

Interview with
CAMI SIMS YARDLEY

April 8, 2021

**THE PANDEMIC YEARS: COVID-19
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION**
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CAMI SIMS YARDLEY

Cami Sims Yardley was interviewed by Maddy Sims on April 8th, 2021 via Zoom. She related how her life changed during the Coronavirus pandemic of 2020.

MS: Alright, okay, it says it's recording. I can see it recording, so let's try this again.

Alright, so this is Maddy Sims, and today's date is April 8th of 2021. I am interviewing Cami Sims Yardley for the DSU pandemic years oral history project.

And now I'm going to ask you to state your full name, spell it, and your location.

CSY: Okay, I'm Cami Sims Yardley, that's C-A-M-I S-I-M-S Y-A-R-D-L-E-Y and I am from St. George, Utah.

MS: Perfect. Alright, awesome. So, just to start things off, do you want to give a little background information of your connections to southern Utah?

CSY: So, I've lived in southern Utah for the past fifteen-sixteen years and I've lived in Cedar City and St. George, both.

MS: Alright, awesome. So, you know, you've been in southern Utah for a while. Alright so, obviously, how were you impacted by this pandemic?

CSY: So, I was impacted by this pandemic in many different ways. I was teaching school at Southern Utah University undergraduate classes and it changed my format from primarily in-person to online, and that was pretty difficult because it's hard to teach public speaking and group communication skills through a computer. So, that was challenging for me as a teacher, to have to basically redefine how I graded and taught, so that was one way it really impacted me. Also, I definitely think that I lost motivation in life, in general, after I stopped having to drive and teach, I just kind of lost it.

MS: Yeah, that's understandable. So, since you know, I'm your sister, I know what goes on in your life and I know that when this all kind of hit you were, you know, in your last semester of your Master's program. And then that got moved online and you weren't able to have a graduation. And I also know you didn't get to say, like, goodbye to your friends that you had made in the past, like, year, year and a half, two years.

How did— did that add to your pandemic depression? Just having, like, your everyday life just totally just, like, uprooted— I guess I shouldn't say uprooted— but just fully just change overnight?

CSY: I know what you mean. Yeah it— I'm definitely a person who likes closure. Like, I don't know, just how my mind works, I have to, in my mind, I just have to know that, like, I've closed one door before I can open another one. And yeah, it was just really weird that all of a sudden, like, all these plans that I had— like I was excited 'cause I was, you know, coming up on the end of my Master's degree. I had worked long and hard and taught long

and hard. So, I was just looking forward to just having graduation and, you know, having our family come. Mom really wanted me to walk, and so I was planning on that. So, you know, Mom and Dad were going to come, and Colton and Lindsey, his wife, and then all my in-laws are, you know, in Cedar City and Beaver, and you know, all my friends and my professors. And so, I was really looking forward to graduation when I could kind of bring everyone together and, you know, show my family, this is school and show school, here's my family, and I just never really got that opportunity and I didn't get to walk. I didn't get to walk with my friends, which I was planning on doing, but I mean, I didn't—I don't really know anyone who's died, so I guess that is worse than just not having a graduation. But it was hard, and it did add to the depression and that feeling of isolation, and I'm completely alone and nowhere to go.

MS: Yeah, definitely. Yeah, so I know I kind of mentioned pandemic depression and just like you felt like it affected you but do—I know earlier you said you kind of felt unmotivated. Do you feel like that was kind of a bit of pandemic depression for you?

CSY: Yeah, I absolutely feel like a lack of motivation 'cause I was so motivated to make it to the finish line. You know what I mean? I was organizing a speech competition, and I was getting ready to coach, you know, kids on speech. And so, we're into this huge thing, and then it was finals and then graduation. So yeah, it was everything that I had, like, laid out in my mind just, you know, stopped and after that I just didn't really feel motivated to do much besides sit on my couch and watch Netflix, and, you know, when TJ Maxx isn't even open or, you know, all my favorite shopping—

MS: Or Ross.

CSY: What do I do, like really? Like, I have my computer and I have Netflix. And yeah, I just think all those things that just, like, killed my motivation because I had—and which probably added to my depression because I didn't have any reason to, you know, get up, get ready. Like, my kids aren't gonna see me as I'm, like, grading their assignments, you know, in my pajamas. And if I was still teaching, obviously I couldn't show up in my pajamas.

MS: Yeah.

