

Transcript of Interview with Angelica S Ramos by Ashley Pierce

Interviewee: Angelica S Ramos
Interviewer: Ashley Pierce
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Location (Interviewer): Avondale, Arizona
Transcriber: Ashley Pierce

Abstract:

Angelica Ramos is a full time mother and student living in Gilbert, Arizona. She is studying history at Arizona State University. She is an Arizona transplant, having moved from her hometown of Los Angeles, California when she was 23 years old. She keeps busy caring for her two small children; balancing school and activities for her children, her own schoolwork and managing her household, all in the time of COVID-19. In this interview, she discusses her thoughts, challenges and feelings on the pandemic year, and what she hopes is on the horizon for next year.

0:02

AP: Okay, so now we're officially recording. And we'll go ahead and get started with the background questions here.

0:11

AP: What is the date and time?

0:15

AR: Ooh, those are really [laughing] good questions. The date, I think it's the 20th of October

AP: It's the 10th.

AR: Oh, it's the 10th of October. [laughing] It's the 10th of October and here in Arizona, it is 1:57pm.

AP: Okay, what is your name? And what are the primary things that you do on a day to day basis?

AR: Oh Lord

AP: For example, your job or extracurricular activities?

AR: Um, my name is Angelica S. Ramos. That's kind of a loaded question I think, for me, so I'm a stay at home mom. I have a five-year-old and a two-year-old. So, I think my day to day

changes every single day, but for the most part, I do schoolwork every day, I take my daughter to school, and then just whatever I can think up for my two-year-old, the third thing on my list.

AP: See, where do you live? And what is it like to live there?

AR: Ah, I live in Gilbert, Arizona. It's hard to live here. Actually, I grew up in Los Angeles, California, I didn't move out of L.A. till I was 23 years old. And I just didn't realize the sense of belonging that I felt in L.A. until I moved out. And I think that's something that I really miss. And so, I'm trying my best to find where I belong in this new community that I'm in.

AP: When you first learned about COVID-19, what were your thoughts about it? How have your thoughts changed since then?

AR: When I first learned about COVID, it was probably around end of February. But it hadn't hit us here yet. It was, I think when it started gaining traction in the East Coast, is when I really started paying attention to it on the news. I was scared because of the great impact it was having on the east coast. And you know, with things like viruses, I kind of just assume that we were next on the west coast. I don't think my views on it have changed too much. I'm still really worried about COVID. Especially because my parents are older. My mom has pre-existing conditions. So I tried to limit my own exposure in hopes of keeping her safe and healthy.

AP: What issues have most concerned you about the covid 19 pandemic?

AR: Like I said, just my, my parents. My parents moved out to Arizona right when my dad was retiring amidst the pandemic in March. So they've kind of become my my number one concern. I know COVID affects everyone all across the board, But I have this false sense of security, I guess, being young and healthy and having small children. So I, sorry, that's my dog. [her dog tries to snuggle up on her lap] I am more concerned or more worried about my parents that are older and have pre-existing conditions.

AP: The next section is employment questions.

AP: How has COVID-19 affected your job? In what ways? I would say stay at home mom would be like a full time job, that counts as a full time job.

AR: I really, really, really appreciate you saying that.

AP: That totally counts.

AR: I agree with you. I feel like mothers are often overshadowed because we don't get paid for the work that we do. But as far as that question and my life or my employment as a mom, I think just having everything shut down and not being able to give my kids the outlet to go to museums

or to the zoo or to a park and just run and just having all that energy cooped up in a house has been definitely the hardest part of COVID for our home.

AP: My sister has a couple of small kids and she's a stay at home mom like, that's definitely a full time job absolutely 100 percent. And the world cannot afford to pay like if you go and like the hourly rate of like, like childcare and all that, like the world can't afford stay at home moms.

AR: Yeah, no, I agree with you. We're, we're very expensive.

AP: And rightly so.

AP: Has COVID-19 changed your employment status? In what ways?

