

Emily Nash

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SPEAKERS

Emily Nash, Rimsha Syed



Rimsha Syed 00:00

Hi, this is Rimsha Syed. The date is April 20th, 2021. I am the program coordinator with IDCL. I'm currently in Austin, Texas on a Zoom call with Emily Nash for the Texas Freeze oral history project. Hi Emily, how are you doing today?



Emily Nash 00:05

Hi, I'm doing good. Thanks for asking.



Rimsha Syed 00:06

I'm really excited to get to know you more today. I wanted to ask if we can start off by [you] sharing with me a little bit about your childhood and family dynamic.



Emily Nash 00:10

I am from Texas. I grew up here. I was actually raised in Bryan-College Station, so not too far from Austin, where I'm living now. My mom is an immigrant from Honduras and my dad is a native Houstonian. I'm actually an only child. So, I think because of that I'm quite close to my parents in a lot of ways, they actually followed me to Austin. I really appreciate the proximity I have with them. As far as my childhood, it was a good

childhood. Even though I was an only child, I don't feel like I was a very lonely child and I attribute that to having a really good support systems. Like I said, I'm very close to my parents. They always provided so much love and care for me. I had very, very good friends growing up, who always had their doors open for me. I was very close to their families. So, despite it always being just me and my mom and dad - I don't have family close by either - I always felt so much love and care and nurturing when I was growing up, which I think was really important for me, because we did come across some hardships. When I was younger, my parents separated when I was about ten years old for various reasons. We had a lot of economic hardships, we were always lower class. So, money has always been a stressor for me and [that] kind of continue[s]. Now that my parents are aging, I think about how I am going to support them once they get older - if they're not receiving enough Social Security - so that's always kind of been a big one, a big stressor, a big hardship. But despite all of that, like I said, I always had the love and support that I think I needed growing up. So, it was a good childhood overall.



Rimsha Syed 02:31

Lovely, thank you so much for sharing. I'm curious if you have any cousins, either here or in Honduras that you're close with? And then, do you and your mom go back to visit often?



Emily Nash 02:50

I do have many cousins, most of them are still in Tegucigalpa, which is the capital and where my family's from. I have a few cousins here in the US. I don't have any here in Texas. So unfortunately, I wasn't raised around my cousins or my family, which is really unfortunate, but I do still feel connected to them. My mom goes to visit Honduras pretty often. I haven't been in about ten years. The last time I went I was fifteen. Before that I hadn't been in also ten years. So, I've only been two times. I was really hoping to go last year but COVID happened and totally messed up my plans, as it messed up everyone's plans. But I'm in a family WhatsApp group with my Honduran family and my mom goes to visit and she's very, very close to her family. My grandma actually recently - I guess she got a travel visa to be able to come to the US a few years ago. So, she was able to come to my college graduation and she's visited a couple times. That's been a good way for me to connect with her since I don't get to visit very often.



Rimsha Syed 04:46

I love how so many immigrant families use WhatsApp group chats to stay connected. I definitely am part of so many.



Emily Nash 04:54

Yeah. It's really like the universal phenomena that brings all of us together. WhatsApp is amazing. I love it.



Rimsha Syed 05:06

Me too. I wanted to ask, "What do you remember about your last trip?" You said you went when you were fifteen. I kind of wanted to hear about how that time went for you.



Emily Nash 05:19

I think I experienced a little bit of a culture shock. Honestly, the last time I had gone, I was five years old. So I was quite young. I do remember a little bit from that. We actually lived there for a few months when I was five years old, and then we moved back to the US. When I went back when I was fifteen, I think in the beginning, I felt a little bit just overwhelmed by being around so many family members. Central Americans are known for being like very expressive and loud, I guess, for lack of a better word. But it was really positive and such a good experience. I have so many good memories from that trip and being able to connect to my cousins who were around the same age. So, it was a lovely experience.



Emily Nash 06:20

The hardest thing I think was the language, I do speak Spanish, I'm actually a lot more comfortable speaking Spanish now than I was then. I was definitely scared of the language barrier that came up. That was really nerve-racking for me. I was nervous that I wouldn't be able to connect to my family in the same way. But I don't know, I made it, I think my Spanish was good enough to where I could communicate with my family. And I still connected with them in a very special way. It was a really, really good, fun experience and has really pushed me to want to go back soon.



Rimsha Syed 07:06

That's really beautiful. You mentioned that you feel more confident in your Spanish speaking skills now versus when you were younger. Is that because you've been practicing with your mom? Or did you actually like take any classes or something to help you?