CSY: That definitely added— My motivation gap, just tanked.

MS: Yeah, that's definitely understandable. So, with, you know, the whole pandemic and we were all shut down and going crazy, they added a mask mandate that, you know, was able to kind of let us out of our house a little bit and gain, a bit more, I guess, freedom, or you know, cure our cabin fever a little bit. But how did you feel about the mask mandate and having to wear masks?

CSY: So, I am very very pro-mask, not because of any political reasons or affiliation. I'm not affiliated with any particular party, but I just believe that it's just, wearing a mask is just part of, like, a health procedure, a health benefit to the community. So yes, I am very extremely pro-mask. And my husband is probably tired of me harping on him to wear his 'cause I know he hates it and doesn't like to wear it, and I'm constantly getting on him to make sure he wears it. Yeah, so I am pro-mask and I think that even with the vaccine

coming out and everyone's like, "Oh, we don't have to wear masks anymore 'cause the vaccine is out," like, it's still going to take a while for the vaccine to circulate through society, and in the meantime, we're still getting more COVID strains from Europe. And so, I think it's a good decision to, you know, keep wearing masks for public safety, not for any reason for, you know, not political, not anything like that. The reason is for public safety. That's why we should keep wearing masks and that's why I am pro-mask.

MS: Perfect. That was very nicely said, and I agree. Another question I have is, how do you feel about anti-maskers?

CSY: Alright, this one might take a few minutes, but I do have some thoughts on anti-maskers.

MS: Go for it, yeah.

CSY: So, my first thought about anti-maskers is, I feel like they're uneducated because I feel like if somebody really understood the impact of wearing a mask, I feel like they wouldn't be so anti-mask. I feel like they don't know, necessarily—I mean, maybe they just aren't interested in, like, healthcare, or higher education, or anything like that. Some people, I feel like they're just so far, maybe, removed from that profession that they just don't, you know, they just hear something in the media that's like, "Oh, masks don't work," and so then they're like, "Well, I'm not gonna wear it 'cause, you know, masks don't work because Facebook said so." But, like really, like we have these high officials from the center of, you know, disease control saying, "Wear a mask. It's gonna help, you know, slow the spread." So, I feel like the masks—

[Phone interruption.] Wow, I am very sorry about that. Shut up phone.

Yeah, so anyways, I just believe that anti-vax [anti-vaccination], no, anti-mask people just need to be educated. Like, maybe they're just lacking education in that area. Also, I just want to say that, again, masks for anti-maskers, like people, you know, really affiliate with political parties. You know, if you're a Democrat, you're like pro-mask. If you're Republican, then you're anti-mask. But I feel like people need to understand that it's not a sign of our political affiliations, it's a matter of public health. And then, what people who do understand that it helps, you know, control the disease, or slow the spread of the disease, and they don't wear it anyways just because it's inconvenient or it's uncomfortable, or they just don't want to wear it, and they don't, that bothers me a lot more than the uneducated people, because I feel like those people are being selfish when they know better, but yet they choose to, you know, [put] themselves and other people at risk when they might have it, but they're not masking up. So yeah, and then I also, too, I understand that it's really hard to get kids to wear masks and have them keep it on, especially the young ones. And so, I would never, so like kids, I'm not even [inaudible] people who are educated and [inaudible].

MS: Perfect. And so, with, you know, all the pandemic pretty much changing the world overnight and all the mask mandate, do you feel like St. George responded to the pandemic in an effective way?

CSY: So, they did the best they could, and really, I think everywhere just kind of did the best they could because this disease was so new and just spread like wildfire spreads, so

rapidly. You know, you just didn't have any of these protocols put in place 'cause we had no idea about this lovely strain. So, I feel like St. George, you know, responded in the best way that they could. One thing that was kind of frustrating is, you know we're cooped up inside and we want to be outside, like we need to get outside and recreate, you know, for our mental health, since we're not doing anything else, but, you know, working and watching Netflix inside and lots of screen time. So, we went to play tennis, and I was so excited to get out of the house and go do something and, you know, I— you know, like we practically lived together, so there's no— like we share germs—

MS: Yeah, yeah.

CSY: — that haven't already been. So, you know, you and I went to go play tennis and St. George City had locked the tennis court, and that just frustrated me so much because I'm like, "People need the chance to, like, recreate." I'm not saying hold huge parties in the park on the tennis court and the pickleball court, but—

MS: No.

