

Elizabeth Sosa interviewed by Zumerys Mejia

July 28, 2020

Sunset Park, Brooklyn, NY

ZM: Hey Elizabeth, do you give me Zumerys Mejia the consent to conduct this interview for Guttman community college.

ES: Yes

ZM: My name is Zumerys Mejia (ZM) and I'm interviewing Elizabeth Sosa (ES) in Sunset Park, Brooklyn. on July 28, 2020.

ZM: Where are you from?

ES: I'm from Brooklyn, New York.

ZM: What 's your age?

ES: 29 years' old

ZM: What's your occupation? I am working on federal climate policy. What's your racial identity?

ES: I am Mexican American.

ZM: Gender Identity?

ES: Female.

ZM: Sexual orientation?

ES: I Wish not to discuss.

ZM: Thank you

ZM: Tell me the long story of how you or your family ended up in New York City?

ES: My Family immigrated in the 80s late 80s and they arrived in Sunset park and then from there we been living here since then

ZM: What was your opinion of police before the protests against police brutality began in May 2020?

ES: I didn't really have. I didn't really interact much with police when I was growing up. I would see them at school, security guards but in one incident that marks how I perceive them was here in my neighborhood sunset park. Sunset park is a low income immigrant hard working class community The people do multiple jobs for a living. My neighbor is a construction worker one day in the afternoon he would go and sell things from Mexico that he would get and to just make extra bucks and one time he's merchandise was all taken away from him and confiscated he was never giving an explanation as to why that was happening. So police were doing this they weren't really having an explanation as

to why it was happening. What he needed to do to get his merchandise back or just is a very rude encounter with the police and when I tried to approach to the police to ask them about it. Because he is my neighbor and I know he is a good person. They were just very uncooperative and to me that was very off putting because they are supposed to protect you especially in a community that doesn't really know their ways around. They don't know they need a permit, they don't really know their way around, they don't know they need a permit. They don't know all the hoops we have to go through to sell in New York city. that was my encounter with police my only Distasteful encounter with the police I would say.

ZM: So you feel that sometimes police use their power to make others feel less because they know what background or they think they know which background they come from?

ES: I am not sure. I hope not, that was my only encounter with them.

ZM: How about since May 2020?

ES: Since May 2020 at protest I seem them very aggressive and very, have a very scary response towards people who are really trying to highlight all the injustices in our society and our criminal justice system. And that they are, that they are presenting themselves in a way that feels like we are doing something wrong by exercising our first amendment. Our freedom of speech is something that to me was very frightening to see. That's something that I remember going when I would go back. This is an anecdote that my parents would take us back for the summers to their home country and there I remember being scare of the police because we can never. Police can't be trusted there in Mexico. Because they are corrupt and when whenever I would see a police man I would always run. I always try not to engage and be very scared and be very coldness while we were there. And I think after like going to protest now. After May 2020 that's the same, I got the same feeling about police here in the US (United states). ZM: What was your opinion of the protest movement before May 2020?

ES: I always honestly I had the luxury of not really engaging as I said I work a lot on climate and I focus a lot on global warming and I never had an interaction with police on that way. So my opinion was that there's something wrong with it. But I think I never put too much attention to it. Or never realized how bad it was.

ZM: How has that opinion changed since May 2020?

ES: I realize that we are, we are in a very we already have proven a point. Even though when we think it is not going to affect us it really does. Because police can abuse, they can abuse someone's power and they can abuse my power at any time. And that is very scary to think about.

ZM: How do you think this protest How do you think they have become bigger now in 2020? Like what's the difference?

ES: I think people have time, people are home, people are watching. And we are realizing that we are not as prepared, we are not as free of a country as we thought.

ZM: Do you believe Coronavirus has impacted those protests?

ES: Yes. I absolutely do, I think Corona has given us the time to reflect on who we are and who we want to be as a society. And what we want to value.

ZM: Where you involve at all the protest since May 2020? If so, how so? Can you tell me some stories about your involvement?

ES: Yeah I have engaged in some of the protests. I have been just a participant not as a leader or any form. Just as someone who's supporting the movement and what they are trying to achieve well what we trying to achieve.

ZM: And what you believe about the cop's response to the protest at the beginning of May? What you believe their response was? Do you believe it was a positive response or it was a negative response which contributed to the actions many people had?

ES: Do you mean in general what cops in NYC (New York city) The response that cops have had in NYC in general?

ZM: Yeah.

