

TRANSCRIPT

Interviewee: Rosa Gomez

Interviewer: Bridget Maxwell

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Abstract:

Rosa Gomez is a third-year student at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. She/they are double majoring in journalism and political science with a minor in. Rosa shared her experiences on the pandemic, school, news, and media, as well as her thoughts and feelings on Covid-19. Her hometown is Minneapolis which allowed them to have two different perspectives on how these states dealt with the outbreak. Closing with why she got the vaccine and what she has learned during this period of their life.

Bridget Maxwell 0:03

Thank you for meeting with me today, Rosa. Today's date is Wednesday, December 1, it's 2021 5:30 pm. And I will give the floor to Rosa if you want to introduce yourself with your name, year in school, major, minor age, anything you feel is needed.

Rosa Gomez 0:34

Hi, my name is Rosa Gomez, I'm 20 years old. I'm a third-year at the University of Wisconsin, Eau Claire, studying political science and journalism with a minor in Spanish.

Bridget Maxwell 0:50

If you want to give a little bit of background on either your race or ethnicity and also if you want to share pronouns before we get started.

Rosa Gomez 1:00

Yeah, I use she they pronouns and I identify as Hispanic.

Bridget Maxwell 1:05

Wonderful, perfect. I'm kind of jumping and to kind of to give you, I guess, reference of the current, like statistics that's going on just for some reference in the United States. The cases right now are about 40 million, and the deaths total is 776,000. Roughly. And but 74.5% of people five and up, have at least one vaccination. So that's something I was actually kind of not expecting. But in Wisconsin, it's a lot lower. But with vaccinated like both, it's 59.5% Total confirmed deaths 9000 New confirmed cases 2000. So confirmed since one, like this was I checked this

today. Okay. So it's as current as I could get it. When you first heard of COVID, what were your initial thoughts? Because of the large number of deaths I just listed, it's crazy in comparison for now reflecting on it, but if you do remember, like your initial thoughts or feelings?

Rosa Gomez 2:35

When I first kind of started getting a handle on what COVID is, it's when I got sent home my freshman year. And even then, I don't think for myself or, or my friends around me that we had any idea of the scale that this pandemic would be, because hearing those numbers now, and a sad way I was sort of unfazed. Like we all I feel like are used to hearing about these enormous death rates because of this. Yeah, but if you would have had said those same numbers to me, my freshman year of college, I would have been blown out of the water.

Bridget Maxwell 3:10

Right. I feel like I grossly underestimated the significance of COVID-19. And honestly, a lot of us did, because we were very, we had a government

Rosa Gomez 3:25

That was like, and like, the only thing that I had to, like, somewhat compare it to was when like, Ebola was a thing, right? Where I was like, Nah, it's not going to come here. Like, it's not going to affect me. Like, it's a big bummer for everyone else. Like I gray eyes in that sense, but I was like, you know, like, I'll be okay.

Bridget Maxwell 3:45

Right? Because it was like a very, I kind of felt the same way as I thought I was going to be a very low number of cases. But then it's significant significantly does opposite of that. So clearly. Yeah, I think the only comparison that we've had in our lifetime is more obviously Ebola so we have nothing to nothing to compare with. But do you feel like you know, learning about it? Did you feel like your news, either locally, or kind of more nationally? Did you feel like the coverage was effectively and efficiently covering the pandemic or COVID-19? Or?

Rosa Gomez 4:34

I think so. Yeah, I feel like, now obviously, I feel like it's still covered daily, but it's not quite as like, extensive almost, I feel like there are more updates about vaccines, but like, what I remember when I was in quarantine was regardless of like, whatever news channel was on or what they were covering, like in the corner, they always had the like death toll and like confirmed cases. So even if you like, didn't want to know, you will know.

Bridget Maxwell 5:04

Yeah, it was kind of like a forced knowledge of it. Yeah, I definitely t as well. Do you think it was different from Minneapolis and Eau Claire? Because you're from Minneapolis?

Rosa Gomez 5:19

I think so. Yeah. Especially because, like it is a bigger city. But then also, once it hits summertime with the peak of the Black Lives Matter movement, like, I feel like news coverage was like rapidly changed and how they like, very quickly intersected the two was wood was different in Minneapolis, and it would be in Eau Claire.

Bridget Maxwell 5:42

Yeah. Was it slightly? I don't know, just in terms of, I guess, would you say was more like, politically charged? In news?