CSY: — it frustrated me because they shut down a lot of things that I think reasonably could have been left open, that it would have helped the community kind of cope. I also feel like they didn't enforce masks until a little bit later, after basically the world kind of had. So, I think maybe they could have responded with masks quicker. But yeah, I think everyone just did the best they could.

MS: Yeah, definitely. Speaking of the way, like, St. George responded, do you feel like St. George responded to the pandemic differently than northern Utah did? And then, if so, do you feel like it was because, you know, St. George and southern Utah has such a smaller population than northern Utah, that could have been a reason?

CSY: Yeah, I did notice a lot of differences, actually, between northern Utah and southern Utah, when it came to the whole COVID protocol and mask mandates. I noticed that northern Utah, they were a lot faster to shut places down. For example, like, we all know that Southern Utah University shut down, but the bigger universities up north, they had already shut down and were in the process of shutting down before, you know, SUU really considered it and started shutting it down. So, just in the schools, yeah, like everything was like [inaudible].

Also, like I mentioned before, the mandates, you know, for the masks, they, sorry— Salt Lake [City, Utah] had those, you know, those rules, those guidelines in place a lot faster than southern Utah did. And I think it is, obviously, it is a difference in, you know, population, 'cause southern Utah is a lot smaller than northern Utah. But I also believe that northern Utah has better access to healthcare and health education. With the huge IHC [Intermountain Healthcare] systems up there, I mean, you have Intermountain Medical Center in Murray [Utah], which is huge, and all of their networks; and you have the University of Utah Health Network. And you have all these really, you know, high up healthcare professionals that are keeping an eye on, you know, what's going on in New York [City, New York], 'cause it was like the epicenter for the pandemic. And, you know, they're in training all the time, and I just felt like they were able to educate

northern Utah faster than the southern Utah doctors were able to catch on and be educated, just because of not only the difference in the population, but just the difference in healthcare, about the quality of healthcare providers. So, yes, that is one difference that I did notice between northern and southern Utah.

MS: Yeah. I remember I would, like, during, like, after the mask mandate came, I would always go home and I would obviously— I obviously wear masks— but I remember I would go out with either, like, Mom and Dad, or Colton, our brother, and we would all wear masks. But it would just shock me how, like, literally everyone in northern Utah was wearing masks, because no one in southern Utah, even with the mask mandate, still wouldn't wear their masks. And every time I would say to, like, Mom and Dad, or Colton, our brother, just like, "People in southern Utah don't wear masks," and Mom was just like, "Well, there's anti-maskers everywhere, it's not just southern Utah." But I really do feel like there was a disconnect between northern Utah and southern Utah.

CSY: Absolutely, huge disconnect. You know, even— So, you know, the mask mandates and things like that, they're starting to lift now that the vaccine's out, and, you know, we're getting closer to summer, but, you know, even trips, you know, up to Cedar [City], you know, to the Walmart and places like that, there were so many people not wearing masks. And I mean, this was back in September when the pandemic is still, you know, in full swing. And Braden, you know, my husband, he was in Walmart and up in Cedar, and he's like, "I was the only one wearing a mask." And he's like, "And people were, like, pointing at me and laughing at me." And he's like, "I had, like, a target on my back because I was wearing a mask." And again, no, that probably wouldn't have happened much in northern Utah. It was definitely just that location.

MS: Yeah. So, and whenever I would talk to you about it, I kind of felt like I wasn't going crazy because you saw the disconnect as well.

CSY: Oh, absolutely.

MS: That was very interesting. And you know, thanks for making me feel not crazy.

CSY: Not at all.

MS: Alright. And so, you know, with the way that the mask mandate rolled out and how everyone has just kind of responded to it— I know that 'cause, you know, we're members of the predominant religion here, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and, you know, they in, like, the first time in, like, their history, they actually, like, shut down church and, like, and I think you said they hadn't done that since the Spanish influenza.

CSY: The Spanish influenza. [Inaudible.]

MS: Yeah so, I know that was, like, a really big deal in our community, just because it is so predominantly LDS. I know that was a big deal because the only time we never really have to go to church is for General Conference. But we still tune in and listen to messages from the church leaders. So, you know, I know that that really kind of threw a wrench in everyone's plans, too. And I know the temple shut down as well, which is also

something that's never happened. And with all this change, how did this impact your religious services on Sundays, or even, like, during the week?

