

**Interviewee:** Emma Garcia

**Interviewer:** Chris Twing

**Date:** 07/09/2020

**Location (Interviewee):** Redondo Beach, California

**Location (Interviewer):** Leander, Texas

**Transcriber:** Sally Velez

**Abstract:**

Emma Garcia is a native of California and is attending a graduate program at Arizona State University online, seeking a master's degree in history. As part of her studies she is working on the Journal of the Plague Year digital archive. The very archive this oral history interview was conducted for and included within. Living with her boyfriend, five months into the pandemic, she explains how life with coronavirus changed her daily routines, relationships with family and friends, where she gets her news, and what she worries and fears the most.

**EG 00:02**

You should have the ability to record

**CT 00:05**

It worked.

**EG 00:06**

I hope you can't hear the dog. Stop.

**CT 00:15**

People have animals, it's okay.

**EG 00:18**

My name is dogs bark a lot.

**CT 00:22**

Okay, so I am Chris Twing, and I will be interviewing...

**EG 00:27**

Emma Garcia.

**CT 00:29**

Today is Thursday, July 9, two o'clock in central time where I am and noon, where...

**EG 00:36**

Emma.

**CT 00:37**

In California. We're each at our homes. I'm in Texas. Again. She's in California and we're conducting this oral interview over zoom. Um, I'm just going to ask you some questions and take notes as we go a little bit. And we're gonna go for about 20 to 30 minutes. And we'll just stop, then, you know, we'll stop in an easy place. But if we don't get to all the questions. Fine, so, as we said, we've got the date and the time. So and again, your name is...

**EG 01:13**

Emma Garcia.

**CT 01:13**

Can you tell me about your normal day what you do on a daily basis?

**EG 01:21**

Generally wake up, try to keep some sort of routine. Make some coffee, start doing schoolwork, most of the time. Yeah, and then I do that all day until night. And I watch Netflix. It's not very exciting.

**CT 01:50**

So what besides your kind of wake up routine? What are you doing in a typical day? Are you at work? Are you at school? Are you staying home, leaving the house?

**EG 02:02**

Yeah, I'm basically just doing school online all day. I don't think I've left the house and a month now. Yeah. I keep meaning to go for a walk. But then I just don't. Scary out there.

**CT 02:22**

Okay, and I know you live in California, tell me again, what town and kind of what part of the state that's in and what it's like to live there.

**EG 02:30**

It's Redondo Beach, it's kind of slightly south of Los Angeles proper. It's part of Los Angeles County. It's really close to the beach. So I mean, by the name. I live in the Riviera, which is a pretty small kind of community. It's, it's pretty friendly. It's been very quiet with without all the people coming in from, you know, the more eastern part of the county to go to the beach, like they usually do in the summer. But now that they can't really do that it's really quiet.

**CT 03:19**

And when you first learned about COVID What were your thoughts and have they changed?

**EG 03:27**

I think it was back in February around Valentine's Day when they first started reporting it because I remember we were talking about it at dinner. Everywhere they're like oh, it's it's way over there and people are being racist about it. So you know, don't want to listen to those types of people. And so I figured, although they'll have it under control, and that definitely changed. Going into like March, the first week of March I My grandfather was in the hospital, so I had to drive up to see him on my mom,

which is about six hours north of here. And I was like nervous the entire time like constantly washing my hands like making sure that I barely stopped, barely touched anything. But I still was kind of like Oh, it can't be that bad. And then a week later everything like locked down. So I was like okay, I guess we're really in the thick of this.

**CT 04:39**

Okay, what things most concern you about the pandemic?

**EG 04:44**

Um, the amount of people that are dying, like that's, it's, it's awful. Especially when they're dying unnecessarily, a lot because, this could have been contained and people could be taking better precautions, but a lot of people aren't. And it's killing a lot of the most vulnerable people. And, like my mom and my grandpa both at risk, so, you know, they're pretty much all I have left, so I don't want to lose them. And I have asthma, so terrified.

