

Transcript of Interview with Emma Clifford by Pearl Rincon

Interviewee: Emma Clifford

Interviewer: Pearl Rincon

Date: 09/18/2020

Location (Interviewee): Boston, Massachusetts

Location (Interviewer): Boston, Massachusetts

Transcriber: Clinton Roberts

Abstract: [curator] Pearl Rincon interviews Emma Clifford and asks them about experience of quarantining during the pandemic. Emma Clifford also speaks about how well she thinks the pandemic was handled by the state governments as well as the federal government. [from item description] I am interviewing Emma Clifford from my HIST1215 class at Northeastern University on pandemics. Emma is from New Jersey so I asked about life and how she adapted to the Covid-19 pandemic. [course info added to description] Heather Streets-Salter, Professor at Northeastern University

Pearl Rincon 0:01

Hello, my name is Pearl Rincon, and I will be interviewing Emma Clifford. Emma, can you say the date and time and give your consent, please?

Emma Clifford 0:09

I consent to being interviewed for the COVID-19 Archive Project. It is currently 2:01 on September 18, 2020.

Pearl Rincon 0:18

Okay, great. So starting off, what was your last day of school? And how long were you originally meant to be out of school for?

Emma Clifford 0:26

My last day of school was Friday, March 13. And originally, the plan was to come back after spring break, which was April 20.

Pearl Rincon 0:36

Yeah, so does that mean that like, I know a lot of people had the impression that COVID wasn't gonna last very long. Did you think that or?

Emma Clifford 0:45

Um, yeah, actually, in the time, a lot of the schools around us decided that they were just going to close for one week. So me and my classmates were like, "Oh, they're, they're, they're being too precautionous. We're not going to need all this time. Why do we have a month off and all the other schools are only taking a week off?"

Pearl Rincon 1:04

Yeah. And then, well, once we all realized that school in person was no longer going to be a thing, how was your adjustment to online learning?

Emma Clifford 1:15

Well, I go to like, an all girls, small, private school. So my adjustment to online learning was pretty easy, just because our class sizes were very small. And we had already developed pretty close relationships with our teachers. So it was easier to get the help that we needed and easier to be in classes. Also, like, a feature about my high school was that we only had four classes a day, that were like an hour and a half long. So it was really easy to track assignments and things like that, just because I didn't have to go to like six or seven or eight classes in one day.

Pearl Rincon 1:52

Yeah. And then what aspects of your school specifically made it easy or difficult, besides just those four classes a day?

Emma Clifford 1:59

Um, our school was also very like hands on, and they really wanted to guide us in making a simple transition. Also like, classmates came together a lot. Our school had something called 'peer groups,' where seniors would mentor groups of freshmen, and I was a peer leader. So one of the responsibilities I had to take on was doing, like, weekly meetings with my peer group so they can get adjusted more simply. So there was just like, a lot of help from around us.

Pearl Rincon 2:33

Yeah. So now let's talk about your family situation, or like, how did that dynamic change since everyone was all quarantined together?

Emma Clifford 2:44

Mm hmm. Well, I have two siblings, one twin sister, and then a brother who came home from college, he was at University of Rochester, and he came home from college, and he brought his girlfriend with him for two months. Because she was- she's international, so she couldn't go home, obviously. So that kind of put a strain on our family relationship just because my sister and I didn't really get along with his girlfriend. But besides that, like my family didn't really have a lot of family dinners before quarantine just because we all played winter sports. So it like, completely changed how much we saw each other and like, really transformed our family dynamic a lot. A lot of families said there was like, increased fighting, but I think it was totally the opposite. We all got like a lot closer after that, which was nice.

Pearl Rincon 3:41

That's awesome. You've told me you're from New Jersey? Is there anything New Jersey specific that also has to do with COVID-19?

Emma Clifford 3:49

Yeah, I'm from Northern New Jersey. Um, so a lot of- we were definitely the most hard hit area region of New Jersey just because of our close proximity to New York City. So because there are a lot of cases by us, a lot of people left northern Jersey to either go to their beach houses down the shore or their beach houses on Long Island, which were regions that were hit a little bit easier. So I quarantined most of the time on Long Island. However, that posed a big problem because a lot of people were doing the same thing and leaving hardly hit regions to go to more safe regions, however, that with them, they brought a lot of cases, so where I was on Long Island, which was Suffolk County actually turned out to be one of the most concentrated parts of the COVID pandemic.

Pearl Rincon 4:51

I see. How do you feel about how the pandemic was handled on both your state level with your governor and then also on the federal level with the current presidential administration and is there anything that you'd like to see change?

Emma Clifford 5:05

Sure, I think because I spent quarantine either in New Jersey or New York, both Cuomo and Murphy, I think have been great leaders in the COVID pandemic; they both took precautions pretty early. And I think they're both taking steps to continue safely reopening. Whereas we've seen a lot of other places like Florida, they're taking reopening really quickly, which has increased cases. However, on the federal level, I'm very disappointed in our leadership. Especially when like the recent interviews that have come out where President Trump has been saying, he knew how- he knew how dangerous it was, he just wanted to downplay it. So it didn't cause panic. I think he has interests other than public health safety that are in the forefront of his mind that I think is really disregarding human lives. So I'm really disappointed on the federal level of our handling.

Pearl Rincon 6:06

Yeah, that totally makes sense. And clearly, you're at Northeastern now, but how did COVID affect your college decision making process?

Emma Clifford 6:14

Sure, I was actually choosing between, because of COVID, well, I knew I want to come to Northeastern, but because of COVID, I was really considering going to my state school, Rutgers, just because of how much cheaper it would be, especially if all my classes were going to be online. So I ultimately made the decision to come to Northeastern because when I came, I was under the impression my classes were not going to be online. They're online now. But I think I still made the right choice.

Pearl Rincon 6:45

Yeah. And then one more final question. How do you think your first year of college is going to play out during a pandemic?

Emma Clifford 6:52

I think my first year of college looks a lot different than what I thought it would. However, I think we're all working through it. I think Northeastern is doing a great job. I'm actually really grateful to be tested so often it kind of eases my nerves. So um, it's different than I thought, but I'm still enjoying it.

Pearl Rincon 7:10

Great. Thanks for talking.

Emma Clifford 7:11

Yeah. Thank you for having me.