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Dyanta Smith, Oral History Interview, 2022

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Eastern Michigan University, Oral Histories Dyanta Smith (DS)

Interview conducted by Dyanta Smith (DS) on November 13, 2022 by EMU undergraduate Emma Owens (EO) for You Li's Journalism 313 course.

Transcribed by Emma Owens

EO: Today I am here with Dyanta Smith, a junior at Eastern Michigan University, to speak about the challenges and upbringings experienced during the Coronavirus pandemic, following with how she dealt with adjusting to new mandates and how she is feeling now. To start, the first thing I wanted to hear from you is, do you remember where you were when you were told about the home isolation mandate and how did you feel when you first found out?

DS: Well, I was home when they first announced the home isolation rule. I was surprised and I was shocked. I felt that I was about to not be able to go out and party. I thought I could go home with my friends. I could do what I would do for sure. And I was upset because they started also setting up curfews because of this. And that made me mad just a little bit. I wanted to be able to be out if I wanted to be. And I don't want to be out so long, but I would like that choice.

EO: I forgot about that, but now that you mention it, I remember. Following, how were you feeling during the midst of all of this? Or in a different way, what was a typical day in your life in the pandemic? If it was different, maybe at the beginning versus getting more towards quarantine. Did your days change as the months passed?

DS: When it came down to that point in time, the typical day I had was waking up, doing

what I wanted, class and whatever else. I would go to sleep, wake up and do it all over again. And it was almost the same routine every day, all day. I am pretty sure that is why sometimes I decided to break even, I broke out. Broke, “out of jail,” supposedly. I decided to go out sometimes here and there. When they finally tried to lift the curfew and the isolation, I still was going out. I just did not care anymore. I got the vaccinations, but I just couldn’t.

EO: I understand completely. Would you consider that your biggest challenge came from the pandemic?

DS: The biggest challenge is still a challenge, apparently. I live with my grandma, and she is at risk. I keep going through the discussion with her of being forced to take the fourth vaccination. That is my biggest challenge. I do not know what to do about it, I just do not want to get the fourth vaccination.

EO: I am on the same boat; my grandma lives with my family and I as well. Anyone at an older age is at some sort of risk, it is scary.

EO: Was there any good that came out of the pandemic for you, do you believe?

DS: No. But the good thing that came out of the pandemic is that there was more help for the students for anything that was needed through their college careers. And then I like that they even came out with the career center at the school now at Eastern Michigan University where they are giving students free clothing.

EO: Wow, that is just great.

DS: Yeah, I still have not checked it out, but I think I am going to this week.

EO: Good idea.

EO: How was it for you adapting to school online? What were your feelings about the sudden

shift, and did they change at all during the period of the pandemic?

DS: When the pandemic first hit, I was attending another school. I was supposed to be going on a volunteering trip to Florida, but I decided to go home because they needed everyone to get their things out of their dorms at school. But because of what was going on, the school had a waiting period before people could come get their things out their doors because everything was going to be done remotely. And they gave you a choice to either stay on campus or go home.

DS: So, we had to do online classes. I found it decent and a little bit easy. But there was one thing that I started to have issues with; when I transferred to Eastern in town in the fall of 2020, I was still online. Because it was still fresh, the pandemic, the big tests and quizzes that must be done, was done online. And I hated that because most of the time if it glitched and it wasn't working for an amount of time, the timer that is on your quiz keeps running regardless. It messes. It messes you up.

EO: I feel as if there was or could have been a lot of struggles for people through online schooling. The Internet could be glitching out, it would be hard.

DS: Exactly. I think I found it a little difficult at first dealing with remote work or Zoom video calls for classes and then assignments. I thought it was hard trying to find help as well, and I am the type of person that learns best in person. I like being face-to-face. I like meeting people, going out. So, I felt a little sad. I was not able to go anywhere, all day, every day. Waking up, classes, homework, and sleep. Then we do it all over again.

EO: Yes, for sure. My next question follows along, did the pandemic affect your work life?

DS: The pandemic affected my work life to the point where I could not even work at all

anymore. I started a job at Wendy's for one week. After one week, I got laid off because the pandemic hit, and it was closing businesses one by one. I had no money.

DS: And we also had issues with items in businesses. Toilet paper, grocery items and food, all taken out of stores and sold so fast. My mom even has a picture of our three grocery carts filled of us much as we could get before seeing that. People were ransacking the store while we were in there so we were grabbing what we could.

EO: I remember seeing stores and I also have pictures on my phone of my family's grocery cart from one point.

EO: How were you feeling mentally during that duration of time? The pandemic was affecting your work life, school life and personal life. How were you feeling?

DS: Mentally, I can say I was sad, and I felt sad and like I was just a person. Sitting around, doing nothing. I usually go out and do stuff just to get out of the house. But then, I was just stuck in my house. I didn't know what to do, I was so bored. I didn't want to stay rooted to one place. I wanted to be free.

EO: Completely, you feel like you are locked. Not even feel like we were physically stuck in our houses.

DS: Almost like we had a tether on our ankle.

EO: I agree with you, and I can understand why you would be feeling that way, I know I was. I do not think it would be hard to feel that emotion in a time like that. I am sure everyone was feeling all sorts of different emotions.

EO: How would you say you are adjusting to post-quarantine? Do you believe that COVID may have changed your life in any way?

DS: Well, hardly no. I am happy I am now able to go out. I have been to new bars and grills in

Michigan and traveled to hotel rooms to hang out with friends. I even have a new job that I have been at for over a year now. I was able to get a new car, too. Now that I am driving to and from campus, I am thinking of moving on campus and seeing how that works.

EO: Nice. Would you say you are less worried about COVID now than you were before?

DS: I am not as worried, but it is still out there. I am just more cautious than I used to be.

EO: For sure.

EO: I know you were speaking to me about your job and how school life has been. How was it and how has it been adjusting back to in-person school and work? It was abrupt to be told that we would be locked down, that alone was a large change. But then we had to switch everything online. What was adjusting like for you?

DS: Basically, I was asking around for a lot of jobs. I finally got one working at the job I work at now and on top of that, worked as a delivery person for an office, which was decent. Interacting with people was a change.

EO: Do you believe that you have learned any lessons through the pandemic, or have you learned anything new about yourself?

DS: One lesson is that I know everybody apparently does not stay clean. That is a good one.

EO: That is a good one. I was interested to hear your response.

DS: What I have learned about myself I would say is that even if I am bored now, I am still able to entertain myself with something.

EO: That is sweet, I like that.

EO: Did the pandemic happen to affect any of your future plans or goals? Or what about any of the plans that you had in place at the time?

DS: I was trying to go out of state, do a road trip, visit places, get on an airplane. I wanted to

do so much before my senior year in college because I was just going to have to stay busy finding work and trying to stay up on a job to find a place to live. Be a mature adult. I was eventually going to have to start doing that, I just wanted to do more fun things first, like party when I could have.

DS: Because of not being on campus, I was not able to go out for the basketball team or join a sorority either.

EO: That must have been hard for you to deal with.

EO: If you could have done anything different during your time spent in quarantine, what would it have been?

DS: Hopefully I would have a cool friend with a pool.

EO: So, more activity?

DS: Yes. With a big screen and a bunch of snacks. That way, I would not be as bored at my house because I kept having to run to the store. We had a lot of food, but it was when we ran out of chips, you could never go without.

EO: Agreed.

EO: That concludes my side of the interview, I appreciate you for being here. Thank you.