

Interview with
HOLLY HURTADO

November 24, 2020

**THE PANDEMIC YEARS: COVID-19
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION**

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HOLLY HURTADO

Holly Hurtado was interviewed by Sara Whitehead in Holly's house on November 24, 2020. She related her experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

SW: My name is Sara Whitehead and I am with Holly Hurtado, and we are in her house on November 24th to talk about the year 2020 and the COVID pandemic.

So, Holly thanks for meeting with me. For the record, can you just tell me a little bit about yourself, where you grew up, what you are doing now?

HH: Yeah, so I grew up in Salt Lake County in West Jordan [Utah]. I am now a student at Dixie State [University] and I am studying Environmental Science, and I should hopefully be graduating in a year. Just kinda working in St. George [Utah], too, when I can.

SW: So, in your experience how has the university reacted to the threat of COVID; what have they done?

HH: I think they actually reacted pretty well, because we've done really well at keeping campus open and just mandating masks, and making Zoom available for all of the students. I think it is a little hard because they can't do much to actually enforce masks. So, for a little while I was seeing some students who just didn't wear masks. But, overall, it's gotten better. Most students are wearing masks most of the time. I think all the professors are taking it really seriously and doing really well at either keeping their masks on or being distanced from students. I think we are doing pretty well as far as cases go, and not having to shut down, and not really having to stop too many events, so that's been nice.

SW: How has the way classes are set up and everything affected your abilities as a student in taking and studying for classes? And also, I know you're a part of student gov[ernment], how has that been affected?

HH: I think as far as classes go, I have been very lucky that I have mostly really small classes, so I just get to meet in person for most of them. The only one that I am taking that wouldn't normally be online that is sometimes online, is the leadership class. That one, Zoom works pretty well; it's a little hard with discussions. So, I think, like, doing discussions in class you can't really talk. Either people on Zoom are having their own conversations and then people in class are having their conversations. It's hard to hear what everyone is all saying. So, that gets a little difficult. And then I think it has been helpful, though, at times when one of my classes has me and another student, that student had to be in quarantine for a few days after he got tested. So, we were just able to do an online class with no problem. So, I think it's made it easier in situations like that, where

we can go online when we need to. As far as student government, that has been a lot more difficult. You can't just hold service projects.

SW: Because you're part of the service, right?

HH: Yeah. So, we can't really hold service projects like we normally would, because normally we would be doing one service project a week, at least. This year, it's kind of been maybe once or twice a month, and even those are limited in numbers. The amount of students that are able to do service is a lot lower than it has been in previous years.

I am the alternative breaks coordinator, and so planning a fall break, I had to basically provide a detailed plan of how I was going to be safe during the trip and make sure everyone else was safe, and make sure everyone was wearing masks at all times, and socially-distanced, and not too many people in a room at once. Also, finding a place that allowed us to do a service project was really hard because almost nowhere is letting groups of people come and help. That became really difficult, and it took a lot longer to find somewhere to do an alternative break than it normally would have. And then, right now, because the entire state is in red [higher number of COVID cases], then I can't plan anything for spring break, since we can't leave the county at this moment. So, I have no idea what's going to happen for spring break.

And all the events that aren't even service projects or service-related, like the student life branch does, that has been really, severely limited. So we're still trying the Wednes— D events, a lot of them have turned into drive-ins. We've had to stop a lot of events and cancel them before they could happen. And that's been really difficult because there is so much work put into these events and then all of sudden it just has to be cancelled because someone says that it's not going to be safe. So yeah, we aren't doing as well at getting the campus together as we normally would've and I think that becomes difficult for freshmen, just because they don't have that many friends in the first place, and then all of sudden they don't have anywhere to meet friends either. Because they're just constantly, everything online or socially-distanced, you can't go up and talk to new people. So, overall, I think we are handling it well, but I think it just gets difficult to interact and to be able to do things we normally would at a college campus.

SW: How do you think other students feel about the half-working campus?

HH: I think it's hard on everyone. The people I have talked to seemed to be annoyed of wearing masks all the time and all of sudden their class is online because their professor had to get tested, or like having to just figure it out, how to use, like, all of the equipment has been frustrating. Having to deal with the professors' learning, that has been hard. I think everyone has been frustrated about it. And I hear that more and more often as it goes on longer, so that gets kind of hard to deal with, to see everyone not wanting to be at school anymore because of it.

SW: What are your days like compared to before 2020 and before the pandemic?

HH: Normally, I would be a really busy person, especially because I am working, technically, three jobs and doing school. Like, I would have no free time, but now everything is severely limited. So, student government would typically take fifteen to twenty hours of my week before, it's now taking five to ten. Jobs are limited in hours they can give, so I am doing less of that. So, I feel like I am at home a lot more than I used to be and I have a lot more free time. It's kind of weird, and I kind of get bored of it because it's very different than what I am used to and a lot slower-paced. I am looking forward to getting back to being busier and having normal days, not having to cut everything out and worry about what I am doing all the time.

SW: How are you staying connected with others and social-distancing?

HH: That is hard. I have been pretty good at using my phone more. A lot more phone calls to friends rather than seeing them in person as much. And work helps a lot, because I am kind of forced to be socially-distanced and careful in workplaces. I still get to interact without chancing of spreading the disease. So, I haven't done super well at quarantining, necessarily, but I am very careful about the friends that I do see and what I do with them. We do a lot of hiking, and outdoor activities have been a really big thing. It's nice living in St. George, at least, because there are so many places to hike and so many things to do outside, and it doesn't get too cold, so hopefully that can continue through the winter.

