

Transcript of Oral History Interview with Nicki Ribakoff

Interviewee: Nicki Ribakoff

Interviewer: Daniela Lin

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Abstract: This is Nicki Ribakoff sharing her story about how Covid-19 impacted her life, specifically her last few months of being a high school senior. She talks about multiple experiences including transitioning to online school, being responsible for getting groceries for her family, and maintaining relationships with her friends.

Daniela Lin 00:00

Hi, my name is Daniela Lin, and I'm interviewing Nicki Ribakoff. It is September 18, 2020 and it is currently 5:03pm. Do you give consent to be interviewed for the COVID-19 archive project?

Nicki Ribakoff 00:15

Yes, I give consent.

Daniela Lin 00:17

Okay, so, Nicki, what was your experience when COVID-19 started to appear in the media, and when things started to shut down?

Nicki Ribakoff 00:25

My high school was 40% boarding in the Upper School, so, we got a lot of international students. So, my first-time hearing about COVID was when a girl from near where the outbreak originally happened shared the experience as a current event in my biology class, it was my first-time hearing of COVID. But when cases started to appear, in my area, it was mainly close to my spring break. So, I got out of school on March 5, which was a Thursday, and then I left for my senior spring break to Montreal on that Friday, and so we didn't really hear about it until we had gone to New Hampshire and the moms were very scared. So, they said, pull over, we need to talk to you because we were in separate cars. So, we pulled over at a gas station, and the moms explained to us that there were cases in Wellesley and that they were scared that we wouldn't be able to pass the border, or that we would get stuck there if, and couldn't return. So, they made the executive decision that one of the moms had a friend who had a house that we could stay at, in New Hampshire. So, we stayed in New Hampshire for the night, to evaluate the

situation and to see if anything got really worse and then when it didn't, we went to Montreal the next day and then it wasn't until we returned from Montreal, four or five days later that things really started to shut down and realized that this was a bigger issue, and it wasn't just going to go away.

Daniela Lin 01:58

Okay, so what was your last day of school? And did you know that it was your last day of school?

Nicki Ribakoff 02:04

So, my last day of school was that Thursday, March 5, 2020, I didn't know it was my last day of school, we all kind of thought that we would be going back after spring break. So, we rushed to leave and we, you know, didn't think much of it. And then later on, when we realized that we weren't, really weren't going back, that's when we all wish that we had taken you know, 5, 10 more minutes really said goodbye, and you know, really appreciate that we could still all be together in one place because we weren't going to be able to do that, again, as we later realized.

Daniela Lin 02:39

Okay, so, what were your experiences throughout quarantine?

Nicki Ribakoff 02:43

In the beginning of quarantine, we could only leave our houses to do grocery shopping and we would only do that, you know, once every week or once every two weeks. And I was the one who mainly did the grocery shopping because my older sister who had to come back from studying abroad that she doesn't have her driver's license, so I do, so I had to drive to the grocery store and do all of that. And then, you know, for COVID and then also just, you know, our peace of mind, we wiped everything down before we put it away and then we made sure that we wore gloves in the supermarket in addition to the mask. And you know, we changed our clothes when we came back into our house from outside because we didn't know if the virus could stick to clothing if it could. And then towards the end of quarantine. I had a few socially distance lunches with friends, one of my best friends and I—I would pick up food on the way to her house and I would sit in her driveway and she would sit on her front porch and we would have a socially distance lunch.

Daniela Lin 03:45

Okay, so, you mentioned that you were able to maintain relationship with this one friend. But overall, how did COVID impact your relationships with your friends and have missing out on the last few months of high school and graduation?

Nicki Ribakoff 04:00

Well, my high school is very tradition oriented. We have class rings that I'm wearing right now. So, your junior flips your ring at your graduation we couldn't do that which is very sad. So, I met up with mine later this summer and she did flip my ring because my school is called Dana Hall and there's a "DH" on the ring. So, when her students the "DH" faces you and then when you graduate, the ring flips and the "DH" faces out so that you know when you read it you can read that it says "DH" instead of it being backwards to you or other people. My other friendships were really good. I texted a lot of people I also did socially distance lunches with other people. But that one friend Her name is Julia. We did lunches almost every week. So, I still did keep in contact with my friends and I'm still in contact with my friends, but it was just not like one instance that I think of.

Daniela Lin 04:54

So, did you end up having any sort of ceremony for graduation or like a prom with just your friends?

Nicki Ribakoff 05:01

So, my graduation was a pre-recorded video on YouTube that was released at a certain time. And I wore a white dress. And so, my school didn't do cap and gowns, we did a white dress and you got a flower crown. And so, I wore that in my dad's office because he had a Apple TV that we could connect to and stream the ceremony on that. And we did a Zoom with my brother and my sister-in-law and my nieces and nephews because they live in LA. So obviously, they couldn't be there and my aunts and uncles and my grandparents who also couldn't be there, we had everyone on Zoom. And then we also had the graduation there. So, we were almost like we were all in one room but still virtual. And then later that day, we went to my high school because it was a 30 to 45-minute drive from my house and we took pictures there, still in my white dress and my flower crown and everyone was all dressed up and I had my diploma.

Daniela Lin 06:04

Okay, thank you.