AR: No, if anything, it's just made my status worse. I feel like before COVID, it was possible to separate my roles as a mom and as a student, being able to go to coffee shops and do homework when my husband got home. And you know, it's still being two individuals, you know, juggling my life that way. And then when COVID hit, I felt like everything kind of meshed. And I was forced to figure out a balance between all the roles that I hold in the same environment.

AP: What concerns do you have about the effects of COVID-19 on your employment and the economy more broadly?

AR: Well, technically, none, because I don't have an official job. But I do worry about the economy, just because I know of a lot of people who have lost their jobs, and I think it's a trickle effect, and people often are able to separate themselves from everybody else that's losing their jobs. But in reality, I feel like when the loss is so grand, it kind of affects everybody.

AP: Has the covid 19 pandemic affected the employment of people you know, in what ways?

AR: Yes. My best friend actually lost her job right when COVID was hitting L.A., she was seen as a non-essential part of her company, even though she had been there for 15 years. So as a single mom of a teenager, I think it hit her the most and in my little circle of friends, but most of my family, they are medical workers. I have family in the military. So I feel like in that aspect, my circle has only been affected, not that greatly.

AP: Next section is our family and household questions.

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

AR: I think like I mentioned I just, staying home. I think staying home has been the hardest part because even though my official unofficial title is a stay at home mom. Moms don't usually stay home every single day all day. So not being able to provide my kids with that outlet or provide myself with, you know, a kid free target run when I need it has probably been the hardest part.

AP: Just like you you're sitting at work sometimes, Like, I'll be like, Man, I wish I get to stay at home today. And then when you get home you're like, Man, I wish I could be anywhere else besides this house, again.

AR: Yeah, yeah, exactly.

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

AR: Oh, man, lots of crafting, lots of glitter, which means a lot of cleanup. I have two girls, so, I, just so much glitter. I am a really big planner. I have like three calendars in my house. And so just trying to be as prepared and as structured as I can, I think has helped a little bit. Just like making up activities has helped, trying to be creative. I think have been my my safe havens. But I think just trying to survive would be the right word. Yeah.

AP: Has the COVID-19 outbreak outbreak affected how you associate and communicate with friends and family? In what ways?

AR: Yes, I think the biggest way is my whole family is still in the Los Angeles area. My father has seven siblings, and we all, like all the cousins grew up together. And so I used to go to L.A. like once a month to just be with my family. And so that kind of transformed into very long zoom calls with all my cousins. But other than that, I think my, my COVID circle in Arizona, it's just been myself, my husband, our kids and my parents. So that hasn't really changed too much.

AP: What have been the biggest challenges that you have faced during the COVID-19 outbreak?

AR: Um, I would say keeping hold of my mental health has probably been my biggest struggle. So I, I struggle a little bit with OCD. And I feel like my OCD gets worse as I feel less in control of my life. So my thing is like placement, like forks have to be facing the right way. And like the toilet paper has to be out the right way or what I perceive it as to be the right way. And so I feel like in that aspect, because I feel like COVID has just added another really big degree of, of me not having control over my own life, it's kind of affected my mental health in a really big way.

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

AR: Oh, man. I don't think there's much that we've done for recreation. Since parks are closed, we can't take the kids to the park. I think just inventing our own park in whatever backyard we have here. Or you know, just a blow up pool for the kids. Whatever works at this point, if the kids want to go play in the sprinklers, I'm all for it.

AP: Especially this year, it's been so hot for so long.

AR: Oh, yeah.

AP: No rain, no rain, no rain.

AR: Yeah. Yep.

AP: Like when I would babysit like my nephews, like, like you said, You can't go to the park. You can't go to the movies. So I had to be very inventive with the board games, because they're really small. So we can't play like monopoly with like, bunch of little ones. Yeah, so I have to dust off like the chutes and ladders and yeah, like I forgotten how much fun these were.

AR: Yeah [laughing].

