

## **Transcript of Interview with Collett Hall by Ashley R. Tibollo**

**Interviewee:** Collett Hall

**Interviewer:** Ashley R. Tibollo

**Date:** 07/08/2021

**Location (Interviewee):** Williamsville, New York

**Location (Interviewer):**

**Abstract:** Collett Hall talks about her fears about her daughter getting the virus, her system for obtaining groceries, and her experiences working as a special education teacher.

**Ashley R. Tibollo 0:03**

Okay, we are recording. My name is Ashley Tibollo. I'm here with Collett Hall. The date is July 8, 2021. The time is 1:22pm. We are in Collett's house. Collett, I want to briefly review the informed consent and deed of gift agreement with you. The COVID-19 Oral History Project is a rapid response oral history focused on archiving the lived experience of the COVID-19 epidemic. We have designed this project so that professional researchers and the broader public can create and upload their oral histories to our open access and open source database. This study will help us collect narratives and understandings about COVID-19 as well as help us better understand the impacts of the pandemic over time. The recordings, demographic information, and the verbatim transcripts will be deposited in the Journal of the Plague Year, a COVID-19 Archive and the Indiana University Library System for the use of researchers and the general public. Do you have any questions about the project that I can answer?

**Collett Hall 1:17**

No.

**Ashley R. Tibollo 1:18**

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part or you may leave this study at any time. Leaving the study will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. Your decision whether or not to participate in this study will not affect your current or future relationship with Indiana University, IUPUI, or the IUPIU Arts and Humanities Institute. Participating in this project means that your interview will be recorded in digital, video, and/or audio format and may be transcribed. The recordings and possible transcriptions of my interview copies or any supplementary documents or additional photos that you wish to share and the informed consent and deed of gift may be deposited in the Journal of the Plague Year, a COVID-19 Archive in the Indiana University Library System and will be available to both researchers and the general public. Your name and other means of identification will not be confidential. Do you have any questions?

**Collett Hall 2:20**

No.

**Ashley R. Tibollo** 2:21

Okay, do you verbally consent that you agree that your interview will be made available to the public immediately?

**Collett Hall** 2:28

Yes.

**Ashley R. Tibollo** 2:31

Wonderful. Thank you. Okay, so can you please state your name?

**Collett Hall** 2:49

Collett Hall.

**Ashley R. Tibollo** 2:52

Okay, and what are like the primary things you do on a day-to-day basis, for example, your job, extracurricular activities, etc.

**Collett Hall** 3:04

Right now, the only thing I do is go to work. I'm a special ed teacher in North Tonawanda, and for extracurriculars, I don't do anything. I don't, um, right now, we're not having our daughter do activities. So we just kind of hang out around the house.

**Ashley R. Tibollo** 3:26

Are you not having her do activities because of the pandemic?

**Collett Hall** 3:30

Yes. We're still not sure how comfortable we are with her interacting with children that we're not familiar with or their families.

**Ashley R. Tibollo** 3:39

And what are your concerns there?

**Collett Hall** 3:43

My biggest concern, I guess, is that the parents of the children that she's playing with aren't vaccinated and aren't taking proper precautions when they're in the community so she could potentially pick it up, mask or no mask, especially since they dropped the mask mandate for kids. Which is nice when she's out on the playground and with familiar people, but still a little scary.

**Ashley R. Tibollo** 4:07

And where do you live that this is happening?

**Collett Hall** 4:11

Right now? We're, we live in Williamsville, New York.

**Ashley R. Tibollo** 4:15

That's outside of Buffalo, yes?

**Collett Hall** 4:17

Yes.

**Ashley R. Tibollo** 4:17

Yes, so a cute little suburb.

**Collett Hall** 4:21

Yes.

**Ashley R. Tibollo** 4:21

So when you first learned about COVID-19, you know, back in probably March of last year, what were your thoughts about it, and have they changed since then?