Rosa Gomez 5:59

I would say it depends, like, what outlet you are using, but I think the main sort of thing I kept seeing, which started in Minneapolis, but then very quickly swept across the nation was because of like, the scale of the protests and the demonstrations. Yeah. You know, we were masked but obvious. I was at a lot of them. We were masked, but a vaccine wasn't created yet. And like, well, you can try and be as safe as possible in this context, when you bring in things like, as the police response with like, like, pepper spray, and what's the other thing that videos like? Do you know what I'm talking about?

Bridget Maxwell 6:51

They would shoot rubber bullets.

Rosa Gomez 6:52

Yeah, that right? Like, yeah, so all of the things like income elation, will create like, like, if you get sprayed, for example, you're, you'd like to take your mask off. And you're like, No. And then you're, like, spit in your eyes or like, you start crying? Yeah. So there's a lot of instances where it just kind of became impossible, for there not to be an uptick in cases.

Bridget Maxwell 7:22

You mentioned that you were at a lot of the protests during what was a pandemic, I know that being from Rochester, Minnesota was like, I was kind of the news was relayed from Minneapolis to back there. And I know because of the pandemic, a lot of people wanted to go down and protest but didn't because of adding more numbers on the streets. But since you were there, I would love to hear kind of your perspective on dealing with a kind of a deadly virus, while also protesting for a kind of civil rights.

Rosa Gomez 7:58

Yeah, it was a very surreal experience. I'm not sure if that's the right word. But like, I'm very politically active. So I've been to like, lots of protests before that. But it was such a different experience. Because like, we all collectively, were there for the same cause. So in that sense, there was that community. But there was not like the same connection, I feel like because, like, we were spread apart, and we were masked and like, didn't want to interact with people outside of your circle. It wasn't like the same connection.

Bridget Maxwell 8:37

Right? Less togetherness.

Rosa Gomez 8:41

Which it's weird because we're all there for the same reason. Yeah. Like we kind of on a moral fundamental level are the same. But like, it's weird, not interacting with other people that are there.

Bridget Maxwell 8:56

Connecting with the people around you to create a stronger voice. Yeah, that's typically I feel like that is frustrating as someone who was like, who you were protesting that you can't make these, I guess more emotional connections. But did you feel like it lessened the movement at all? COVID Or was when you were out? And around? Did that like Did anyone mention it? Talk about it or were fearful of it.

Rosa Gomez 9:32

I think all of those emotions and feelings towards that were present. I think a lot of it depended on your situation. Personally, no one in my family is high risk or immune-compromised it was less scary than the prospect of catching it. But there are people that I knew that like wouldn't go at all. Or if they did go, they would have to, like stay separate from their family because like, they were more high risk, it was a much more vulnerable situation for them.

Bridget Maxwell 10:12

For sure. And I know you don't have any family whose hybrid so for you receiving the vaccine, was it for just, you know, personally, and was there any hesitation behind receiving it?

Rosa Gomez 10:28

I was not hesitant about any of the vaccines received. I've never like looked into what's in it, or, you know, whatever field my doctor gives me, is pretty much all the knowledge I have about it. Right? Just like it's just another one just like me. Yeah, like I don't want it and I don't want to like, be a carrier for those around me.

Bridget Maxwell 10:54

Now, yeah, that's, uh, I feel like that's a very big, like, not basic answer. But I feel like that's kind of standard, I was the same way.

Rosa Gomez 11:06

It's free. Like, why not? Why would you get it right on campus? I was like, there's no reason not to.

Bridget Maxwell 11:14

Nothing's ever free in America, like, take the vaccine.

Seriously. And then people argue that it's like, oh, it happened so fast. I don't trust it. I'm like, but this is that's because it's a global pandemic people everyone was worth. Everyone's working on it. Come on.

Rosa Gomez 11:34

Yeah. Like I understand, like suspicions, if you have like, some sort of underlying health conditions where you are very cautious of like, what you're putting in your body. Yes. But like, I know, I put stuff in my body on a daily that's bad for me, so why not get the vaccine.

Bridget Maxwell 11:56

I was like, Sign me up. Yeah. Put it Yep. I'll be try run. I don't just, you know, do what you got to do. But did you? I know because your target online is gone. We've dealt with kind of the same experience. But were you nervous about coming back this year? Because this is kind of like the first more official time we are staying on campus.