AP: But thank goodness for my mom never throwing anything away.

AR: Oh, yeah, I know how that is.

AP: How has the COVID-19 outbreak affected your community?

AR: Oh, man, that's a really interesting question. I think because I'm, I'm relatively new to the Gilbert area. And it's so, I would say it's almost like a polar opposite of how I grew up. So it's, it's no secret that L.A. is like, politically opposite of Gilbert, Arizona. And so I feel like, people here haven't really been taking it too serious. I feel like in L.A., as soon as the pandemic hit, everyone was kind of like following the rules and trying to social distance and wearing the masks and just all that, I think here in Arizona, or at least in Gilbert, it's taken people a lot longer to realize the severity of the pandemic. So it's been really hard, especially because I have a five year old who asks a lot of questions, and I try to be as honest as I can, with a five year old, I don't like to have her in a bubble, because that's not real world. And it's really hard for me to express the severity of a pandemic when she looks around and people aren't really doing what they're supposed to be doing. So I think that aspect of of my new community has been a little bit difficult is I feel like maybe I'm being a little extreme sometimes because I'm trying to follow the rules, and not many people around me are so that's been a little challenging.

AP: Yeah, I, I moved to Arizona, my parents are in the military, so we moved here when I was in high school. So I got to notice Arizona has more of a wild west.

AR: Yeah, thats a good way to put it.

AP: It's more, "You want to do what you wanna do." atmosphere.

AR: Yeah. Yeah.

AP: And I remember back in like March or April, one of the CDC or one of the experts whatever saying like, it's the hot weather that'll, that'll kill it. And Arizona was like, Oh, yeah, we're fine.

Don't worry. It's gonna be like, a million degrees, And then later on, like, well, maybe no, maybe not, like, Yeah, but Arizona, We're, they're kind of stubborn that way. I guess.

AR: I agree.

AP: It's not just you, no, I think I guess for better or worse.

AR: Yeah.

AP: And the next question you kind of touched on already, how are people around you responding to the covid 19 pandemic?

AR: Yeah, I feel like it's all over the place. I feel like there are some people who are very cooperative and understanding. But then there's some people who are just, they just don't get it or they don't care or they don't want to get it or they feel untouchable, maybe would be the right word, I don't think it's ignorance at this point, I think either people feel invincible, or they just don't care. So I think that's, that kind of sums up my, my community here in the wild west.

AP: And I think also a little bit of it, or at least like as far as like, coworkers, we're just been so inundated with it every day all day. COVID-19, wear your mask, sanitize! wear your mask!

AR: Right, right.

AP: Right. Might be a little bit of I don't know, compassion fatigue. Like,

AR: Yeah, we've been at it for so long and it hasn't gone anywhere.

AP: Yeah, if I hear COVID one more time. Yeah, that's gonna be the one that does it. So I have with you there. Like, it's not that people necessarily don't care some of them. But just out of the ability to empathize at this point.

AR: Yeah. I feel like we, um, we started our quarantine way too early. I think here in Arizona, we saw California going through the thick of it. And so we implemented our quarantine. And then we didn't get hit until two months later. So I just feel like by the time Arizona really got hit with COVID, and our numbers were spiking and skyrocketing, there is no way you can get people to quarantine themselves again. Well, I just think, yeah, no, I I don't know if I could have either. But it's just I think, just the politics of it. And that's kind of the unfortunate aspect of COVID. It's so politicized now, that people aren't really looking at it as it's a virus that can kill me, they're looking at it as well, the President is saying this, or the governor is saying this, or so and so is saying this, and I'm going to believe that over anyone else. And so that's kind of the frustrating part of it, too.

AP: Have you seen the people around you change their opinions, day to day activities, or relationships in response to the pandemic?

