

Transcript of Interview with Cynthia “Cindy” Lopez by Kristine Gonzales

Interviewee: Cynthia “Cindy” Lopez

Interviewer: Kristine Gonzales

Date: 10/13/2020

Location (Interviewee): San Antonio, Texas

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Abstract: An interview with Cynthia Lopez, a St. Mary's University employee in the Blume Library.

Kristine Gonzales 0:00

Okay, I am here with Cynthia Lopez. And today we're going to be conducting an oral history regarding her experience so far during this pandemic. This is for the COVID-19 Digital Archive, which is an online repository documenting the individual experience. This will be a part of the St. Mary's Cover Your Fangs project. So Cindy, I want to thank you for being here with me. So um just a general question, how has your experience been at work since this all kind of kicked off?

Cynthia “Cindy” Lopez 0:36

Well, I was confused at first, because I know it happened in March, I won't forget March 24th of this year, 2020. And it happened abruptly, it was almost time to go home, about four o'clock. I have no internet at home; my only internet connection is here through work. So I kind of panicked, so then thank God that they gave me a break and gave me time to connect my internet. And I got it going. And I struggled a little bit, especially with the um Zoom- with those Zoom meetings. So- but I managed to go over friends, one of the staff workers that works with us, coworkers- coworker, Cynthia, and I was there. I was able to be there at the meeting as well. And it affected me mentally because I had to struggle to go get a ride. Plus, I didn't have a vehicle. So mentally, it affected me, because I needed transportation. But eventually I was able to find the transportation then- and then to come up with the money to do to pay the cable. So everything was like really fast, and it needed to be done. And it was important because it was part of my job and I didn't want it to affect my work. But my supervisor and the director were very helpful and patient with me. So, other than that... and then- then struggling Monday through Friday. Thinking about my work schedule at home was taking a load on me as well because I panicked thinking that I couldn't do some of the work because I thought maybe I would need a physical body being there, meaning like either my coworker in case I had a question or how to get ahold of my supervisor in case I got stuck somewhere. But eventually that pulled through as well. And then then I struggled with my family because I'm the only person with transportation and then my vehicle broke down within this one-

Kristine Gonzales 3:15

When it all happened.

Cynthia “Cindy” Lopez 3:16

When it all happened, yeah. And I was like, stuck at home. Thank God, I didn't have to drive to work. But then I didn't have a vehicle to get groceries, to go visit my father, to go visit my mother who's in the nursing home, and then to run errands with my sister and my brother who lived with my dad. So I had to, you know, I struggle because they don't have a vehicle. My dad's an elderly; he's gonna be 90 this year in December. And my

mother's gonna be 89 in January of next year. So- so yeah, it took a toll on me emotionally and not so much physically. But I've struggled before to where I know how to cope with it. And the good thing- I think the good thing about it was that I was able to get a moment to myself being at home and trying to figure out how to- how to- how to figure out how to live within this problem that's happening in the world, because I wasn't the only one. My neighbors were affected by it as well, you know, and some of my coworkers as well. You know, I heard some other stories, so it wasn't a together thing. And now we're in October and some of the people have coped with it, and I've coped with it already. So I don't struggle mentally. It hasn't affected me that that bad. Yeah, but at first it was a shocker. I'm not gonna lie

Kristine Gonzales 4:56

And you bring up a very valid point. Kind of just coping, I think is a big thing that a lot of people don't know how to do. So I think that's you bring up a really important point. Now, I just want to ask, when the last time you were able to, I guess, see your mom?

Cynthia "Cindy" Lopez 5:15

I saw my mother... Shoot, when did I see my mom? That day. It was it- does it have a date? I think it was in... August, it was August! And I told my boyfriend because he's the one with the vehicle. I said, "Take me to go see my mother." But I knew- I knew that they weren't allowing people to go in. But I was able to see her through the exit door. And it's glass. So what I did is I rang the bell in the front, the front desk saw me standing there. So the guy- the maintenance, I forgot his name, but he is really, really kind to my mother, and he knows my who my mother is, and he knows who I am. So I waved him down. And then I said a wave back at me and he says, "I'll bring your mother." I could- I could hear what he was saying. And, "I'll bring your mother but go around through the exit door," and I said, "Okay." So I went around and there she was. She was already waiting for me. I was trying to- she couldn't hear me because of the glass. And I couldn't hear her either because she doesn't speak very loud. And so we were there just looking at each other and smiling and giving hand signs and- and hearts and hugs and- and then we started crying. I started crying because... [*Cynthia starts to tear up*] When I- when I uh... would go visit my mom, I was able to...

