

Luna Ruiz interviewed by Gianti Alcantara
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Harlem, Manhattan

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Gianti Alcantara: My name is Gianti Alcantara. I'm a second-year student I've gotten in community college currently studying human services. From my government and politics class, I will be doing a video recording about protests and the pandemic that is currently taking place. Today is February 10, 2021, the person who will be interviewing is my cousin, Luna Ruiz, before she introduces herself, I will first like to ask, do you give me permission to record and distribute this oral history?

Luna Ruiz: Yes, I do.

GA: Okay, great. So why don't tell me a little bit about yourself.

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LR: So my name is Luna. I was born and raised in Harlem, New York. I'm 22 years old.

And I'm a Latina.

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GA: Okay, so let's start with the questions. The first question I have is, are the people in your household currently working?

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LR: Well, I live with my grandmother, my cousin, my grandmother has not been working for a couple of of years because she gets on Social Security. My cousin got a job during the pandemic, but unfortunately, could not continue working because she had gotten the virus. And she was pretty much like, let go.

01:17

GA: And yourself?

LR: No, I'm not working. I graduated from college during the pandemic back in May. So yeah, looking for work now.

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GA: Okay, so what do you learn? And what did you learn about yourself or your families since the beginning of this crisis?

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LR: I think what I've learned not only just because of the pandemic because I finished school, and I actually had time to myself, was that there may be some things that I'm dealing with, that I didn't know about, like, things about myself. Like a stick. For example. I guess my life has always been surround, based on my schoolwork and being busy. So not being busy has made me realize that wow, like I've been struggling with things such as my identity. And other things, honestly.

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GA: Okay, have you or anyone else in your family got sick too?

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LR: So Coronavirus? Yeah, so both my grandmother and my cousin, thankfully, I wasn't here when they had contracted the virus because I usually helped my mother babysit my younger siblings. So when she had gotten sick, I was in my mom's house. I had gotten tested just to make sure I didn't contract with this virus and it turned out negative, thankfully. So I just quarantine there.

02:51

GA: Okay, that's good. What has been the hardest part of this pandemic for you? Or how has this pandemic affected you personally?

03:01

LR: The hardest part?

03:02

GA: Yes.

LR: Well, just going back to all the things that I just struggle with, you know, graduated from college and pandemic, so it didn't feel like an actually closed door. It just felt like something I had to just get over. And finding a job independently. Also having a lot of free time. As I said, my dad really misses something that definitely been struggling with

lot. 03:28

GA: Okay, what do you think the nation and the world should learn from this pandemic?

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LR: That, well, I think there's a lot of things you should never send them like I think a lot of people have, specifically are they allowed to go have been so dependent on others to make them happy than now that when they're alone, they're alone. They realize that they were never truly happy people, they just always distracted themselves. And I think mental health has become a very important topic specifically during this pandemic and is a reason why a lot of people aren't quarantining because they cannot seem to hang out with themselves. So they become very self selfish, and they go out rather than getting the help that they need. But then again, our government is not quite great with getting people even with insurance or medical, attention, mental health, you know, like therapy, and counseling and stuff.

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GA: Talking about the government, would you like to explain to me why these anti-racist protests erupted? And what do you think led to these people attempting to like, violate and overthrow the government?

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LR: Well, these things have always been happening. I remember being in high school and middle school, elementary school, what do you feel like? It never occurred the way it did? No, I think the only difference is now more people are paying attention to their force there paying attention. They're not in this district is that they work with even though people are still working, but it has. It's a time when people are paying a lot more attention to the news on social media because first of all people are hanging out with each other. So, they are some form of entertainment. Right? So they go to these outlets to get some form of information. And also people are keeping up with the Coronavirus. So, they're looking at the same news outlets, the same social media platforms, and newspaper, online, and stuff. So I think it's just become more apparent to people who haven't seen it, but these are things that have been happening and will lead to them

obviously, is resort justice. Like for example, what happened to George Floyd? weapon to Brianna Taylor. Those were some people's first introduction to race. But it's been happening for years, probably centuries.

06:00

GA: Okay, what do you feel was the difference between the Black Lives Matter protests and the Trump supporters protesting? Do you feel like there was a difference in the way the police handled the situation?

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LR: Absolutely. I think that the peaceful protesters were attacked a lot more physically and emotionally in the media, and Trump supporters were just kind of empathize with a lot more. But I think, again, that goes back to just race in this country, and how pervasive it is across the country, our states, specifically, so not surprised.

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GA: All right, what do you feel would have happened if Trump ran for president again? Would there have been a difference? Or do you think things would have remained the same?

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LR: He did run for president I mean for another four years? That's a good question, why I think it would be similar to what happened now. And I think he'll get even fewer supporters because I think people have forgotten what it is to have. I think people didn't realize the importance of our government. I think they knew it was important, but I don't think they knew how important it was like, not a lot of us are literally locked in our houses because our president ignored early signs of the pandemic. So, I think he ends, you know, seeing someone like the current president that we have, and not to say that he's a great president. But I think it has definitely isn't going to handle things differently. If I'm talking about the president, we have now on a case signing things back into order, you put things back into Word, and we didn't realize how important those things were, how it affects us.

08:02

GA: The final question I have for you is, do you have any stories you are willing to share about encounters you had with racism or the police?

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LR: Right? Well, as I said, I've been dealing a lot with my day and having conversations with others, specifically, like, definitely with my mother. But, just thinking about my involvement with the Black Lives Matter movement, and how that is affected by my identity. So, I'm someone who identifies as an afro Latina, because of just where I come from what I grew up as also my mother being dark-skinned, though, that's a conversation that we definitely have, I mean, being light-skinned. So, it definitely created this sort of confusion in my mind, also in her mind, and something that I called her up the other days, at three in the morning saying, like, What is going on? I don't even know because I always identified as black like, I was like, a homebody is what it is, but I definitely there were times where I questioned whether or not I was accepted as someone who was black so that has definitely been I really like to talk about it right now. Because it just opens up a jar that I just tried to put the shelves for fine, but it's crazy with your mom being a darker compliant.

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GA: And we're always as a kid always being as far as adopted or being because you were always lighter.

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LR: Right? Yeah, I was like my mom was dark or even the people who will believe that she's my mother like, oh, you're the white version of her is always like this confusion. And my separation from her son. A pathway that I know of to blackness. So that's always been confusing to me as to whether or not I truly am of her or not, which is weird because she's my mother.

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GA: All right. Well, that's the end of this interview. Thank you for your participation, and for answering all the questions I've had.

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LR: Thank you