Rosa Gomez 12:32

Yeah, I was because none of my classes have a zoom option. So I know, I've had a couple of instances where I've been sick. Luckily, it's never been COVID. But you still have to wait for your results to get back. And it's really frustrating not being able to go to class. But then. So there's that whole aspect of just being annoyed. And like really inconvenience. But there's also the aspect of like, I have not taken an in-person test since freshman year. Yeah, I have now but it was like, it was so weak. Like, I had to turn parts of my brain back on that had been off for like, years, like, I don't know, and I find now that I am just so exhausted, like, just after going to class, because I'm not used to having to, like, interact with that many people anymore.

Bridget Maxwell 13:29

Right? It's kind of like, daunting, sometimes being like, Oh, my, there's just going to be so many people in one space, I'm going to have to, like socialize, because I've been deprived of that we all have for the past two years. I get the frustration with that.

Rosa Gomez 13:52

Zoom should have higher accessibility. Two of my roommates, like, for example, have a chronic illness. Like there a chronic illness where they like, can't make it to class, but they're like, have to find a way because Yeah, what else are they supposed to do? Or I know for myself, I from people I've talked to I don't think it's the same for everyone. But a lot of my professors have said that, like, even if you're sick, it's not an excused absence.

Bridget Maxwell 14:24

Yeah, if you get Covid it is your fault essentially.

Rosa Gomez 14:33

I know and I'm like, what are you expect me to do? I'm aggravated and I like I yeah, I wear my mask and I like to do my best but at the end of the day, I've learned around I may not be doing my best.

Bridget Maxwell 14:45

Like you can still get COVID while being vaccinated. It's going to be less aggressive babies will get it. So something to be mindful of I guess we're talking about schools and accessibility. But do you think Eau Claire, as a university is being efficient and or effective with flattening the curve? As a campus, I suppose.

Rosa Gomez 15:25

I think there's a lot of different aspects that go into it when you have. I know, we're not like a ginormous school, but like, you're still having, like, 1000s of people on the campus like, it's difficult. I think they could probably do better at enforcing masks. In Davis I see people walking around without a mask all the time, right? Or like walking to class with that one, and it just makes me nervous. Or like they could do better in the sense that they could offer a zoom option, you know.

Bridget Maxwell 16:02

t's frustrating having to be like, like, you don't want to be just like, policing people being like, put your mask up. But also, it's like, yeah, I'm going to because it's frustrating when I'm trying to like, just get a banana from Davies. And there's just a little group with their masks down over their face, like on their chin like you mentioned.

Rosa Gomez 16:34

Another thing I found is I've gone to get tested twice. And the testing site upon hilltop. I was convinced I was going to get COVID from just being up there. While inline no one was social

distancing. And it's open to the community, which I understand. But I'm also like, it made me worried because there were like, kids and kids are gross. They have a lot of germs.

Bridget Maxwell 17:01

Yeah. And a lot of them can't get the VAX.

Rosa Gomez 17:05

Yep, there's that too. Or three? Yeah, they're just gross. Exactly.

Their mask would be under their chin or below their nose, or they'd have liked the fake Gator masks. And there are people there that are coming because they have symptoms. And you have like a face mask on and you're coughing everywhere. It was just so gross.

Bridget Maxwell 17:29

Yeah, I feel like the enforcement of mass, because it's like it's still going on. Just it's nothing new. Just put her up. So hard. I don't know, I do feel like you've kind of with Eau Claire in general, have you gained more of a respect for this city like, kind of policies and laws to enforce? Or I guess, to kind of flatten the curve, essentially, sort of like in a larger scheme?

Rosa Gomez 18:05

I mean, I think I've been, I've been simultaneously impressed by certain aspects, but also like severely disappointed and other aspects. Because, like, I guess this is true for like, anywhere you go, there's always going to be people who like will follow the rules and will do their best and understand the like. The significance and importance of like, what we should be doing to help stop the spread and flatten the curve. And yeah, go health care workers. But then there's also like the people who are just like, No, you're infringing on my rights. Like, I'm not going to wear one. I'm not going to get a vaccine, which I think there is a lot both here.

Bridget Maxwell 18:51

Yeah. There's, no in-between you know, Claire, it's either one or the other. Did I don't know, I guess, because of this split divide of I don't know, politics with COVID. Has it changed any of, your interpersonal relationships, or kind of the way you view certain people?

Rosa Gomez 19:22

I have always been a pretty political person. So there are different there are a lot of different aspects where I have things where if I'm not in agreement with people about certain things, they generally are not in my life, because we don't have the same morals. Um, but this has played a big part too, because like at this point, it's like, I feel like it's a no-brainer. Like there's so many resources and like information that's just thrown at you constantly, but there's just like, no reason for you too, like, still be anti-Vax and like still be anti-mask.