ES: I believe it has not been the way I would expect. People who are supposed to protect, who are there to protect us in our rights and is not aligned with what they signed up to do. They like I mentioned earlier or felt I was doing something wrong by going to protest. But in the United states we value our freedom of speech. We uplift that as one of core pillars fundamental to who we are as a society. But when you try to protest and you get that sort of hatred in sometimes some cases hatred from police officers, it felt like I was there, I was their enemy and it shouldn't feel that way. Because I am not I am fighting for them too when they take off that jacket... that uniform, they become citizens like you and me. Their families are citizens like you and me and we are in the same team but it did not feel like that.

ZM: What do you think about your governor's response to the protest that began in May 2020?

ES: I did not feel we were on the same page about what we were fighting for. I don't feel like our governor understood what it was we are out there fighting for.

ZM: What do you think about Congress' response to protest that began on May 2020?

ES: Congress is trying to find Band-Aids to the big problem that we have and doesn't really have the... doesn't really want to address the real issues that are coming forward.

ZM: How has protest in the context of the Coronavirus shifted the way you think about race in America?

ES: To be honest not very much have. Always I grow up Mexican American and I went to very white schools and there I became aware of race very fast. And is what I have always thought about race in America.

ZM: How would you like to see this movement resolve?

ES: I think we need to value we need to sit down as society think about what we value, who we are protecting and really think whether this police. The police state that we have

form has served us well. We have the most encouraging set, we the people, we are the nation with the most encouraging set people in the world. We spent more in arms than we spend in education and that's a problem.

ZM: So you believe that the government should spend more time in educating people's way of thinking and racial problems more than spending money on things that are not as necessary?

ES: We need to evaluate why it is that we feel that we need a police system. What is that we are giving, we are tasking police to do. Are we tasking them to take care of the homeless to put them in jail. We have a huge homeless population in New York city. Are there any avenues that we can take to address that same issue, can we find housing for those people, and services to give them a second chance? Everyone deserves a second chance and what we are doing by Investing more in police and not investing in housing, not investing in education. Is telling people that they do not deserve a second chance. That if they become homeless that's it for them and that is not the society that we want, that we that we should want to live in because if it can happen to someone it can happen to us. And we should always think about that when we are making decisions about our future.

ZM: What is your role in achieving that outcome?

ES: For now?

ZM: Yeah.

ES: I am protesting as much as I can even though I am scared, even though I am not a protester at heart. I am a scientist. I do it because I believe that's a powerful way of getting action. But I am thinking of ways of how to, how to have more, how to do more.

ZM: So, why do you support this movement Black live matter?

ES: Black lives matter because I believe that their liberation would lead to the liberation of black people, would lead to the liberation of immigrants, would lead to the liberation of brown people and would lead to us to a society that we are proud of in the future.

ZM: What do you believe is the goal of the movement Black lives matters?

ES: I believe that the goal of black lives matters is to create a system of justice that works for everyone that is needed for everyone. Right now we do not have a justice system that protects and serves everyone.

ZM: And do you believe the goal was accomplished with the protest?

ES: I think there's a lot of investment interest in keeping the system the way it is. And is going to take a lot more, and a lot more people coming out and supporting and saying that is not okay for us to not care for our black brothers and sisters for it to really change. There's a lot of resistance against change.

ZM: What you wish those who created hate towards black people or anyone who has experience racial discrimination knew before they do this type of brutality?

ES: That this type of discrimination really affects everyone. It creates a society that is constantly. whatever they do they can't escape it is going to come back to hunt then.

ZM: So you believe they should learn that whatever you give, you receive?

ES: Yes, I think we live in a close earth is a close system if you throw garbage out it doesn't just disappear. Well it does for you it does but it stays in this world and is the same with hatred and the things that you do to people. Doesn't just go away it stays and it comes back from what we have today. The society that we have today, all the homelessness, crimes, all the poverty is what we put out, what we made, the decisions that we made in the past that were wrong, that were unfair, that were unjust that were not for everyone, that were not for the benefit of everyone. That created the United States that we have today.

ZM: Do you believe protesting would get the justice that people deserve?

ES: Protecting. Yes, I think it is the only way from now on. I think that everything else has led us to incremental changes.

ZM: Alright, thank you Elizabeth for the interview. I think you did a great job; I appreciate the time you put into creating this with me. And I hope that you get to make the change that you want too. I hope the world gets more conscious of what is going on not only here in the United states but everywhere that hate only creates hate and that we need to learn to be good to each other.

ES: Yeah I think. I think so too, I think that's the goal to call out hate whenever we see it perpetuate and to create a better world for us. So yeah you are welcome. Thank you so much for interviewing me. I feel really proud. Thank you.