CSY: Yeah, so on Sundays, you know, obviously, if you're familiar with LDS religion, our core meeting where everyone, you know, meets together, families, doesn't matter, you know what age or gender, we all just meet together and have Sacrament Meeting and that's where we take the sacrament, which is just a holy ordinance, if you just read up into, you know, the LDS Church. And then, after the Sacrament Meeting is over, and then everybody else will split off into groups, like by age. So like, for, like, the primary kids, or, like, the younger kids; you know, young women and young men are, like, the high school age; and so everyone will, you know, separate off into their more exclusive categories. So, they shut down, you know, both Sacrament Meeting and they shut down all the, like, meetings that they would do after Sacrament. And the first thing when things kind of started to open back up, they opened Sacrament Meeting back up pretty quickly. But, even now, a good year later, the church still has not restarted any of, like, the youth programs that would happen, like, after Sacrament Meeting. So, that definitely changed the way— 'cause everyone was just used to going to Sacrament Meeting and then their Sunday school classes, or their, you know, age classes, and you know, those still haven't started back up.

And even as you mentioned, like, during the week, they're still holding, like, youth activities, you know, during the week. And there are, like, leadership meetings during the week, and things like that, like, quite a few. And they just all stopped and it was actually kind of nice because, you know, Braden, my husband, he is so involved in church leadership and involved in, you know, things that he's a great person and has a lot to offer in service to others, and it was selfishly, it was kind of great that all those church meetings got cancelled because I felt like for the first time in a really long time that I actually, like, wasn't losing my husband to, like, a bazillion different meetings, like, all week long and on the weekend. So, I know a lot of people really lamented the fact that, you know, churches were closed, activities are cancelled, but for me, I was like, "Yeah, it's kind of a bummer, but I'm, like, really excited to spend time with my husband and actually like—" I know a lot of people probably weren't quite as happy like I was with church being cancelled.

MS: Yeah, definitely. I know it was nice for you to have him back. And did, like, the temple shut down, did that have an impact on you?

CSY: That really, really did have an impact on me. Like I— like, I can't always go to the temple nearly as often, you know, as I'd like to. But even, you know, when my life would be getting rough or I'd be feeling stressed or kind of having a hard time, I would be like, "Okay, I'm, like, really having a problem," and at that time in my life, like, I always knew, like, I need to take a trip to the temple and I need to, like, sit down and, like, sort through my thoughts, and just take a good temple trip. And so, I felt myself having those feelings, obviously, during the pandemic, like, the depression and the anxiety, like the no motivation, the loneliness, like, all that stuff. And normally, I would go to the temple and try and, you know, find some relief there. But, I'd be like, "I need to go to the temple," and then I'd go, "Oh yeah. It's not open." And so, that was kind of— it wasn't kind of, it was a bummer. And the temples still aren't open, really. Like, they're allowing people to

get married in the temple and kind of go through for the first time, but as far as you being able to go to the temple, just go and feel peace, like, they still haven't opened it up for that. And I'm really hoping they do soon because yeah, it's been hard not to have the option to go.

MS: Yeah, definitely. So, like, now the pandemic, it's been going on for about a year now, do you have any fun plans when all this is over? Or did you put anything off due to the pandemic that you're hoping that once it's over you can just try it again?

CSY: Yeah, so one thing, I mean, just being in school, getting my Master's degree, obviously we didn't have a lot of money just to throw around on lavish vacations anyways. But, you know, as I was graduating, going to get back into the workforce and, you know, start making some money again, I was really looking forward to be able—I've always wanted to go to Europe, and I just have never been able to swing a trip over there yet. I really—I really want to see, like, England; I want to see Italy; I want to see France. I just really want to go all over Europe and just take my time exploring. And it's something that I've wanted to do for so long, and something I was working towards, and then when it—you know, everywhere just shut down, like international travel, you know, couldn't do it, and you still can't do it. I am, in the near future, when all that crazy disease is under somewhat control in Europe, I am looking forward just to go over there and see all the sights I want to see, and just spend a lot of quality time abroad. And so, that's one thing, I feel like I've had to delay my trip to Europe, and I can't wait.

Also, and you know this, just with everything last summer, you know, I love the beach. We were gonna just take our little California vacation over the summer, that was the plan. I was really excited 'cause, you know, I love the beach more than anything and that's basically why I go to California, to go to the beach.

MS: Yeah.