Bridget Maxwell 20:07

I don't know. It's just they're waiting for like the Facebook sources that specifically they find to back third invalid point, you know, just kind of searching to find what they want.

Rosa Gomez 20:22

I feel like their arguments just got very old, very fast, where I feel like, for a lot of like other social issues where I still don't like I wouldn't excuse someone's ignorance, it's a little bit more understandable why there would be some confusion where like this is talked about all the time. Like at this point, I'm like, what?

Bridget Maxwell 20:47

There's no room for research like if it's out there, it's all that research she needs to do there. He did it. And that's why there's the vaccine, they already did it. What are you, Sally from Pennsylvania going to do? That the CDC didn't already check off their list, you know? I don't know. And I feel like yeah, I don't know. It's hard to have relationships where your morals are different. That's completely different. That's not like politically versus like, political friends. Like you just there's a fine line. To find that. Yeah. I feel like off of that, did you gain kind of any, anything from this experience, and in terms of either if you've just learned more about yourself, or more about how important I guess, having a voice or you know, what you've learned during the Black Lives Matter movement with a combination of, yeah, really kind of any?

Rosa Gomez 21:53

I learned a lot. Let's see how to sum this up in words. I would say one of the main things that come to mind is how much more important, it has become, for me to surround myself with people who have the same beliefs as me. Because like, before all this while I wouldn't like necessarily to hang out with like conservatives, for example, I would be a little bit more tolerant of it, or I would be fine hanging out with people who would then hang out with these people that I don't think are great people. And I feel like now at this point, I'm just like, if you are not advocating for like, social justice, or for like human rights, like whatever it may be, like, I just don't want to be around you. Like, you don't have to be some like social justice warrior. You don't need to be a big activist. But if you just like using to be a good person, you have to care about other people.

Bridget Maxwell 23:08

It's just the bare minimum, like at least just go out and vote for the right things. And there are right and wrong things.

Rosa Gomez 23:15

Yeah. Yeah. But I don't know. I think something a lot of us have also gained is just as cheesy as it sounds, we all like got to know ourselves a little bit better. Because when you're locked inside in several months, like, what else do you have to do besides a little self-growth?

Bridget Maxwell 23:38

Was there anything significant, I guess, during that duration of time?

Rosa Gomez 23:47

Yeah, I think I just became a lot more confident in myself. And being more using more of my voice to advocate for things that I believe in and get, like, just more involved with organizations and causes that work for things that I'm passionate about.

Bridget Maxwell 24:07

Okay. I think that's a wonderful thing, Rosa, that you've learned. With that, did you kind of did your relationships grow? Get stronger? Dissolved?

Rosa Gomez 24:23

Yeah, I had some that dissolved. Because I think for myself, at least, when we were just in the height of everything that was going on, I just kind of became very aware of how unfulfilling some relationships were.

I felt like I wasn't becoming a better person when I was with them. Like quite the opposite. I felt like I wasn't, I wasn't being me. And that sense, some of those relationships dissolved because I was like, Hey, I don't think we believe in the same things. On the other hand, those that I have in my life or are new to my life that is involved in some of the same things that I am or believe a lot of the same things, I feel like those relationships are a lot stronger. Because I feel like we all have this somewhat shared experience from COVID. And from just everything that we've witnessed over the last year that we can all connect and just have somewhat of a community because of that.

Bridget Maxwell 25:30

Yeah. That's really, that's cool. I like that. Great answer. Wrapping up here on kind of just closing thoughts. Thank you again for meeting with me. I found your perspective, very fascinating. And it's interesting hearing someone else's viewpoint on kind of their initial thoughts on COVID. And how similar a lot of kind of ideas we all it. Yeah, I'm seeing, you know, a lot of relation between everyone, I guess, does that make sense?

Rosa Gomez 26:18

No. Yeah, I think it's interesting because I feel like generally on a surface level, everything we experienced was the same. But then like, once you kind of dive in on a more personal level, you're like, Whoa, branches off and we all went through some stuff here.

Bridget Maxwell 26:31

Yeah. Oh, I think we can all agree. We all went through it.

Rosa Gomez 26:37

Oh, yeah. One unit.

Bridget Maxwell 26:39

Do you have any closing thoughts or statements or anything else you feel is important to share?

Rosa Gomez 26:53

Get vaccinated. Get your booster. And wear a mask.

Bridget Maxwell 26:59

Thank you for meeting with me. Appreciate it.

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