AR: I think the only aspects of that, that I've seen our people who were skeptics, and then lost somebody. I think there's one person in particular, in California that, again, super political, she was way republican all about, you know, the opinions of the president at this point, didn't wear masks, didn't social distance. And then her husband got COVID. Two weeks later, he passed away. And so, I think as far as the pandemic, and COVID goes, maybe not politics, but as far as the pandemic goes, I think she had to have a personal experience with the deadly aspect of COVID to actually realize that it's not fake. But I, I'm thankful that's the only example of that that I have.

AP: Let's see, Self isolation and flattening the curve have been two key ideas that have emerged during the pandemic, how have you, your family, friends and community responded to requests to self isolate and flatten the curve?

AR: Oh, man, I wish I had a better response to, to self isolation. But, I helped my parents move from California in March. And I think when COVID hit Arizona, I kind of figured, I've been seeing my parents every single day, I might as well just continue to see them every day. So it wasn't really like a quarantine self isolation in my home, it was more of a quarantine, periodically with my parents and their home too. And I feel like, in some aspects that helped with my mental health to have an outlet from the four walls of my home. But I think outside of my parents, we have been pretty isolated, and we haven't really, really done too much.

AP: In this question, you've kind of touched on a little bit earlier as well has COVID-19 changed your relationships with family, friends and community? In what ways?

AR: Yeah, I don't think it's changed my relationships. I think it's just changed the way that we execute or we interact. The relationships I think, because my closest friends are my cousins, it's just, I can't see them, but we zoom, so the relationships are still there. It's just different.

AP: Let's see, into the health section. Have you or anybody you know, gotten sick during the covid 19 outbreak? What has been your experience in responding to the sickness?

AR: So I actually know a lot of people who have been hit by COVID, my husband's best friend came to visit from L.A. before COVID was really bad in Arizona. And he brought it with him to Arizona. He didn't stay at our house, he stayed at his cousin's house. And so then that whole household got COVID. I know a couple people in L.A. who got COVID. I know three people who passed from COVID. And I think that kind of kept things in perspective for my family, because it was so close to us to just be careful and social distance and keep our circle very small. I think it's safe to say we haven't had anybody at our house after that one time, because, then my husband got sick, and he thought he had COVID. Thankfully, he tested negative for it. But it was

close enough, and scary enough, to be more strict in our own household as far as who we allow in and who we allow ourselves to be exposed to.

AP: Yeah, I haven't had anybody over to my house either.

AR: Yeah. The one time we did it proved to be a very bad choice.

AP: And we've had a bunch of people where I work get sick with it, so it kind of just, I mean, where I work, we were always about hand sanitizing, and wearing gloves and masks anyway, just because of where we were at, but then when this came in, you're just like, you know what, I like you, but yeah, stay over there. Yeah, we'll visit later.

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

AR: Oh, man, I think COVID-19 is affecting both. I've probably gained 19 pounds since COVID started. I know, I have a neighbor here, a friend, she used to go to the gym every single day, it was part of her daily routine. I'm so sorry, that was my dog. [laughing] That was, aww, since he wants to be seen [interviewees dog pops into view again], Here's Charlie.

AP: AWW, he's cute.

AR: Thank you.

AR: So, I feel like as far as, as physical health, not being able to go to the gym has affected a lot of people. Okay, Charlie, that's enough. [speaking to someone off camera] Kev, can you get the dog?

AR: And so I feel like that kind of goes hand in hand with mental health because I know a lot of people work out as a natural stress reliever. So I think just having the gyms closed or having to be that extra dedicated to a workout to where you're doing it from home. I think it's also become more challenging. But then I'm also of the mindset of where there's a will there's a way so if someone really wants to work out, I think you'll, you'll make it happen. I know my husband and I are one of the large group of people who have bought a lot of gym equipment when COVID hit. And it was mostly just wishful thinking because I like I said I'd gained weight. So I have not been using all that equipment. But he has. So I always feel like where there's a will there's a way but I do see how it's affected both people's mental health and physical health.

