

Marisol Lucero interviewed by Jennifer Lucero  
July 29, 2020  
Bensonhurst, NY

Marisol Lucero: Hello?

Jennifer Lucero: Hi

ML: Hi Jenny

JL: Do you give me permission to record this oral history?

ML: Um- Yeah

JL: Ok. Where are you from?

ML: I was born in Brooklyn

JL: Ok, can you tell me a little bit about how you or your family ended up in New York City?

ML: So my parents emigrated here from Mexico um- I was the second born child here, I'm the second out of four in our family, we've lived in Brooklyn our whole life. Um and yeah. Do you want me to say more or is that ok?

JL: No, that's good.

ML: Ok.

JL: So before the protests began against police brutality back in May 2020, what was your opinion on police?

ML: I always felt that there was some issue with like the police and the system in general, I think growing up and having grown up in-in immigrant family and being Latina myself, I've seen a lot of discrimination. I've experienced discrimination myself um- whether it was from like um a police authority or just authority in general so I think that I have always had maybe a bit of a biased in feeling that because I am a person of color I am treated a certain way. So I think when the protest started it just kind of reinforced that and seeing the video of everything that was happening really got to me and just makes you think a lot about everything that doesn't get captured but is still occurring and all the discrimination and violent acts that people are subjected to, and aren't reported and aren't and like there police that do this aren't held accountable.

JL: So do you think- um what you- everything you said right now is a part of the reason why the protests have begun to erupt?

ML: Yeah. I think- I think with my generation and the new generation like we wanna make change happen like I think everything has been you know going in a certain direction like I think a lot of different systems are very bureaucratic and the people at the top with the most power don't necessarily make changes that will bring about change and I think that we're just tired and it's time to really create change and not just say- say it and it to be a trending topic but for real change to happen in all different types of systems, health systems, police systems, political, I mean just even with the president that we have now it's just in-insane, it's just crazy to me.

JL: Yeah. So do you have any personal experience you'd like to share in which you encountered the police before or since May 2020?

ML: Um well the protest I participated in were all peaceful protests um I think that it was a good experience for me to see, just because you know I feel like the media was showing one side or like being biased towards one side; when, in reality, the protests were not about looting, the protests were not about violence, the protests were about making a statement and standing with you know the black community who is most targeted by police um and like again as a person of color I include myself in that group because. it's always kinda been a target on the Black and Latino community. Um so I think going to the protest kinda showed me you know reinforced that you know we're trying to make a positive and peaceful movement but also that you know what the media was showing that it was so violent and things weren't necessarily always true um I think that the police also seem very guarded and a lot of them looked nervous so I do feel bad because I don't think that every single police officer is bad, I don't think that every police officer is racist or you know intentionally does these things but I think that the majority have shown some type of behavior that unfortunately now is just being attached to label the police officer.

JL: So you think like um you know in comparison to viewing the protest through the t.v screen or a phone it-it really like changes your perspective when you're actually there?

ML: I think it does and if anything, I mean it was emotional enough for me to see the videos online and on t.v but then I think also- also just being there and being surrounded by so many people that we share the same belief of wanting to create a change.. Um it just feels empowering and also very emotional I think that you know when we were saying everybody's name, of the people who passed away, it was very emotional um and you know when people started chanting like a- I can't breathe again it was emotional for me because I can't wrap my mind around the idea that someone could be choking someone with their knee and hearing someone yelling for help saying like please I can't breathe and not react like that just doesn't even seem human to me so- I do think that going to the protest was very different than watching it on t.v and.. it just made me feel like at least I'm there and supporting um, of course, like, you don't have to go to the protest to support the movement but for me like it felt like something I want to do I needed to do.

JL: Yeah. In your perspective, How has this movement helped give a voice to the black community? (Pause)

ML: Um I think-I mean I was actually just thinking about that because um I think it's been like two full months of like none stop protesting and I think you know this happened before I think it was around 2005 that like protests started but it didn't go as strong as now and I think that today like with day an age with media and like social networking and like online and like internet access it really helps to spread awareness pass New York, pass the United States, but like globally and the fact that people in other countries like Germany and you know we're like protesting as well and going on into the streets and like talking about their own racism in their own countries also is just a sign that like- like we've had enough and I think that with like the millennials generation and generation um the where I'm from- omg I think I'm messing it up. (Laughs)

ML: But you know I think it's gonna finally bring about change and of course, its gonna take time it's not gonna happen.. overnight but change is gonna happen and I actually just got off a meeting from my job, I work in a hospital and they actually just had a whole town hall talking about how they're gonna address the racism that um employees have reported and the-address the diversity in positions of power so I was really happy to see that and my manager told me that in the 20 years that she's worked there, this conversation has never come up so I think its an example of how this is truly gonna create a rippling effect over the years.