**Collett Hall** 4:33

Oh, for sure, my thoughts have changed. In the beginning, I think I was just afraid of everything. We didn't know how it transmitted. We didn't know how fast or how serious it could be. Thankfully, they said pretty quickly that children are less affected. I think that's my number one concern through this whole thing. I did tell a lot of people that if they didn't have kids, they probably wouldn't have been so scared. But I guess having that extra responsibility, it was pretty crazy. We didn't leave the house or go anywhere. We couldn't go to the playground. We didn't, we really didn't leave our house or see friends or even our family. I didn't see my parents for two or three weeks, we were so nervous about it. And then we needed food, so we would order online, which was new, and then I would have to go pick it up. And I would wear gloves and a mask and bring Lysol and wipes. And then I asked the people to not even put it in my car. I left my car closed and had them put it on the ground. Because I was afraid of them like, coughing in my car, and I would wipe everything down. But eventually, we got to see our friends and our family. And we just kept distant, and then now I, I know, it's still a risk, and I'm still very nervous about it, but I think going to work every day has kind of just been like, you have to keep going like, you can't live in a scary little bubble forever.

**Ashley R. Tibollo** 6:08

And speaking of work, you said you're a teacher, yes?

**Collett Hall** 6:10

Yes.

**Ashley R. Tibollo** 6:12

What grade do you teach?

**Collett Hall** 6:14

Right now I'm teaching fifth grade. And I'm a special ed teacher, but I am a consultant teacher, so I'm in a classroom with a gen ed teacher. Also with gen ed students and special ed students mixed.

**Ashley R. Tibollo** 6:26

And how has COVID-19 affected your job?

**Collett Hall** 6:33

It's been bonkers this year, to say the least. I think I'm pretty lucky that I am the special ed teacher in there. So I'm more of like the support for the students. I'm there to like, modify and accommodate and help the gen ed teacher and all the students, so I was not directly responsible for creating curriculum and figuring out how to implement and transpire, how do you say, you know, get it to the kids at home, not transport, I'm not transporting it, but like to figure out how to get to the kids that either chose to be full remote or it wasn't their day in school, they had to, we had to figure out how to get them their academic curriculum. But that wasn't really my general goal, that was pretty much on the gen ed teacher, so I was there to help them. But so that was nice that I didn't have to worry about that. But it's been a bonkers year, like kids didn't see each other's faces. I didn't know what kids looked like until like, the second or third week of school because everyone had their masks on. So it totally changed like teaching. I'm like a close teacher. I like to like, come in and like be like, 'Hey, what's up?' Or, you know, high five or pat on the back. You couldn't do any of that. It's so weird.

**Ashley R. Tibollo** 7:55

And so you mentioned that there were some kids in remote, some kids in the classroom for certain days. Did you have a hybrid model or what did, what did that look like? What were the options available?

**Collett Hall** 8:10

So yes, it was, it was actually both. So some other teachers in other districts only had to do one or the other, but my district decided to do that one teacher was going to do both. So our class, our specific class list could either come based on the alphabet, Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, or like log in from home, Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, and the classroom teacher, my gen ed teacher was responsible for all those students all the time, so. And there was not really an option for the remote kids to ever come back. And none of them ever did, even in June, but then thankfully, the special ed kids got to come back four days a week starting in October. And in May, the gen ed students got to come back four days a week too. So by the end of May, our entire class that could come in the building, did get to come in the building and all be together.

**Ashley R. Tibollo** 9:11

And what kind of safety precautions did, did you guys have to take in the classroom to accommodate that?

**Collett Hall** 9:19

All the desks had to be at least six feet apart. You had to wear a mask all the time. Every time the students left us their space, the desks and chairs were cleaned. In the hallway, we had to stay separated. In the cafeteria, they had to stay separated and all face the same direction. That was really hard too, to like not let them like have fun at lunch like the only time that they got. That all materials were wiped down. Like, if a kid needed a pencil, first you had to like sanitize your hands, then get like a wipe, wipe off the pencil, and give the kid their supplies like because everything was, and we stayed really far apart, even as teachers, like we didn't get like near the students very much.