SW: How do you think St. George and other places like Salt Lake [City, Utah] are reacting differently?

HH: St. George has been very lax on a lot of things that they do. Like social-distancing isn't really enforced and I think it took a really long time for masks to be mandated in public places. Even when we're supposed to quarantine, like, no one was quarantined. All the trails were full if you wanted to go hiking. I went down to the Virgin River a lot and it was just hard to find a place that was away from other people. We just haven't done super well at making sure people are following all those guidelines. I think, also being more of a tourist town, we have a lot of people coming in from out of state. And they're coming from California and Nevada because they don't agree with California and Nevada's rules. So they're coming here and continuing to not wearing masks and not social-distance, and so that's been kind of weird.

I went up to Salt Lake and it was so strict. Even when rules have been kind of lifted, it was right after quarantine and everything. It was like I still had to wear a mask at all times in the restaurant when I wasn't eating, and the masks were always mandated in public places. You weren't allowed to go anywhere without one. They were still pretty strict about limiting social gatherings and whatever. So, that was all kind of weird and I wasn't necessarily prepared for it when I went up there, because I was used to what St. George was doing and we just didn't care as much. So, after seeing that, I just saw how much St. George wasn't doing anything to help this.

SW: Why do you think they are reacting so differently, and how do you think that has affected the numbers in any way?

HH: I think St. George being a smaller town makes it a little less strict on things. Because there aren't so many people that are going to businesses and everything, it's not so busy. Then, I also think that politics has some play in it, because St. George is a lot more Republican, they just don't believe in masks as much; they don't think the pandemic is a big deal. I think that has some to do with it. Overall, I think, yeah, it has more to do with it being like a smaller city, so then the mayor and governor weren't so strict about what was being done here. I think the numbers stayed pretty low here until school got back in, and then there were parties and I think that's where it started to transfer more. Because no one's wearing masks or no one's social-distancing at parties the college students were throwing. I think that was a huge change. I think that's when everyone realized that can't be happening anymore, that's really got to be stopped. So, it was kind of when we had a bigger population of people, then, we needed to be more careful than we were.

SW: If 2020 was a book, what would the different chapters be about?

HH: I mean, definitely COVID would be a big chapter in that. I think the election would also play a huge part in that book 'cause that's kind of affected everything that has been going on.... It's just been weird. I'm trying to think all the other things that have happened this year.

SW: Would COVID have subheadings?

HH: Yeah, COVID would definitely have subheadings, like quarantine would be a subheading. Masks, and the different opinions of the masks. Probably socially-distancing, also, and how it's affecting the different age groups, how different age groups are reacting to it. And also, I think the difference in knowing someone who is immune compromised and not. I didn't really think too much about wearing my mask all the time until I was around someone who was immune compromised and I knew that, and then I had to be a lot more careful and make sure that my mask was on all the time around them. I never get too close to them. I think that would also be another subheading there. But yeah, that's all I can think of right now.

SW: Besides COVID, how have these other major events affected you?

HH: I think the election: it was just weird, and I think it caused a lot of anger towards people between the different groups and there was a lot of fighting. I have friends who are really strongly opinionated in one area and, like, I am a little opposite of them. Then that gets hard because of different political views and I am not as strongly opinionated. I didn't want to fight with anybody about it. I feel like no one was listening to each other; it was just all fighting.

Oh, and I guess, Black Lives Matter, that whole movement would probably have been another heading in the book. I think that kind of affected a lot also, because I think all of a sudden, a lot of people were doing research that they have never done before and they were learning a lot about other cultures that they didn't know. Even I did, I didn't know a

ton about African cultures or even, like, African-American cultures because I didn't grow up in a place that has very much, like, either of those cultures or anything. It made me do a lot of research and learn a lot more about other people. And I feel like it helped everyone understand each other's sides a little more. There's obviously still differing opinions on that, but I think, yeah, just a lot of white people had to learn why what they were doing wasn't okay.

Also, with the police having to deal with everything and seeing how they react to things and learning so much about what they're doing. And where those big police stations, where all their money is going to and why everyone was backing the defunding of the police and everything. You don't actually know where that money is going to, and then when you find out, it's kind of crazy. I think it was interesting to see St. George react to all of that, though, too. Just because it is smaller, so there were more protests; there weren't riots really happening here at all. Also, all of the signs that were "Back the Blue" and I know those are kind of causing problems, too. It's all been kind of weird and everything has been up in the air about all of that.

There's also, I went up to Salt Lake again, right after all the riots had ended. And I went up to the capitol building in Salt Lake, and just seeing everything was taped off with caution tape and it had been spray painted, and they were riots that had happened there and some looting that happened in Salt Lake. It was really weird because that didn't happen, really, in St. George. There wasn't, like, any violence that was happening here. It was kind of scary to see that it is happening. That was interesting and kind of crazy. So, I think I have just learned a lot this year about how different people react to things and, like, I learned just about others, yeah, different political views from mine and, like, different cultures. So, it's been, honestly, kind of a progressive year; so it's been interesting.

SW: That's a great way to put it. Well, thanks so much Holly. I appreciate it.

[END OF RECORDING. END OF INTERVIEW.]