. But then, coming here, it has been a shock because like, obviously, when you're the one person taking it seriously in a group of like hundreds of people, it is hard. Also, I feel like I haven't had this much social contact in so long. It's like weird to be the people constantly but I mean, I guess this is how it was six months ago. So.

JN 04:47

Right. Where were you when the stay-at-home orders were put in place? Um, and is this something you think you will remember for the rest of your life?

RB 04:59

Yeah, for sure. So basically, the week that all this happened, my school had an assembly basically saying that we shouldn't have to we shouldn't worry about Corona because people, people were getting very like riled up. And they were, they basically said that we weren't going to be sent home. And then two days later, we did get sent home. And then like, every week, they would put out like a thing saying, oh, like, we're gonna come back, we're gonna come back. So, when Cuomo like said that initial, like, we're gonna be home for the next couple of months. We were already at home. So, I guess he saw coming.

JN 05:31

Did you expect to have the quarantine go on for this long? Because Initially, it was just two weeks and everything would be back to normal. And now it's going on several months. Did you expect it to last this long?

RB 05:48

Ah, no, not at all. Honestly, I think I came from a lack of information. Because like, no one, the government was telling anything to us. And no one really knew the severity of the virus. So honestly, I just did think it would take a month and then we would go back. But now that I think about it, like at the time, I feel like I shouldn't have been so naïve about it.

JN 06:12

Did you feel frustrated with your like your state government's response or the national government's response to the pandemic?

RB 06:22

Um, I think state wise Cuomo was really good with it. He really did a good job, just shutting everything down. And then nation wise, I definitely think there could have been like a better way of handling things. I think if we had started a lot sooner, things would have been better. Also, just like the lack of clarity and like what our president wants to do has really made you confusing for everyone. So yeah, I think I would, I wouldn't change what my state did, but I would change with the nation did.

JN 07:01

All right, well, thank you for your time, and have a good one.