

Sabrina Garcia interviewed by Jasmin Amaya
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The Bronx, NYC

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

people, feel, new york city, guessing, neighborhood, crazy, protest, community, support, family, live, policeman, black, remember, interview, jasmine, mom, changed, personality trait, train
Jasmin Amaya: My name is Jasmine Amaya, and I'm interviewing Sabrina Garcia in Bronx, New York on May 18th of 2020. Do you give me permission to record and make this oral history?

Sabrina Garcia: Yes.

JA: As a reminder, you do not have to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable. Please share as much basic information you are willing to share. Would you please tell me your name?

SG: My name is Sabrina Garcia.

JA: Would you please tell me how old you are?

SG: I am 24 years old.

JA: What is your occupation?

SG: I am currently working at a charter school. I'm an operations associate.

JA: Your neighborhood?

SG: I live in the Bronx.

JA: The place of origin?

SG: Well we are currently in my house.

JA: Okay. Um, would you please tell me your first language?

SG: English?

JA: English. Your ethnic identity?

SG: I am Puerto Rican.

JA: Okay.

JA: Your gender identity?

SG: I consider myself female.

JA: And your sexual orientation?

SG: Sexual orientation meaning as in my preferences? I am a bisexual woman.

JA: That's good to know. As we move forward. Are you and your family from New York City? If not, please tell me how you and your family and ended up in New York City.

SG: Yes, we are from New York City. My mom? Is it, my mom wasn't born here. But she met my dad here. And they made a family here, so yea.

JA: Yeah. Okay. That's nice to know. As a reminder, you do not have to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable.

SG: I remember you said that in the beginning.

JA: Yes. But I have to repeat myself for that.

SG: No, of course.

JA: How do you get around in the city?

SG: I think the bus, I take the train when I have a little bit of money. I take the lift sometimes.

JA: What buses do you take? Or trains?

SG: Like the numbers and stuff?

JA: Yes.

SG: Um, I take the 2 and the 5. From then, I'll probably still take the 2 and the 5 to get to the city. I take the B19 a lot. That's the bus I take for work. And I take the B36. Sometimes, the B1 not that long ago. I've never been on that bus, but that's another story.

JA: Okay. Um, would you please describe your experience with the transportation system in New York City?

SG: Well, I lived here for 24 years, since I was born. So, you know, you see a lot of crazy stuff. It's New York. So, you know, it's not the most sane place.

JA: Okay, um, do you feel safe in New York City public transportation system? Why or why not?

SG: No, I do not at all. Because, you know, if you watch the news, you know, we watch the news. So there's a lot of crazy stuff going on, you know, especially about that shooting that happened on the train and stuff. Crazy people doing crazy stuff, showing their stuff, people just crazy. No, I don't feel safe.

JA: Okay. Um, do you have any wild stories from being on public transit? Public transportation system in New York City?

SG: Do you really want to know?

JA: Yes.

SG: Oh, my goodness. Yes. Well, one time since he, since we're talking to the audience, me and my sister, which is the one that's interviewing me. This week, we had a lot of experiences. There was one time that I remember we was going on the train and it smells so bad. It's so so so bad. And we didn't know what it was. And it was just a homeless guy with his shoes off. But it was so bad. I can't describe it. And it's crazy because it's so many stuff that happens but I cannot get that story out of my head because we could not find where that smell was coming from because we didn't see him at first. And then we seen them and I was shocked.

JA: Yes, that was a crazy day. Okay, do you feel safe in your community?

SG: To be honest, a lot of crazy stuff happens around here but I feel safe. I never really got into anything or seen anything.

JA: Okay, that's nice to know. What would or does make your community safe? Oh, I'm sorry, what would or does make your community safe?

SG: Can you repeat the question?

JA: What would or does make your community safe?

SG: Um, one thing that I think that, okay, one thing that I think would make it safe would be like a, rec center. I feel like they have it in some areas, but they don't have it over here. And I noticed they only have the pool and you know, that opens in the summer. So that's not really something. What we, I'm guessing we could do as a community, to feel safe, as, you know, reduce the gun violence that's going on?

JA: Yes.

SG: Yeah, there was a woman that was on the news that she got shot over here. I guess she was getting out of her car, getting off from work. And I guess they were shooting or something like that. And she literally got shot like blindsided, and she got killed in her car.

JA: Oh, wow.

SG: She lives off the block. And that's crazy so.

JA: Okay, how does law enforcement fit into your vision of safety in New York City?

SG: I mean, to be honest, I'm guessing they have to fit because they're trained to put civilians lives before theirs. So, I guess that's a big thing for us to have.

JA: Okay. How does concerns for safety and your community shift how that community functions?