CSY: With everything that happened, we both decided it would be, Braden, my husband, and I both decided it would just be easier not to go to California. So we're hoping this summer that we can make it to California at least, and then hopefully this vaccine rolls out worldwide and I can get my trip to Europe.

MS: Hopefully, yeah.

CSY: Yep.

MS: Awesome. And speaking of vaccine, what are your thoughts on it, and are you planning on getting it?

CSY: Okay, so. I'm sorry, hang on, just one—

MS: No, you're fine.

CSY: Alright, so my thoughts on the vaccine, I have quite a bit of thoughts on the vaccine. First of all, let me just make it clear that I am not an anti-vaxxer, right. I'm at the doctor's office and they asked me, they're like, "Did you get your COVID shot?" I'm like, "No, I

haven't." I haven't because it hasn't been available to my age group up until, like, the last few weeks and they're, like, "Did you get a flu shot?" And I said, "No, I didn't get a flu shot," and there's not any reason why, just didn't, not that I am against it. She goes, "Oh well, are you against all vaccines then?" And I'm like, "No, I just haven't had those two in particular." So, I am not an anti-vaxxer; I just want to make that clear for the record.

But my thoughts, in general, on the vaccine, and I think everyone kind of shares my concern, is it was developed— You know, we've had the polio vaccine for since [the] 1950s, right? So, we're going into, like, seventy years, having the polio vaccine. And so, we've been able to see not too many negative side effects, that I know of, at least, of the polio vaccine. So everyone's really, like, fine to get the polio vaccine or, you know, any of the others that they have 'cause they've been around and been established for so long. But with this brand-new vaccine, hot on the market, it's like, you or anybody— you have to be careful with what you put into your body, or you just have to, you have to question it. You're like, "What am I putting into my body?" Especially, you know, we're dealing with this foreign strain, this disease that we don't know about, and then, you know, they're looking at putting it in our body and it does, you know, it is cause for concern. It's like, "Oh, what am I putting in there?"

So, like I say, not that I'm an anti-vaxxer with the COVID vaccine, but I haven't just jumped on board to get one because I've just wanted to see how the side effects from the vaccine have played out before I get mine. And I think it's really interesting. I'm glad that I waited. Like, I'm ready to get one now, but I'm glad that I waited because they're coming back with studies now, you know, saying like the Moderna and the Pfizer vaccine[s] are actually over 90% effective against the COVID, but the Johnson and Johnson, is only like 76% effective against COVID. And so, it was nice to kind of, like, wait and be able to see how effective each, you know, vaccine is. And, obviously, I'm going to get the one that's, like, the most effective. And also, I find it really interesting, too— and I don't really have any concrete facts on this yet, I still need to look into it— but I just read that the Johnson and Johnson Corporation actually had a batch of bad COVID vaccines. I guess they found mold in some of them and they just, like, weren't developed properly, I guess. And the warehouse where they were manufactured, that warehouse had already had previous safety violations, and Johnson and Johnson used them anyways. And so, another thing I kind of, I'm glad I didn't, just like hop on. They say that the [inaudible] Johnson and Johnson wasn't affected by it, and if you had it, then there was no negative effects. But for me, I'm just like, "I'm glad that I waited." I think I'm going to go with the Moderna or the Pfizer, and leave Johnson and Johnson, you know [inaudible] my body. So yeah, I am pro-vaccine, but again, I believe you have to be careful, and, you know, do your research of what you put in your body.

MS: Yeah. Definitely, it was such a new vaccine, you know, there are gonna be, like, unknown side effects. So yeah, I understand that. I feel the same way, so—

CSY: Well, as you know, there's been a lot of allergic reactions to the vaccines that were pretty una— I feel like, were pretty unanticipated. That's another thing, that, yeah, the vaccine, you know, is probably fine to get, but you need to be careful of these anaphylactic, you know, allergic reactions because you could actually die. And so, that's something to keep

in mind when you get the vaccine, too, is you have to be ready in case you do have an allergic reaction. And that's one side effect that I'm glad that others went first.

MS: Yeah, definitely. Alright, awesome. Those are all my questions that I had for you. Is there anything you would like to say that I didn't cover or has everything been covered?

CSY: No, I think we did it all.

MS: Alright, awesome. Sweet, yeah, that's all, all I have. So, thank you so much for doing this for me. I really appreciate it. I'll talk to you later.

CSY: [Inaudible]

MS: Alright, bye.

CSY: Bye.

[END OF RECORDING. END OF INTERVIEW.]