

Christopher Graves Interviews Ariadna Villeda
January 25, 2021
Bronx, NY

Chris Graves: All right. So good morning.

Ariadna Villeda: Good afternoon.

CG: Yes, good afternoon. My name is Christopher Graves and I am interviewing and Ariadna Villeda. The location we are in I mean I am in the Bronx and I don't know where you are at.

AV: I'm in the Bronx as well.

CG: I see the Bronx has to represent okay, okay. Today is January 25, 2021. And do you give me permission to record and distribute this or history?

AV: Yes, I do.

CG: Okay. Alright, so, can you tell me what is like your full name, age, and the stuff that you do on the outside world.

AV: Okay, so my name is Ariadna Villeda. I'm 20 years old. I'm currently going to Lehman. My major is psychology, and my minor is art. I'm trying to be an art therapist. And in my free time, I have a small business where I do resin ashtrays, and I also do like hearings as well. Yeah.

CG: So what do you identify as in terms of like, race, and gender?

AV: I'm Hispanic. I identify as a female. Yeah.

CG: I see. Since you said that you are in the Bronx, were you born in the Bronx, or did you move somewhere else?

AV: Yeah, I was born and raised here, period.

CG: The questions that I'm going to actually ask now it's about COVID-19. So my first question is how has Coronavirus changed your life?

AV: Honestly, just having remote classes, because it's harder to keep, the concentration and the flow going when it comes to school because I'm more of a visual learner and the teacher telling me step by step on how to do things so I could do it correctly. But through the zoom calls, and like Blackboard, it's honestly complete shit.

CG: Same here.

AV: Yes, I hated it so much.

CG: Yes, I feel the same. Second question, what was it like to be home so often?

AV: So honestly, it was depriving. I didn't feel like myself. I got into a depressive state where it's like I just felt locked in. Yeah.

CG: Yeah, and then it keeps going on and on.

AV: And then you forget and lose track of the days as well. And then, nothing really matters.

CG: I know, I feel the same way. Just like the sleep schedules all messed up.

AV: Yes, I wake up at one that's bad. It's not healthy.

CG: We could talk about that later. So, number three, how did it impact you mentally and emotionally? I mean, it's kind of the same thing. Yeah.

AV: Depressing.

CG: How did it impact your family?

VA: My family was impacted a lot because a lot of the time my dad had to like miss a good portion of work because of the lockdowns. And my mom was struggling to get jobs and stuff like that. The interviews were more difficult to get into because everyone was getting unemployed. Everyone was trying to find a job that they could do during the pandemic. I had a couple of close family members passed away. I'm not really close to them like that, but, it did hurt my family for the most part, and I saw the grieving.

CG: Yeah, I'm so sorry about that.

AV: It's okay, thank you.

CG: So, are your parents and your household are working right now?

AV: Yes.

CG: Okay, good. So, the seventh question is what have you learned about yourself and about your family since the beginning of the whole COVID stuff?

AV: I've learned under key stuff. Sorry, my sister's being annoying. So I've learned that even through tough times, there are ways to kind of motivate yourself. Then I saw that from my parents, especially because they didn't like to be complicit or stay home all the time. They wanted to do stuff? So I feel like I learned that I had to do something. I chose my life, even if we're all locked in.

CG: Sorry, there were some noises going on.

AV: That's okay.

CG: Number eight what has been the hardest part of this pandemic for you?

AV: The hardest part is not being able to see a lot of my family and friends. Trying to get with each other like we usually would do.

CG: Yeah, I usually go all the time.

AV: Especially with this cold weather, you don't see me going anywhere.

CG: Yes, fact. Next question, has there been anything positive to come out of the pandemic for you?

AV: Honestly, it's just like zigzags. It's like there are some good things and there's some bad things as well, like pros and cons. Yeah, but I don't know. Probably no.

CG: So next question, what do you think the nation and the world should learn from this pandemic?

AV: Honestly, to be smarter when it comes to protecting yourself because even though we weren't on the wave right away when it came to protecting ourselves. So, it took time, and people were arrogant when it came to putting the mask on the precautions. I feel like just following the rules.

CG: So, next is about the Black of Black Lives Matter protests. So my question is can you explain to me why you think these anti-racist protests erupted?