JL: Yeah. I think it's great you- in your job you having those conversations, it's important.

ML: Yeah.

JL: No I wanted to ask you what did it take to make you want to get involved, in these protests? (Pause)

ML: I mean I don't know, I think I was just upset and I think that all the videos that were coming up were very triggering for me and I just- honestly I was angry. I was angry that this was happening. I was angry that people are ok with this, angry that people would defend murders and not take any action. I mean if that video of Ahmaud never came out- like the police ha-had covered it all up and on top of the fact that he was innocently killed they had like um what's it called? -accused him of like a crime and stuff.

JL: Yeah

ML: -And it wasn't until it went viral that other people spoke out and said what they saw and the video was really- so I was just angry and upset and I decided to try to be apart of it in whatever way I could.

JL: So do you think your opinion of protests um- like before May, Did your opinion of protest movements like change compared to now?

ML: Did my opinion of protests movements change?

JL: Yeah.

ML: I think so, I mean I think that- I don't know I have a mix opinion on protests a lot of the times (Laughs)

ML: because I think like in just getting older I see how much-how much needs to be done, how many policies le-legislations and things need to be passed and I know that a protest can't just change that but I think a step in the right direction for sure and I think it's important for all of us to voice our opinions and take a stand and say like we're not gonna take this and I think that that is why protests are so important you know.

JL: Yeah

ML: -I think like I've heard a lot of people say the protest isn't gonna change anything like that's not true like it's not true like its a start you know it's showing your voice, it's stating your opinion and you know basically saying like that it like we're not taking more you know

JL: Yeah. What do you think about the cop's response to protests? (Pause)

ML: I mean I think I was a mixed- a mix of responses- again it's hard to say like an unbiased answer because I think a lot of us don't only have the media to see like certain um actions that we're taking but I do think that you know police overuse force, I think that there has to be more training that goes into- into that specific department, I mean we're supposed to count on these people to defend and protect we can't fear them you know. We can't have to double think should I call 911 because next thing you know you're the one getting assaulted or something by an officer. I do think that there is an abusive power, I think brut forces you way too often and I think that there's definitely a bias in who gets treated a certain way you know a person of color being arrested is not gonna be nicely asked to turn around and then put their handcuffs on automatically you see that brute force comes in versus when you see the arrest of like white people or like even with like the school shootings, like when they would arrest you know the shooter if they didn't commit suicide at the end they're like commonly putting handcuffs after they just killed people literally just killed people and they're being handled with care but a person like I don't know does like a minor offense and they're being tackled to the floor and killed? You know it makes no sense and the only difference is those incidents unfortunately is the color of the skin.

JL: And I wanted to mention you know why these protests have been going on around the world we still have a pandemic going on as well like- and it has definitely impacted many lives so, How do you think the coronavirus has impacted these protests? (Pause)

ML: How the coronavirus has impacted the protests?

JL: Yeah.

ML: Um I mean I don't know I was personally a little torn about that because I knew that as someone who wants to go into like public health as well I feel like I'm betraying my public health person (Laughs)

ML: Because I'm going to a protest but also you know- actually the protest that I attended like everyone had a mask on, they were actually handing out masks if you needed one to make sure that everyone was wearing one. There were hand sanitizer and while social distancing wasn't followed in like the protest I went to, I mean I felt ok and it was like I don't know, I mean I feel like everyone was wearing a mask. I do have mixed opinions but I don't know. Um, and how it has an impact- you said how coronavirus has impacted the protest?

JL: Yeah.

ML: I mean I guess just maybe even fewer people showing up, I know that there's a lot of people that have pretty severe conditions that put them at a higher risk, so I would say that probably a lot of people didn't participate for that reason (Pause)

ML: And you know just for fear, and for wanting to follow you know stay at home orders and things like that.

JL: Yeah. And also how has the coronavirus changed your life?

ML: The coronavirus changed my life?

JL: Yeah.

ML: Well I work from home now so I definitely feel more isolated um I started a new job actually right in March so I didn't get to meet any of my co-workers or my supervisor probably until the beginning of May is when finally was asked to go into the office and I started to meet like one or two of my co-workers. It has been an isolating-an isolating feeling, I also don't live with my family so you know when we were quarantined I literally was in an apartment by myself so that wasn't fun. (Laughs)

ML: I mean I think that's the biggest thing, I think that the whole pandemic has just made me feel- feel isolated and just you know um especially when you know it was strict orders and everything shut down at Eight/8 you know I was- I just wasn't seeing anyone so all I had was like my phone and my computer and you know you miss human interaction and also for my job I work with cancer patients so I haven't really been able to meet a lot of like the new patients that are referred to us, so it changes the interactions and the relationships that I have with them.