AR: I've kind of seen that too. Like even like if you go to the gym every day, like, it gets you out of the house, it's a different environment, fresh air. And then now that you can't, like it's kind of a snowball effect. Like you get the happy endorphins when you go and workout but you can't so you stay at home and you're a little bit, you're missing those happy endorphins that you're used to getting. And it just kind of snowballs, so then you...

AR: So then you grab a Twinkie, and that gives you happy endorphins to so... Oh story of my life.

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

AR: Oh, this is a good one. I remember asking Angelica this question when I interviewed her. I grew up in a very conservative religious home. I think it's really cultural to because I'm Hispanic. My family was always very conservative. But, when I grew up, and started having my own opinions and my own thoughts, I feel like maybe I wasn't so conservative. But I also realized that news outlets especially the really popular ones are very biased and they're very single minded and they're very one..., I just I don't appreciate either so I can I've just watched both. And it's funny because they are usually very opposite to one another and they're saying, one says the sky is pink, the other says it's purple. And so I just kind of find my own truth by watching both sides of the story.

AP: You have to watch like a bit and then pick out enough to get one coherent story.

AR: Yeah. So I usually do a little bit of CNN and then sprinkle it with a little bit of Fox News.

AP: Have your news sources changed during the course of the pandemic?

AR: Yes, and no, I feel like there's just so many different news outlets. I think CSPAN so far has been the best one that I found as far as neutrality goes. But I think just, the only ways that it's changed is that I'm more open to different news outlets, just because I get bored of, of just all the hate. That's spewed on like the really big outlets, because I'm not, I'm more about like, love and acceptance. And I feel like a hippie at heart most of the time,

AP: Let's just get along.

AR: Let's just get along. We can be different and believe different things. But like, let's respect each other and love each other. So I like to be informed, which is kind of the catch-22 of news is just being informed. But it's hard to watch the news these days, I think because it's so negative. But I try my best to stay informed and find the truth, I guess.

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

AR: Oh Lord, that's a loaded one, I think most of the issues that are important to me right now are being covered by the news. I think the problem with the coverage is the majority of the time, it's one sided. And I think that's the problem with it, because there are people who don't do their own research. And they just sit there and they watch the news and take it as 100% truth and then and then just roll with that. And that becomes their truth. And that almost becomes like ammo for their hate or their false information. So I think a lot of, a lot of issues are being talked about like Black Lives Matter. But I think in the aspect of the Black Lives Matter movement, I think there

should also be a discussion about law enforcement and how everyone is against bad officers. That doesn't mean all officers are bad.

AP: Yes... Some of them are fun.

AR: I know, I have a neighbor who is a police officer, he's one of our best friends. I do believe there is a such thing as systemic racism in this country. That doesn't mean that all white people are racist. I just think because of the extremes that news outlets choose to take to get a point their issue, I think there's a loss of humanity. Because we're all pointing fingers at each other, we forget that we're all human beings, and that there are bad apples across the board, in whichever community you want to look at. There are bad people, and we are all against those bad people. But it doesn't make that whole group bad.

AP: I think part of it is like the news, whatever side they're on either left or right, whatever. They've forgotten that life is neither one or the other. There's a whole range in the middle. And the way they're like structuring their articles, they're really not leaving any room for gray, like not white or black. Left, right, one or the other. There's a whole room in the middle and they're not really leaving any sort of opportunity. And that kind of gets lost and people forget.

AR: Yeah, it's I kind of, I wish, I mean, I understand the Black Lives Matter movement in bringing to light, this issue of racism that our country was founded on, but I also wish that maybe they would take an hour and talk about police enforcement partnerships that they've done or highlight more of, because I know Fox News just, again, polar opposites, Fox News does stories of like, police officers who are protesting with the Black Lives Matter movement. But then on the other side of that I can understand why the Black Lives Matter movement wants to just focus on the issue to try and get to a solution. It's just, it's just complicated. I think we're living in a really complicated time. And unfortunately, I feel like people don't do their own research and think for themselves anymore, they just sit in front of a TV and get spoon fed information. I think as history majors, or at least for me, I love to sit and research and, and wonder and ask, but I feel like the normal person just sits and a spoon fed information. And that's kind of adding fuel to the fire.