AV: Honestly, with all that's been going on around the news, we've seen social media, people started paying more attention especially with the pandemic. All of us locked in, and having nothing really, to be motivated to do or proactive. There was something in us that is just like, we had to do something to change it. And especially if, everyone was home. I just feel like everyone was paying more attention. If that was the case we all want it to be more active and something that we believe then.

CG: So, next, why do you think New York City became an epicenter of the protests?

AV: I feel like it is because we're mainly Democrat city. And even though the whole New York State wasn't really on that topic. And there were many Republicans, but like we were mainly Democrats over here. We see the injustice when it comes to the NYPD all the time. So, it kind of hit home, especially it being the majority of Latino and Black communities. We all basically came together and there were a lot of white people coming together as well because they didn't want to stay quiet either.

CG: Okay alright so, is how have the uprisings across the country shifted? And how do you think about your ethnic identity and your place in US society?

AV: So, because I'm Latina, there's a lot that goes on when it comes to Latinos and everything when it comes to immigration, all that stuff, but being in the Bronx, you kind of see more of other ethnic groups being targeted as well. It's not just us. So, I feel like when it comes to my place, and participating in this movement, it's more so having another voice trying to be heard because I feel like they can't ignore everyone. I don't know what the first part of the question was, I forgot.

CG: The first part of the question was, how have the uprisings across the country shifted? It's asking how the Black Lives Matter protests shifted the US especially now. How people see the Black Lives Matter protest?

AV: So you could tell who was on one side and who was on the other it was really clear, especially when it came to family members as well, you could tell because I have an uncle he was a cop. He was a sergeant I think for the NYPD a few years back, and it was for a long time. But when I started putting my opinions out there they started coming back with oh, they're just trying to protect themselves. How? How are they trying to protect themselves? Like, you have a whole identity is protecting you. I don't get it. But, I feel like, you could just tell a lot who was on which side and who was on the other and it kind of separates a lot of us when it comes to family and friends as well.

CG: Yeah, but if I was to answer this question too.

AV: Answer it. I need to know because I know a lot of people who have been switching up.

CG: No, just a short story, I had this aunt and I was kind of close with. And she was basically telling me that Trump isn't like a bad person and stuff like that. And when it came to this election I was pretty like, 50/50. I didn't want to vote but, but like, I had to vote just to get Trump out of office. So yeah, so basically, for the most part, my aunt and I were just going back and forth. And she was just coming at me for my disbelief and how I feel scared to go outside because of the cops. Especially that I am a Black African-Hispanic man. And she basically came on me for being scared to go outside because of the cops and everything. So yeah, it was just a lot that we heard just went back and forth. Well, now I don't really talk to her but for the most part, she was just on the side of my Trump like they didn't do anything bad. You just got the social media thinking that you think in one way than the other. I was like, okay, you got whatever you think.

AV: I felt bad because even though I love my grandma I love my grandma so much. She told me she's like don't get into politics. I'm like, why not? And she was like, it's gonna get you in trouble. I'm like Grandma, who did you vote for? She's like, none of your business. Mind your business. I'm like, well, now, I know.

CG: It's funny because my grandma, actually said that she voted for Trump because her reasoning was that she feels bad for him because he's old, and he's about to die. So I didn't know how to put that. So I was like, okay. I mean, I'm not going to have an argument with an 80-year-olds. So I'm not going to do that to myself.

AV: No, I felt that though because when it came to Trump, it was mainly like the older people that they just weren't getting it. Like my aunt, I think I was wearing something. And she kind of came out for it and she was like, you can't just people because of their political beliefs. And I mean, their political beliefs kind of dictate how they think.

CG: Yeah, pretty much.

AV: So, when she was telling me like, oh, Trump is good for the economy this and that and I'm like sis you just hop on the bandwagon. Have you seen what he's done? And like, the amount of depth he's in and he does not pay taxes? I don't know where you're getting your information from? But yeah, it was bad. And also my neighbor, he said "I'm gonna vote for him". I said why? And she was like, oh, because he gave us a stimulus checks. I'm like, No, he put his name on money that the government needs to give us isnot his money.

CG: I dead I forgot about all these questions. Alright so do you have any stories that you are going to share about the encounters that you have had with racism? Or police?