**CT 05:22**

I know you said that you're not working right now, but you are going to school. So how has, or has school changed at all, for you because of the pandemic?

**EG 05:33**

Um, no, I started grad school, like in the middle of this, like, was it last month or the month before? Time is blending together? And I finished my bachelor's online and I was doing online classes through a community college for prereq stuff before that, so it's not not really in a different.

**CT 06:06**

Okay. So while you're not employed right now, does the pandemic concern you in regards to the economy?

**EG 06:22**

Oh, yeah. A lot of people who were struggling to get fired, like have it even worse now. And the unemployment rate is crazy. And I worry about, you know, my own ability to find it because I was looking for a job before COVID happened and then just stopped because there's not much I can do. And I figured, might as well just throw myself into this but the wider economy like it's not, it's not great. It's just focusing on trickle down economics and putting money into the stock market and the highest people who already have a bunch of money isn't gonna help the people who are just gonna die from being poor.

**CT 07:19**

Have any of the people that you know, had their employment affected by the pandemic?

**EG 07:25**

Yeah, I still have some friends at my old companies. Both of them, or all of them have gone to remote work, which is kind of unheard of. Well, sort of unheard of in the in the gaming industry little bit. They

usually like to keep that stuff under lock and key. So they ended up having to fire a bunch of people, I think a bunch of temps and since they're higher level, they didn't get fired but...

**CT 07:55**

Did they fire them because of the remote working or because... they had... and so they had to people?

**EG 08:06**

Probably combination, although like they are extremely large companies that have plenty of money they probably could have kept them on but I think they probably use it as an excuse to get rid of people because they like to feel like to do that. The industry is not very, can't think of the word, stable? Yeah.

**CT 08:38**

Okay, we're gonna move on and talk about your family and your household. Unless there's anything else you want to add about COVID and employment?

**EG 08:49**

Nope.

**CT 08:50**

Okay. Um, how has COVID affected you and your family's day to day activity Household?

**EG 09:01**

Um, before COVID It was just me here every day. Well, me in the cats. And then now my boyfriend is working from home. So we're constantly next to each other like coworkers. He's got a better setup though.

**CT 09:23**

Are you working in the same room?

**EG 09:25**

Yeah.

**CT 09:33**

You said he has a better setup. Why do you say that?

**EG 09:37**

Oh, I just mean that he he was working off a laptop. This work gave him because he works on very secure stuff. Yeah, and so he asked to run through that and it was annoying because he couldn't use his regular keyboard and his regular computer and like his big monitors. So he fixed it up and made it so that it's, you know, he can.

**CT 10:02**

Right.

**EG 10:02**

Yeah.

**CT 10:06**

How has the COVID outbreak affected the way that you associate and communicate with friends and family?

**EG 10:17**

I don't see them anymore. We used to go to trivia every Wednesday at a bar down the way in the, on the pier. And that was my main social interaction for the week. And now, we can't do that. But they are doing like zoom sessions. I haven't been able to do it for the last few weeks, because I've been busy, but it's pretty fun.

**CT 10:48**

What have been the biggest challenges for you during the pandemic?

**EG 10:54**

Um, just anxiety about you know, like, it's a tiny, microscopic little thing that you can't, like, see, and make sure that you avoid so it's just feels like you're constantly afraid of everything around you, I guess. Or at least I am constantly afraid that you know, something you'll get in on a package or, you know, someone will cough and I don't know, I don't leave so I don't really worry about other people coughing on me or anything.

**CT 11:27**

Does your boyfriend leave very often?

**EG 11:29**

He was and then the spikes started happening. So we started doing grocery delivery instead.

**CT 11:38**

So I know you mentioned that you did some online trivia instead of in person. Have you or your family and friends done anything else for recreation during the pandemic?