JL: Yeah.

ML: And I got sick and that was not fun, I actually did have COVID back in March um and I was tested positive for the antibodies in April and I did the COVID test and it came back Negative.

JL: That's good. (Pause)

JL: Um I also want to ask you what do you think about your mayor's response to protests that began in May 2020?

ML: Um I have to remember what he said (Laughs)

ML: What do you mean like regards to what, like which comment?

JL: Um well how he has responded throughout like all the protests right going on

ML: Um I mean I have to be honest in saying that I don't remember exactly what he- he was saying because I don't have a T.V so I don't watch the news at all (Laughs)

ML: So I'm not entirely sure what to answer.

JL: Um

ML: I mean I think that he was basically saying you know to be safe and I know that there was like a lot of controversy with like is this gonna impact COVID and make it- make the race increase and things like that but from what I saw from the protest, at least the one I attend everyone had a mask and hand sanitizer. It wasn't like you know a free run around

JL: Yeah

ML: Coughing and like all this stuff yeah

JL: Um well do you- What do you think about President Trump like his response to the protests?

ML: Well, I think that he was obviously biased, I think that like he was ok with like conservative protesting and like executing like what they were calling like their freedom of speech and like the protests that like were counteracting the black lives matter movement, like the people in those protests weren't wearing masks, weren't social distancing, were walking out with guns in their hands and they were never like met with any like brute force or pepper spray, I mean thinking back to it, it was crazy like in some cities people protesting for black lives matter were being literally shot at with rubber bullets just for protesting and some of them- like most of them were peacefully protesting of course then like there were people who took advantage of the situation

and then started looting um and of course our lovely president then labeled that as that's the protest so I think he had a poor response I think he makes it like hes made people feel comfortable being openly racist to others because he constantly says discriminatory comments and thinks that, that's ok and he does not apologize for anything, I mean even with COVID calling it the Chinese virus, and then I remember one time I heard like a clip of what he said, he was like no I'm not gonna stop calling it the Chinese virus. I mean who- what type of present do we have? It's like we have a child

JL: So you

ML: You know

JL: Yeah. So you think it's possible that President Trump may be dividing the county even more so than before it was?

ML: Yes. Definitely. Definitely.

JL: And

ML And I think his presidency has just made it more obvious of how many racist people there truly are in our county, it's just that now they feel comfortable being openly racist.

JL: Yeah

ML: They don't feel like they need to hide. (Pause)

JL: And um- how have protests in the context of the coronavirus shifted the way you think about race in America? (Pause)

ML: Um I mean, I think that I've always thought humans are very divided over race. I think that race matters way too much. Like, in general, like in the world but especially in this county I think that there are not equal opportunities for all races. Um

JL: Yeah

ML: And can you repeat the question? I don't know if I answered it.

JL: Um- How have protests in the context of the coronavirus shifted the way you think race in America?

ML: Shifted the way I think of race in America?

JL: Yeah.

ML: Um- I mean I don't know if it's so much shifted, I think that in a way I still see it the same because again like going back to like I feel like ever since Trump got into power more people felt very comfortable making racial comments and thinking that it's ok, so I think it didn't necessarily shift I would say but I think the protests and everything just gave us more of a voice.

JL: Yeah. How would you like to see this movement resolved?

ML: I mean I think it has to be a systematic change. It's the only way. There has to be a systematic change across the country and people have to be open to learning and being anti-racist not just saying I'm not racist, but being anti-racist and calling out other people and I think you know we all need to check ourselves and ask ourselves like are we like sub concisely holding you know stereotypes or judgments towards other cultures and races.

JL: Yeah

ML: I think we all we all have to do the work.

JL: What role do you play in achieving that outcome?

ML: What role do I play?

JL: Yeah

ML: Um I mean I'll call out people, I think that I call out my friends if I ever feel like you know jokingly they make a comment or something and I'm not talking about like a racist comment, I'm talking about like more like giving in to stereotypes and things like that cause I think a lot of times, you know even comedians try to use that which I don't know then it's like you have to watch-watch with all of that um and I mean I try my best to treat everyone equally and be aware of myself and I don't know I just I guess if that counts.  
(Laughs)

JL: Yeah well thank you for your time, that was all the questions I had for you today.

ML: Ok. Thank you.

JL: Alright. Thank you, bye.

ML: Ok, bye.