AV: Not necessarily well, honestly, not really because you know of how I look like I'm a white Latina, basically. And I have the privilege of just being the skin color that I am. Yeah, but the only time that I got attacked by one was when they thought that I hopped on the train station because I heard the door. And they literally stopped me. I was like, sir, you do not see my card in my hand. Like, come on. I'm just trying to get home and that's basically it.

CG: So were you active in the protest at all in digital, or in-person way over the last six months?

AV: I went to four protests they were bad, even though I was trying to stay as peaceful as I could, but it was bad. It was like a mixture of emotions. I caught myself crying so many times. I was just like, this is too much. But, it has to be done. I saw this one white lady. We're walking through Central Park she had the nerve to say some shit like, oh, all lives matter. How you have the guts to be doing that when everyone is literally protesting like, it's hundreds of people. She was like don't talk about this this and that. But it happened a lot.

CG: So, have seen how have protest in the context of the Coronavirus shifted the way that you think race in America?

AV: I feel like it's a great spot when it comes to the protests. Mainly because there are cops that are of all ethnic backgrounds. So, you kind of see yourself like, kind of like seeing them eye to eye and just saying you're really on their side. Like, you know how fuck up the system is. But you continue. Yeah, so it's like, you kind of have yourself in a great area to really, like comeat them because of where they're from, but it's also mentality, I think. What was the question? Honestly, my brain is not on clock today.

CG: It's the same I'm not gonna lie. We gonna go to the next question. How have the past few months changed how you think about the police and racism in the US? And did you learn more about the history of racism in this country since the process?

AV: I feel like my relationship with ... hold on my brain repeat that again. No I feel so bad.

CG: No, you're good. You're good. How have the past few months change how you think aboutthe police and the racism in the US?

AV: Okay, my opinions when it comes to police, I thought they were pretty good in the beginning when I was younger because of the relations I had with my uncles, they were cops. But, then I started getting older, and I started realizing more. They're not trying to do what they're supposed to do, especially when it comes to all the people, especially in New York, there are people with mental issues. They're not equipped for that. So, I see that their first intake is to attack, and not really, kind of talk properly or, like, kind of approach the situation correctly unless they're white. So, I kind of don't like them. I don't them.

CG: What have you seen in your word I can't read? What have you seen your peers do that inspires you?

AV: My peers. I see a lot of them. Like, throughout the protests or like, pandemic?

CG: About the protests.

AV: A lot of them, there was a good handful of people that came with me to the protests that were my friends. I saw they felt passionate about the topic as well. So, I feel like just inspiration that they had inspired me.

CG: What do you think about the cop's response to protests that began in May 2020?

AV: That was a while ago. I don't think I remember.

CG: It's okay if you don't remember.

AV: Actually, I remember. It was bad. Like, it was just plain bad. They didn't know how to react when it came to black communities and all this diverse community of the Black Lives Matter movement. They did not know how to react. They reacted in the most violent way possible. However, when there are white people freaking protesting, I think it was a while back, you remember when they will start posting that they want to open the cities again. And they were in front with their rifles. That shuts me off completely. I was like, really? Like, you're not gonna take the people that have guns, but you're gonna detect people that are literally going like this "hands up don't shoot."

CG: I kind of just want to skip to the stuff that happened at the Capitol. Pretty much because everything is just your response to the whole stuff that happened in May 2020. I am going to ask this, what would you like to see resolved in the movement?

AV: The movement, honestly, I want to see cops getting more time and training. And going to school for it as well. Because it's not just people out there. There are people with, a bunch of things going on at home, mentally, physically. So, I feel like they need more training. I feel like the laws when it comes to, what is it the call. You know when they where they search you at randomize places? What is it called?

CG: I know what you're talking about, but I forgot the name.

AV: But yeah, I feel like they need to stop racially profiling and other things like I don't know,

they just have to change a lot of things. When it comes to racial profile.

CG: Yeah, I actually got racially profiled a while ago, but, whatever we can talk about that after this. So, for 2021 with the whole capital stuff, what do you think led these people to attempt to violently with overthrow the government?

AV: Because they couldn't handle the truth that Biden had won. They couldn't handle the truth that white supremacy was getting out of the higher a state when it comes to power. They felt like their voices of racism were not gonna be heard anymore. And it was really shut down. So, I feel like they were sad, angry because they know they're notgoing to be able to deal with the show anymore.