**EG 11:52**

Puzzles, lots of puzzles. I love puzzles. Reading, lots of video games. I started writing on World of Warcraft again. Yeah.

**CT 12:09**

How do you do puzzles with cats?

**EG 12:13**

We got one of those like felt things that you build it on so that you can roll it up. But then we never roll it up and then we just put a towel over it. And then because otherwise they just throw it they push it off and if it's on the felt thing, it doesn't get pushed off as easy.

**CT 12:35**

Um, and outside of your household more in your community. It could be school churches, jobs, any organizations you belong to or, or just whatever you consider your community. How has COVID affected that?

**EG 12:52**

Um, I mean, I used to do Pokemon Go, it's a, I don't know if you've ever played Pokemon Go, but you can like do raids around town with other people to fight gyms. And so like I would usually meet up with them to do raids a couple times a day if I felt like it. So I haven't seen any of them in a long time but they talk on Discord and then they changed that system so that you can raid from home, but then my, my neighbors used to, I mean they were doing like happy hours just about every day, like they were doing it pretty often, but now they do about just about every day. We're like I live in like a quad plex thing. So um, bunch of neighbors, well not a bunch of neighbors just like three units. I haven't really joined them though.

**CT 14:00**

And what about the people around you? How are they responding? To pandemic?

**EG 14:09**

Oh, most people wear masks I think although sometimes I'll look out the window and see a few people walking by without them. They'll have like small get togethers next door. Yeah, mostly everyone's just kind of staying to themselves and keeping distance.

**CT 14:48**

Um, have you seen people around you change their opinions as far as far as the pandemic goes?

**EG 14:57**

Um, not around here. Everyone was pretty reasonable when it started and everyone's been taking it seriously. But um you know, yeah.

**CT 15:19**

So self isolation and flattening the curve are two key ideas that have shown up during the pandemic. Have you or your family, friends, community responded to request self isolate and flatten the curve?

**EG 15:34**

Yeah. Definitely.

**CT 15:43**

Has COVID-19 changed your relationships with family, friends, and your community?

**EG 15:47**

A little because I was ever since my grandma passed away. I've been going up to my hometown a lot to help my mom take care of my grandpa because he's 95 and so it's been difficult trying to help her from

afar and then we had to get him into a care facility because he kept falling. So that was difficult, but yeah. I feel bad because now I feel like I've abandoned him there. I didn't mean to but you can't go in then. So my mom hasn't been able to go in and see him so..

**CT 16:34**

So they won't let anyone in right now?

**EG 16:36**

Hm'm. Oh, he doesn't hear well, so he kind of refuses to talk on the phone most of the time.

**CT 16:47**

Um, have you or anybody, you know, gotten COVID?

**EG 16:53**

No. My boyfriend's done the antibody test?

**CT 16:59**

I didn't hear the beginning of that. I just heard that your boyfriend did an antibody test.

**EG 17:07**

Yeah, he did. But no one I know has gotten COVID.

**CT 17:12**

And so he was negative?

**EG 17:14**

Yeah, he was.

**CT 17:15**

Okay. Um, how do you think COVID is affecting people's mental and physical health?

**EG 17:25**

Really not great. I mean, I've been way more sedentary than I usually am. I usually go for walks and go to the gym. Or I'm just been sitting here at the computer most days so I assume that a lot of people are doing that. Yeah, and mental health... I'm an introvert so I can kind of handle it. Probably a little better than an extrovert but I can imagine that a lot of people are going stir crazy, like my mom is certainly going stir crazy because she, she likes to go out to lunch with her friends and like do stuff and she can't do that so...

**CT 18:11**

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

**EG 18:15**

Our primary source of what?

**CT** 18:21

Try that again.

**EG** 18:23

What was it, the primary source of what? Oh. News.

**CT** 18:50

Can you still hear me?

**EG** 18:52

Yeah, I can hear you now. little choppy.

**CT** 19:24

Okay, can you hear me?