SG: If it shifts a lot, like for example, mentioning about the woman that got killed, excuse me. And, um, you know, I heard a couple people talking about it, you know, that they don't want to, like they're scared to go outside, even to the supermarket because it was right across the street from the supermarket. And, you know, people don't want to go outside and, you know, go get their things and just do their normal errands because of everything that's going on.

JA: Um, okay. I'm sorry. What is it like living in your city that has people from all over the world?

SG: I love it. Everybody's different. Everybody's got their own style. Everybody just, you don't have to look like somebody to. Everybody just looks different. It's just cool. Like, it's just a cool vibe.

JA: How have you benefited from New York City diversity?

SG: I benefited a lot since I'm Puerto Rican. I had a best friend for a while, she was African American. And, you know, she introduced me to the culture. And I love it. And you know, going to college with a lot of different people as well. And it's just cool.

JA: Okay. How would you consider New York City generally, or your neighborhoods specifically to be racially segregated? Meaning not diverse? Why or why not?

SG: I guess the neighborhood isn't so diverse, just because, you know, we're by the public housing and things like that. So, we're usually the same as ethnic or racial, all you see is Hispanic Latinos. And yeah, yeah.

JA: Um, what have been your experience with New York City public education system, as a student, parent and or an observer?

SG: As a student? Um, school was okay. It was good. elementary, middle school, high school wasn't. I feel like college was when I really got the opportunity to like, engage and focus and take in all that education and actually like, you know, like it, love it and appreciate it in a way cuz you know, a lot of people don't get that.

JA: Okay. Have you ever experienced segregation either in one ethnic group, or having an ethnic group missing in your school system?

SG: Can you repeat the question?

JA: The question is have you ever experienced segregation either in one ethnic group or having an ethnic group missing in your school system?

SG: I mean school wise there's a lot of like I said there's a lot of different people, so a lot of different people just get along with each other because of the interest not because of the color. So school wise, I don't really see it but I'm guessing, I just can't really remember right now, but I'm guessing I had to go through it at some point in my life and see it because I definitely did get like picked on about being so light and having like, thicker hair. So I know that that's something personal, but I just can't think of another one right now.

JA: Okay, that's fine. Um, if so? If so, what do you think are the consequences of segregation?

SG: I'm sorry, repeat it?

JA: What are the consequences of the segregation?

SG: What do you mean by that?

JA: I'm guessing Hold on, I'm sorry.

SG: Um, well, the consequences. Well, it's really hard because somebody just not liking you. Or just like, being rude and disrespectful about your ethnicity is not segregation. Honestly, now that I'm thinking about it, no, because this generation is very more so into interracial friendships, interracial couples, interracial everything is really supported in our generation. So, generation wise, I really haven't had to deal with that.

JA: What are some personality traits of the New Yorker?

SG: Loud. I think every New Yorker kind of have that same personality, kinda have like a same personality trait, no matter how nice you are. It's like, you know, don't step over me because I'm not, you know, a punk, you know. And I feel like they blend in anything because New York is so alike, with so many different people, I feel like no matter where New Yorker goes, I feel like they blend because you know, of different people.

JA: Okay? Um, how do you alter your social interaction to survive and thrive in this city?

SG: I'm sorry, can you repeat it?

JA: How do you alter your social interaction to survive and thrive in this city?

SG: Well, I feel like that all depends on like, what you like to do and stuff on a daily basis. So workwise I mean, I have to be social because I work with kids and I work around people. But honestly, I feel like it doesn't. Okay, oh, social interactions, okay. Well to survive I you know, not messing with the wrong crowd and not getting into things that you don't really need to get into like foolishness. A way you thrive is you know, taking advantage of all the good things like if you like, for example, want to be a model and things like that, like you can always find nice views and stuff in the city. You can always take pictures, there's always opportunities there and things like that.

JA: Um, as a reminder, you do not have to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable. How well do you know your neighbors and the people in your community?

SG: Well, personally, I don't know my neighbors very well, but I do hear them all the time. Community wise I really don't know a lot of people because I literally just go to work come home and you know, handle whatever needs to be handled. I really don't know them so well.

JA: Okay. What public? What public support system have you experienced in your community?

SG: I really haven't experienced anything.

JA: Nothing.

SG: Public support system? I don't know if it's a system, but when my father passed, I really needed a notary. And she lived on the block and that really helped. I don't know if that would answer the question, but I know that that's one thing that helped me.

JA: Okay. Are there others you know about that aren't available in your community?

SG: Other public stuff? Um, yes. Like I said, a recreational center, I have never seen one. I never heard about one around here.

JA: What does good housing means to you in terms of neighborhood, space in the apartment? Public Space in areas? Food and areas? safety, transportation, neighborhood resources of your identity? Have you? Yeah. I'm sorry. I'll repeat that.