**Ashley R. Tibollo** 10:08

So did you feel safe on a day-to-day basis?

**Collett Hall** 10:11

I did. Yes, there was, there was hard sometimes in the beginning because some students either weren't familiar with wearing masks, or they weren't, like their parents weren't as strict as I think I was. So they would wear them under their nose, and I wanted to help them, but every time I went over, I'd be like, "Cover your nose, cover your nose, I can't help you unless your nose is covered." But then thankfully, in January, I was able to get vaccinated. And that really, that really made me feel a lot more comfortable going to work. But like I said, after being there for however many months, September, October, November, you just go, you're going every day, you just can't, you know, it was less afraid, come like December than I was in September.

**Ashley R. Tibollo** 10:57

You mentioned that some of the students came from families who have been possibly less strict about precautions and PPE and things like that. How do you feel in, in general, that the community around you has responded to the COVID-19 pandemic?

**Collett Hall** 11:22

Um, so I would say my personal community I, I want to say because my community they did, they did a better job, like in Williamsville, where I actually live, I think, I do see a lot more families at the playground wearing masks when we still had to. I think that they really supported. In the school, in the district that I teach in, I don't think it was taken quite as seriously. But, I mean, everyone has their way of doing things, so, but I do appreciate that my daughter's school was very safe, and I always felt comfortable sending her.

**Ashley R. Tibollo** 12:06

Have you or anybody you know gotten sick during the COVID-19 outbreak?

**Collett Hall** 12:12

No, thank goodness, I don't know anybody personally.

**Ashley R. Tibollo** 12:16

That's good.

**Collett Hall** 12:17

It is very good. Somehow we've made it this far. I think that also gives me hope for moving forward.

**Ashley R. Tibollo** 12:23

And during the pandemic, what have been sort of your primary sources for news?

**Collett Hall** 12:30

Um, it sounds really awful, but I would say my husband, I get all my information from him. But he, you know, CNN and Dr. Fauci, he's been pretty strong in leading the way. I don't look to Facebook. I don't look at social media. I, I try and stay as, you know, science and research based as possible when making my decisions and deciding what I'm comfortable with and what I want to follow.

**Ashley R. Tibollo** 13:04

And do you have any thoughts about how local, state, or federal leaders are, are responding or have responded to the crisis differently?

**Collett Hall** 13:15

For as much slack as Cuomo gets for everything else, I do appreciate that he locked us down when he did, and he stayed strict and enforced a lot of things because I think that's paying off now. I'm still, because it's just me, and I'm just a normal person, I'm not really sure why they can't make it mandatory for everyone, so that I don't have to worry about my kid, right? You know, getting sick out and about in the community, but I guess I'm very thankful that we were so strict for so long so that we could start doing things and be a little less worried.

**Ashley R. Tibollo** 13:59

And has your experience transformed in any way how you think about your family, friends, or community?

**Collett Hall** 14:08

I guess I'm just really grateful that I did have like a nice close knit group of friends to rely on, and I mean, yeah, you value like what you have so much more, right? And you're very thankful. I'm very thankful that I didn't lose anybody and that my family stayed safe. But I enjoyed like the quietness of like, always just being like, no, we literally don't have anything to do like, what are you girls doing and whose backyard are we hanging out in? And I appreciate roofs on patios and heated blankets, more than ever.

**Ashley R. Tibollo** 14:44

I hear you there. And, okay, the last question is having lived through this pandemic and knowing what you know now, what do you think could or should be done in the future if something like this were to happen again?

**Collett Hall** 15:10

Again, I mean, I'm just like a civilian so apparently this why they don't ask me in the beginning, but I feel like it should be taken seriously. I don't think that it should be something that they say will pass in a week or a month. I do think borders should be shut down sooner. Travel should be restricted and to learn from us and just know like, if we shut things down, and we stay serious, we can overcome it, and hopefully get through it a lot faster than we did this time.

**Ashley R. Tibollo** 15:42

Well, thank you so much, Collett, for your time and your contribution to the archive.

**Collett Hall** 15:46

Thank you.