**EG** 19:25

Yeah, I can.

**CT** 19:26

Ah, I turned off my video in hopes that maybe that would help with the bandwidth. Oh. Should I turn mine on? So? Sure. The last question I had asked but didn't hear an answer to was. Where are you getting your news?

**EG** 19:42

Oh. Mostly the internet. Reddit and various news sites.

**CT** 19:57

What are like your top two news sites?

**EG** 20:00

I don't know, I vary them a lot. I just try to make sure that they're reputable. Like, I guess probably the New York Times and maybe the Washington Post, maybe they do CNN, I don't know.

**CT** 20:19

Okay. Have you changed? Like you said that you vary them? But have you found yourself relying on different news sources now versus at the beginning of the pandemic?

**EG** 20:36

No, not really.

**CT** 20:41

Are there any issues that you think that are important, the media is not covering?



**EG 20:45**

Well, I haven't seen like a good amount of media coverage because I don't watch like televised news really. But I feel like they're focusing too much on the maybe the political stuff, which is important because it affects everyone. But you know, like, there's real consequences to this, like, people are dying and, and people are being driven even further into poverty and losing, you know, and landlords are kicking people out, and I keep seeing things about oh, landlord does this cool thing where they gave an extra \$50 to people that I'm just like, it doesn't really help. I don't know, because I don't watch the news, really. And I don't really read it all that often. Just...

**CT 21:49**

Okay. Um, how have your municipal leaders and other government officials locally responded to the outbreak?

**EG 21:58**

The governor Newsom initially responded well, he closed everything down. And that helped flatten the curve, and then they were going to reopen things slowly. They said, and then all of a sudden, I heard from a friend that they were going to well, he had previously said that they were going to extend the lockdown until August at least for LA County, which I think was the mayor, or someone, I don't remember who and, and then that was the most I heard about it for like, a couple of weeks. And then all of a sudden, like, I heard people at the bar nearby and I was like, wait, did they open the bars again? And they did and then we had this huge spike and they open to the beaches, and it was just bad. And now everything's closed down again. So yeah. it's been mixed.

**CT 23:03**

So now we'll just, there's about five questions left. If we have time, we'll do them all. If not, that's fine. And these all pertain to the future. So, how is your experience transformed how you think about family, friends, and community?

**EG 23:20**

Not much, really, because I was kind of a homebody already. I didn't really see friends a lot. So...

**CT 23:30**

Okay. How does the pandemic compare to other big events in your lifetime?

**EG 23:39**

I feel like the only thing I could really compare to this that I have lived through would be like the, well 9/11 And like the, the recession back in what was it like 2008. This is different because it's kind of like significantly more people are dying and the economy's not doing great and it's feels way worse.

**CT 24:23**

What do you imagine your life to be like in a year?

**EG 24:28**

I am hoping in a year that they have a vaccine and they're producing it enough to have it around for a good amount of people, but I know that those most at risk are not going to be the first people who receive it. That doesn't really pertain to me. But I don't know. I don't imagine that we're gonna go back to anything normal. But then But maybe I'm just pessimistic

**CT 25:08**

With what you know now, what do you think that governments or individuals community need to keep in mind for the future?

**EG 25:21**

We need to stop politicizing medical issues. That was a huge, that's a huge problem. And also, I think we should keep, we should probably do what a lot of Asian countries do and wear masks whenever we're sick so that we don't keep spreading stuff and be more mindful of stuff like that. And maybe definitely work on setting up better social safety nets for people. Oh, definitely the healthcare system too.

**CT 26:02**

Okay. And as a last question, is there anything that you would like to add, or talk about that we didn't cover?

**EG 26:12**

Not that I can make.

**CT 26:16**

Okay, well, I really appreciate you taking your time to answer all these questions. I'm gonna go ahead and stop the recording and I hope you have a great day.

**EG 26:25**

You too. Thank you.