SG: It's okay. Um, how has good housing means to you? Okay. Well, good housing means a lot, honestly. And yeah, it does. And transportation and everything you said does go along with it? Um, well, um, my grandma's ADA and I have a dog and I have a bunny and a turtle. So, I have big dog, I have a pit bull. So space in my apartment, yes, it means a lot. And food wise, making sure that, you know, supermarkets and things like that is nearby is important too. Because, you know, you don't want to walk up really long to go find a supermarket.

JA: Yeah. It's convenient for you right across the street when you feel lazy. Okay, have you ever been worried about not being able to afford rent? If so, can you please explain that experience?

SG: Well, yeah. Yeah. It's a horrible experience, especially when you're the person that's the breadwinner in the family, and you support everybody. It is a horrible experience. So yes.

JA: What has been the impact of gentrification and commuting dislocation, on your neighborhood, in your neighborhood?

SH: Well, the building managers that had my apartment that I am living in now got changed, and now they're these people, and their ethnicity is Jewish. That's one change because to be honest, I feel like the managers beforehand, since they knew the area and they knew it was like, you know, poverty and everything like that. They knew what to do and where to say and where to go. Like, for example, when we lost my dad, they told my mom about like the psychologist place they can go to within the program. I feel like Jewish, the Jewish people that the managers I feel like they don't they, they really don't give us options and things like that.

JA: Okay, well, that kind of sucks.

SG: Yeah, they suck.

JA: Um, how do you feel about the homelessness crisis in New York City?

SG: I think it's crazy, and it's a lot.

JA: What do you see as the cause?

SG: To be honest, the causes are from way back when to be honest, that's a lot to get into. That's a lot to get into, from way back when it's when they started off. If I'm not mistaken, this went on the Human Services and everything was going on. And they started closing down psych hospitals. And then the people that were living in the psych hospital, they were just kicked out, and they just had to be forced to live on the street and then everything else that goes on in the world.

JA: How should society and the government do to fix this?

SG: I feel like they need to do a lot. I feel like they need to do a lot because I don't know if it's true or not but I saw something online about that. They that they made the new stairs and new stairway leading right into Times Square. And they spend \$3 million on that. Yes. And it's so crazy how they spent \$3 million on that and they have money for that but there's still like so much we need and the community needs and people need. And they're spending \$3 million on stairs. It makes no sense to me.

JA: It's ridiculous, the world where we live in. Okay. Moving forward. Again, you do not have to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable.

SG: I know.

JA: How do you feel about the Black Lives Matter protest?

SG: I support it. I completely support it.

JA: Okay. Explain to me why do you think these anti-racist protests erupted strongly in New York City?

SG: A lot of it is police brutality. That's exactly how everything usually starts up police brutality.

JA: You're right. Okay, what do you think activated, protesting Black-Americans and their non-black allies to challenge subculture racism in the United States?

SG: Basically, how did black people and white people come to like, I'm guessing like how like, black people and white people do want to protest against what black people are going through and things like

that? Um, I just honestly, I just feel like, again, it's our generation, I feel like our generation is very more accepting and like, we don't look at things like that. I don't know how to describe it. But our generation is very much, I don't know, it's like skin deep. But it's like it doesn't have to be like, you have to look like this and that for us to be friends and for us to get along.

JA: Do you have any stories you are willing to share about the encounters? Sorry, you have or had with racism?

SG: People are just stupid. One time some boy, there were these two boys. And they were talking, they were both black. I work with them. They were talking about... I think I told you the story. They were talking about something that happened with Black Lives Matter. And I wanted to know about it. And I was like, and I was friends with one of them. Another one I wasn't really cool with. I asked the one I was cool with oh, what's going on? What he's talking about? And the other one said, we can't tell you because you're not black.

JA: Oh, really? Yeah. Oh, wow. That's crazy. Okay, how about the negative encounter with the police?

SG: I remember clear as day when I was a kid seeing my dad get beat bloody by policemen. I remember that like it was yesterday.

JA: Oh, well, I'm so sorry.

SG: It's okay. I was mad young.

JA: Have you learned about an experience of someone close to you that you didn't know before?

SG: Not really. Well, I can think about it right now.

JA: Okay, that's fine. Um, how? How has your opinion of the NYPD changed over time?

SG: I just feel like they're just getting useless and useless by the years. Just being honest.

JA: You're being honest, your right. Okay, how about the way race or racism and policing is covered in the media?

SG: I felt like people say and make up what they want to make up not even make up just like kind of twist words. Instead of saying, oh, a policeman attacked or something or a policeman shot a black man in the street or something like that. Instead of it being put like that it will be put like Black men resist arrest. So sadly, police officer had to kill him or strike him or something like that. They will twist it and make it sound so not as bad when instead of just keeping them blunt and say know what it is.

JA: Do you think any changes should be made with the way NYPD updates given the events of the last two years?