Kristine Gonzales 7:08

Take your time.

Cynthia "Cindy" Lopez 7:13

Kristine, you didn't tell me you were gonna make me cry. [laughs]

Kristine Gonzales 7:14

I'm sorry!

Cynthia "Cindy" Lopez 7:16

I was able to hold her hand. I was able to kiss her. I was able to dance with her a ton. "Look Mom, YouTube, let's watch some Youtube. What's your favorite song?" She always tells me, "John Lennon, John Lennon, Imagine!" She really loves that song. So I go "Okay, Mom, I'm gonna play it for you." So it's like, holding hands and I go "do you like him Mom?" and she goes, "oh I love him he was so cute." John Lennon and my phone's not that big so we were both squeezing our faces together to watch John Lennon sing his Imagine-

Imagine song. And it was so ironic because my mom's like, "Where's your dad? Where's your dad? How come hasn't come visit me?" And I said "Mom, dad is not a young 17 year old that you met." She still thinks that she's that age too, and I say "Mom you are old already" and she starts to laugh, and she goes "No, he's still cute." [both laugh] I go "Mom you haven't seen dad." Anyway, so we were there. And I miss those moments with my mother when I can't do that. And it's been since March. I mean, August actually, I'm sorry, August. Because of the COVID, the nurses the nursing homes people are getting very sick and dying and that I know of that... not this month... yeah it was in August. They started shutting down the the nursing home, and I- we couldn't go in there anymore.

Kristine Gonzales 8:58

So it wasn't until August that they really stopped-

Cynthia "Cindy" Lopez 9:02

Yeah that they stopped from letting us from going in, in late July- late July and early August. And I still have some dusters, dressers- the dusters that I need to give her because she- she was lacking the last time and they're still there. They are still there waiting for her.

Kristine Gonzales 9:27

And there's no way for you to...

Cynthia "Cindy" Lopez 9:28

Well, I just found out two weeks ago my sister called me that they called her because she's in charge of retrieving messages from the nursing home in case something happens that we need to know. And they're going to go ahead and start letting people visit but um, they have to take the COVID test. And as I took it, I think they're distributing it there, that's how I took it. I'm not really sure because I haven't contacted them yet. So I have to give them a call and find out, though we won't be able to sit with her and hug her, physically. I'm not sure if there's gonna be some kind of barrier or gloves where we can just touch her hands. And that's basically it. Okay, but that's still pending. And that's- that's where I'm at right now. And everybody- my dad's very sad, and they miss each other. I mean, I could tell.

Kristine Gonzales 10:33

How long have your parents been together?

Cynthia "Cindy" Lopez 10:36

Oh, they got married... I remember last time I talked to my mom. I don't remember the date, Kristine, but it's over 60 years already. Or maybe 60 years. So, yes.

Kristine Gonzales 10:52

Oh, to be in love.

Cynthia "Cindy" Lopez 10:54

Ugh. Those two are terrible. [both laugh] Teenagers, they act like teenagers. My mom just might- she just babies my dad, and my dad gets real shy. He gets real shy. And then my mom, she teases she, “Well, what about you? What are you gonna tell me back?” And my dad, “I love you, Emma. I love you, Emma.”

Kristine Gonzales 11:24

How cute.

Cynthia “Cindy” Lopez 11:27

So- so we're coping with that. It's heartbreaking. Because I know my mom and my dad, they're still totally in love with each other. I mean, that's ironic. I mean, you don't hear that anymore. And the majority of my- my best friends and my girlfriends, um, their parents... I only had like a couple that were still together and they ended up dying. Their parents ended up dying and my mom and my dad are still here. There are not as strong physically, but their mind is still very strong and active, and they remember a lot of stuff. So thank God, they don't have dementia. Like sometimes my mom's mind does drift, but because of the medications she's taking, because she can't walk no longer so sometimes she gets pain, but other than that, they're pretty sharp with their memory.

Kristine Gonzales 12:28

Okay, Cindy. Well, I want to thank you again, for speaking with me. I really hope you get to see your mom soon.

Cynthia “Cindy” Lopez 12:35

Oh, thank you, Kristine.

Kristine Gonzales 12:36

I'm gonna cry. I hope- I hope they get to see each other soon.

Cynthia “Cindy” Lopez 12:39

Me too. Yeah, let's not cry because...

Kristine Gonzales 12:43

No, we'll just hope for good things. But thank you again, Cindy.

Cynthia Lopez 12:48

Oh, you're welcome, Kristine. Anytime, anytime.