CG: So, were you surprised how they were treated by the police?26:53

AV: Honestly, no. I knew they weren't gonna get attacked. I know there was one ladythat died.

CG: For me, nobody should die. But, at the same time, given the circumstances of thepast two years. Out of the many African Americans and, the Mexicans, the Spanish people that have died from police versus one that got killed in that day.

AV: Yes, you can not compare that to what ya put us through.

CG: Yes, it's sad that she died but at the same time, given the circumstances is like nobody really cares about her because one, when you rated the whole capitol.

AV: Compare that to us, if we did that everybody is dead. They let them in and there were videos of them literally opening up the door telling them to come in.

CG: So, this is a long question I'm just gonna see if you can try to remember. It goes back to the last question. There have been reports that members of the group stormed the US Capitol, including police officers, or elected officials, and members of the US military. What, if anything, should we as a society do with the information that segments of US law enforcement, elected officials, and on forces tried to overthrow US democracy? I was trying so hard not to stutter.

AV: So, basically, to put it all together, you mean what's something that because they were involved, right? Yeah, like the whole US Capitol like rating what we can fix in order to prevent that again?

CG: Like what we should do as a society not let to overthrow while the US democracy.

AV: I feel like just when people aren't equipped for the type of job that they're given, especially when you're in power to just like, what we did impeach Donald Trump. I tried to, in the beginning, try to hold them accountable for the things that they say and just holding them accountable because if they do get away with it, then they're obviously going to overthrow a lot. And just ruining everything that this country stands for, stands for quotation marks put that in

there.

CG: Speaking of, what do you think about Trump's response and reaction to the whole, not the protest the freaking Capitol?

AV: The Capitol?

CG: Yes, The Capitol. Now I want to hear this

AV: He said shut up. He told them to go and do that. He's the one that got the fricking lady killed that's his fault.

CG: Yes, pretty much.

AV: That's basically it. He set it up. Then you heard the little speech that he made. It wasn't even a speech. It was a recorded video.

CG: Yeah. I don't know if it was after. Well, I know that it was during when the whole thing was like going but, I said to Finesurrey that his video response made it worse.

AV: Like, I love you, go home. And he's like telling everyone I know we lost to this fucking guy. Like, basically, he's just throwing a lot of stuff.

CG: Exactly.

AV: Fucking child. Oh, my God.

CG: He is a big baby.

CG: I got some questions myself that I wanted to ask you. The protest that you have gotten into, were you scared of going to that protest?

AV: Yeah, I was. I was kind of scared. But I feel like the time that I was the most scared was when I went like the last time it was like the fourth time. The fourth time is when they were doing the curfew. I was all the way, I didn't know where I was. I was all the way in Downtown Manhattan. I saw on the citizen app that eight o'clock is the new curfew. I'm like, really? I live like an hour and a half away. And I live all the way near Fordham. So, it's too much. I feel like the most scared was when, the last time when they said that there was gonna be a curfew because I and my friends were trying to get out before curfew. We did not want to get into trouble. We're just trying to do something peacefully. So, in order to follow the rules or whatever, we're here asking the apps like if we can get out? We're just trying to go to the train station, and it was literally directing us to a towards police guys.

CG: Really!

AV: Yes, because we were literally near Chinatown.

CG: Oh, yeah, that's deep.

AV: Yeah. So, they kind of circled us in that's the thing and we were trying to get through and it was kind of difficult because of our masks, when we're talking to the cops, you know, they, the cops from the further aside they think that we're kind of confronting them. So, then it's a bunch of them just start following us. And we're just trying to leave, it's not that hard.

CG: The same thing another short story on the whole like curfew stuff. I was in I was inside the house already then, I heard like a few noises or some stuff outside on my window. And then so I looked, there was like 10, I swear everything heavily armed dudes with Ars roaming around the park while it was right next to me. I think I've recorded it. I don't know if I saved it or not, but, but I definitely recorded it. If I find it, I'll show it to you. But that shit was crazy.

AV: That's crazy.

CG: My next question is, have you ever encountered a Trump supporter and or a racist and What did they say to you? And what was your response? If they did?