SG: Of course, but to be honest with you I'm not even going to put all the blame on NYPD because it's not. I feel like there's a lot of things that need to change but there's a lot of things that need to change. I feel like there's a lot of ignorance on both sides.

JA: Okay. If you were active in a in the protests in the in, I'm sorry...

SG: I wasn't active in the protest.

JA: In a digital way or in person?

SG: Oh, yes. Yeah.

JA: In the last year two years?

SG: Yes, me and you. I'm sorry. I don't know if you remember the Blackout Tuesday?

JA: Yes.

SG: When we had to just post the picture or something. I don't really remember what's going on?

JA: Yes. You had to post a picture on Instagram.

SG: Yes. And it would just have to be a black screen. Yeah. And it was to support something. I'm not sure what it was. I don't know what it was. But if we find it, find it. We'll put it here. But I don't know. But I remember that. Okay.

JA: Why did we decide to get involved?

SG: It's sad because I don't remember what it was. But I definitely know what it has to do with Black Lives Matter. Yes, that's about African Americans. So I definitely know like it was because it upset us and it bothered us. And we wanted to show that we supported it. I'm not supporting it, but support us all sticking together and fighting against whatever happened.

JA: As a reminder, you do not have to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable. How has your life changed financially since COVID-19?

SG: I've been up and I've been down. First, I was up, and I went down. This was a roller coaster.

JA: How were the working conditions at your workplace before COVID?

SG: Before? Before COVID? Well, I didn't have the same job. But before COVID nobody wore a mask. Of course. Yeah. And yeah, nobody wore a mask. That's one big thing. Nobody wore masks before COVID. And now everybody wears a mask.

JA: How has your workplace shift since March of 2020?

SG: Um, well, I'm not in the same position. But I'm guessing, I honestly, I couldn't tell you. Because I haven't been in the position more than a year and I'm not working for the other job. So, I don't know.

JA: Okay, that's fine. How has your life changed personally since COVID-19?

SG: A lot has changed. Since I don't know, I guess I got to enjoy more being inside and just finding things to do inside and just spending time with family.

JA: Are there any new hobbies you've taken up?

SG: Yes. Oh, my goodness. I find that I like to paint. Me jazz and my mom, we always watch a new show, always watching new movies. That's our little thing. That's what we like to do. So that was one big thing we found out about us.

JA: Yes. Are there any old hobbies you lost interest in?

SG: Going outside all the time. I used to love to be outside all the time just hanging out, friends, whatever I was doing. And that was fun. I just love being inside. And it's much safer when all this stuff is going on?

JA: Yes. How have your relationship changed with your friends, neighbors or family?

SG: Um, honestly, you just really got to just see who you really like who you're really cool with and who's really your friend and who's really not. I remember me and Jaz didn't see each other for like three months, four months. And we used to see each other all the time because I used to go to Guttman. So we used to see other every single day, like so it went from that to not seeing each other in three, four months. Oh my god. Yeah. What was the question again?

JA: Um, how your relationship changed with your neighborhood, your neighbors or your family?

SG: Okay, this is what I was getting up to. Cause when we did see each other, and we finally got a chance to see each other, we were so happy. And we just got closer over time, over that. Family wise, I just got closest to my family because of it like yeah, and even though all the crazy things happen, you just gotta look at the brighter things and those are really the brightest stuff like you know, you got close to people. No, you really started to find a genuine joy in things.

JA: Yes. Okay, how has COVID-19 impact your health and the health of your family?

SG: By the grace of Jesus himself It hasn't impacted me or my family in really no way. Not even the vaccines. Like, well, Jasmine wasn't feeling very well with hers, but mine. It didn't bother me. And my mom and my grandma and everybody they're not vaccinated just me, Jasmine, my brother, and they God be willing, they have been fine.

JA: Yes. Yes. Same to my family. What, if any, were the benefits to your life from two years in quarantine?

SG: Any benefit? Oh, my goodness, I could talk to you about shows for days. I don't know, you just generally just find a genuine happiness in little things. Now, you know, you don't gotta like, go out and do mad crazy stuff. Or have a ton of fun, spend tons of money to be happy. And just be happy.

JA: Is there anything you learned about yourself or your family?

SG: Um, I learned that my mom was way stronger than she thinks she is. And sometimes even if she don't feel it, and I learned that about myself, too. I knew I was always strong, but you never really know how strong you are until life really hits you and knocks you on your bottom. You gotta get up and you know what, this also? Yes, you know, you realize how strong you are.

JA: Okay, as we finish this interview up, is there anything I should have asked or anything you would like to add?

SG: Um, no, I think you asked everything. It was good.

JA: Are you still comfortable making this oral history public?

SG: Yeah.

JA: Are you sure?

SG: Yeah.

JA: Okay. All right. Well, that's the end of this interview. Thank you so much, Sabrina, for letting me interview you. I hope you have a good day.

SG: Thank you, you too.