AP: I agree with that too.

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

AR: Oh, Lord. I don't think at this point, it's any secret, I am not a Republican. I do not agree with the Republican Party and their execution on trying to control COVID. I feel like the fact that the President negates science, I think is probably the number one problem. Being from California, I keep up on news from California and for the President to sit there and say that climate change is not real, and it's a forestation problem, I think is a spit in the face to, not just California, but the science community. And because our president is saying things like that, it

kind of trickles down, I think to every Republican state or Republican Representative, and that affects our everyday life. And so I don't think that enough has been done since the beginning of COVID. To help, just everybody, I just like I said, it's a mess. I think that's what it is. It's just a mess.

AP: Do you have any thoughts on how local, state, or federal leaders are responding to the crisis differently?

AR: I think with COVID, you can't win. I think there's no winning with COVID. I think, if you look at the Democratic states, and how tight they've been, I know California still has way more restrictions than we do here in Arizona. And I know people aren't happy with those restrictions. But then I feel like you talk to people in Arizona who wish that we had bigger restrictions, I just feel like, it doesn't matter what government does, at this point, people are going to be unhappy, either, either there's too many restrictions or not enough restrictions.

AP: Some people are not happy unless they have something to complain about.

AR: I mean, I think a lot of people have a lot of things to complain about right now.

AP: Well, they're just [laughing] ecstatic.

AP: Looking towards the future. Has your experience transformed how you think about your family, friends and community? In what ways?

AR: I think just, cherishing life, I think would be the biggest one, because I have seen the loss of COVID. Actually, one of my neighbors, I live in a cul-de-sac, so one of my neighbors lost her father to COVID. And it was very unexpected. So I think just realizing that one day, nobody knew what COVID was, and now the whole world knows what COVID is, just keeping that in perspective and realizing that we truly don't know what the future brings, and that we should cherish every day. And going back to what I've been saying just get along and just respect each other. And our differences, I think would be the biggest outcome that I, I would hope people get from this pandemic.

AP: How does the pandemic compared to other big events that have happened in your lifetime?

AR: Ooh, as far as like viruses go, I don't think I've lived through anything of this magnitude. I remember, like the bird flu and the swine flu. But I wouldn't compare that to this. So I don't think I have anything in my lifetime. I would say like the black plague, but obviously I didn't live through that. So I don't think there's anything comparable, as far as viruses go to COVID.

AP: Let's see, What can you imagine your life being like in a year?

AR: Oh man, hopefully with a different president and a whole different government structure, not different structure, just I think...

AP: Hopefully at least some who went to science class...

AR: Yes, someone who believes in science. Hopefully, yeah, someone who just believes in the laws of Newton, I don't know, I hope we're not dealing with COVID anymore a year from now. If there's a vaccine, I just thought of Kamala Harris, if there's a vaccine and Trump came up with it with Russia, I'm definitely not taking it. But if the scientists come up with the vaccine, I will gladly take it and hopefully, that improves our way of life and can give us back some kind of normalcy during our regular flu season. I just hope in every aspect of our society that we are not where we are right now.

AP: And then, the last question, to wrap it up, knowing what you know, now, what do you think that individuals, communities, or governments need to keep in mind for the future?

AR: Ooo, trust the CDC, listen to the doctors. But I think at the root of everything, I think we all need to remember that we're all human. We're all sharing this world. And I think just mutual respect for one another will go a long way. I wonder what our politicians would be behaving like if they all share that common sense of respect for one another.

AP: Good point.

AP: Okay. Well, thank you for letting me interview you for my project.

AR: Thank You.

AP: Let me go ahead and stop the recording, just to have it noted, it is 2:34pm in Arizona right now.

AP: Okay.