AV: So there was this one time, I think it was just walking. I don't know where the hell is going. But it was like they were saying some ignorant shit. I was, "yo, shut up because no one cares about you. And you're here everyone else's business, destroying everyone else's peace." You know, I just started cursing at them. And I wasn't gonna get attacked. I know that because there are people around me, but you never know...with their little guns.

CG: Thank God, they didn't do anything because they are a bit crazy.

AV: They're something else.

CG: My next question is what were your best and worst moments in the movements that you have gone to?

AV: My best moments and the protests. I feel like it was when we all were at a meeting point for all the protesters. And there are people talking about their experiences. I feel like those are my best moments because we got to hear people. It wasn't just a march is literally people coming together and sharing their stories on the shit that they went through when it comes to injustice, police force, and everything. So that was my best moment. You said my worst, right?

CG: Yeah.

AV: My worst moment I think was in Times Square. And I was this close to getting arrested because I was with one of my girlfriends, and I was just going on live, right?. And, when the thing that they say on like the speakerphone where it's like, oh, you have to get on the sidewalk with a man on the street, we were on the sidewalk. We're following rules, even though we were protesting. The thing is that the cops did end up getting on a sidewalk and start arresting people. And I am there in shock, like, oh, shit. So, they're about to grab me but then my friend she likes let's go. It was bad but, I kind of got like stuck there. And I was like, you're just really gonna tell people to do something, but then you're coming at them?

CG: Yeah. That's crazy. This next question you kind answered it earlier but, I still want to see your response. What do you think should change in our society to make communities better and make a make New York a safer place?

AV: Honestly, the racial profiling gotta go because you kind of take people and, I feel like when it comes to the stop and search, I think that's what it's called, that's just taking people off. And I like I said, they're not trained to really help people when it comes to them being frustrated or like something mental going on. They're more so physically quick to attack if they see one-off movement.

CG: Yeah, did. Yeah.

AV: But I feel like they just have to take into consideration what they're doing when it comes to people's lives and racially profiling and on an everyday basis as well. You know, it's crazy. This is really off-topic. It's not off topic but it is off topic to the question. So, I was watching this video yesterday and it was a guy getting pulled over and getting searched on him and his car. And literally that the fricking up he literally was looking through and then he put something in the fucking trunk. So you can see it clearly in the freaking camera. He puts it in the trunk.

CG: Now I've seen some of them, I start to question, do they know that they are being recorded? Because they get quite clear that they are putting a substance in the car and then saying after also like he got something in like the charcoal or like the side of his car. But you literally seen his hand putting some substance in the cart and still manage to get what the innocent person arrested. So like, it's just stuff like that and it's been going on for a good minute.

AV: And they have to do background checks on these people, on who they're hiring.

CG: Because I swear there could be a whole psychopath working as the police and he could just go on the whole killing spirit as long as he's not on camera, he thinks that it's fine.

AV: It's crazy though because they're always caught that in the act as well. And their walkie-talkies and everything. You know how they have this this and basically you could hear them throughout anything, especially in the cars as well. They have it on the recording.

CG: Yeah.

AV: And I think it was during the protests, there was this one recording of a policeman, basically saying like, oh, just shoot them down, have no remorse on whoever comes to you. They were ready to attack. They didn't even have any compassion or empathy for the people that were trying to say what they feel. But no.

CG: Yeah. So, my last question is, if you was to start up your own March, what would it be? And where would it take place? If it's the Bronx, Harlem, or Manhattan, what do you think?

AV: Like what will it start off with?

CG: So, if you were to create your own march or something what would it be? What would that be about? And where? And where specifically will you have that march at?

AV: I feel like it would be like a whole mixture of things. Like people coming together when it comes to police violence, to immigrants on inequality and the just worker's inequality. Everything, honestly, because I feel like there's not just one thing that's going wrong in the US. There are so many things when it comes to minorities. So, I feel like just having a kind of podium for everyone to talk share the experiences they've gone through when it comes to certain issues that they face, that everyone else faces. Just kind of starts off from there. And how people are just sharing their stories and then March. Yeah.

CG: So, thank you so much for the interview. And I completely forgot what else I was gonna to say after that. But, I thank you so much for taking your time to do this interview with me. I am very grateful. And I'm very happy to hear all of your stories and what not. Have a good day.