Emily Nash 07:25

I had to take Spanish in college, and I think that actually was really helpful for me. My

problem with the Spanish language was always [that] I could understand it very, very well. My mom always speaks Spanish to me. But when I was growing up, she was trying to learn English. So, we tried to speak English in the house, and I think she also had this idea that if I was learning two languages growing up, I would get too confused. I was encouraged to speak English while my mom would continue to speak to me in Spanish. We kind of grew up with this - my mom speaks to me in Spanish, I speak to her in English. I definitely had that baseline for the Spanish language. It really wasn't until I started working at my current job, as a bilingual case manager that I really had to become comfortable with speaking Spanish and get over my fear of it. I think I've always kind of felt this fear of, "Oh, well, my accent isn't perfect, and sometimes I can't think of words quickly enough, and I am scared of sounding like I don't know what I'm doing." I think a lot of it was based in fear and anxiety around speaking Spanish.

E

Emily Nash 08:54

Now, my Spanish is still not perfect, but I'm a lot less scared of messing up. When I speak to my clients who are Spanish speakers, if I don't know a certain word, I just use Google Translate. If there's no time for that, we just figure it out. My clients are never judgmental. They always appreciate that I'm able to speak Spanish with them. I think that has gotten me a lot more comfortable with the language, and I have tried speaking Spanish to my mom a little more, just to get some practice in. But it feels weird just because she speaks Spanish with me, I really only speak English with her. Switching it up is strange. It almost doesn't feel like we're genuinely communicating, which is a really weird sensation. But I'm also trying to move on from that because it's good to practice my Spanish with her and I do want to keep the very specific Honduran accent that she has. I want to keep that as well. I think communicating with her in Spanish helps me keep that part.



Rimsha Syed 10:14

Yeah, I actually have the same language dynamic in my household where my parents typically speak to me in Urdu. But I only respond in English, even though I can understand 95% of what they're saying. But actually speaking it is so much harder for some reason, when you grow up needing to learn English in this country to really thrive as a child. So, I totally feel where you're where you're coming from.

E

Emily Nash 10:47

Yeah. It's such an interesting concept, I think so many children of immigrants experience. In

the household, that's where our parents feel the most comfortable, and that's where they want to be able to speak their own language. When you're raised around that, it makes sense that you know what's going on, and that you understand your parents, but when you really don't have that much of a need to speak the language, it kind of gets lost. I feel this really intense sense of anxiety around it. So much so to where I just avoided speaking Spanish at all costs, if I could.



Rimsha Syed 11:27

Does your dad also speak Spanish?



Emily Nash 11:31

Not really. He definitely understands it. I mean, my mom will speak to him in Spanish all the time. His accent is - no shade to him - but it's just not very good. He actually studied Latin American Studies, he was working on a PhD and that was his focus. He's pretty familiar with the language, but he doesn't really speak it too well.



Rimsha Syed 12:01

Does your family or your parents practice any religion specifically?



Emily Nash 12:07

My mom is very, very Christian. She actually has two degrees, one of her degrees is in social work and the other is actually in theology. She was raised in, I think, The Church of Christ and I think she now goes to a Baptist church. She's very, very Christian. My dad was raised Lutheran, so I think he also still kind of identifies with that. I was raised in a very Christian household and a very Christian environment. For myself, personally, I struggled with that a little bit, just because I think the Protestant church as an institution, there are a lot of things that I just don't really agree with as far as practice goes, which is really unfortunate, because I think the Bible has been twisted in so many ways to just be really oppressive, even though Jesus was very much a radical. That's my belief. I mean, he was a Brown man. He had this sense of radical love for everybody. I do really hold on to that part of Christianity. I don't go to church anymore. I don't really practice what they did when I was growing up. I think now I'm a little more on the agnostic, spiritual side. I don't really call myself a Christian like I used to. But there are a lot of things in the Bible that I think are really interesting, and that I connect to and it was a really important part of my childhood growing up. Anytime we had hard times or I was really going through something

personally, I always prayed, and that really brought me a lot of sense of relief and calmness. But I don't really practice now. I hope that answers your question.



Rimsha Syed 14:17

Thank you so much for sharing that with me. I wanted to actually go back a little bit to what you mentioned earlier, when you were introducing yourself about being raised lower class, and I was curious as to how that has affected your worldview of things or priorities that you have.



Emily Nash 14:38

Yeah, I mean, it's really impacted everything maybe. I mean, my parents are still working class people. I think when I was much younger, there was a point where we were at least, pretty stable, financially - certainly not even middle class - but my mom was quite frugal, and we would make our bills and everything. There was a point when I was much younger, before my parents separated where I remember my parents were really strapped financially. Even when you're little, you know what's going on. When my mom would say, "We literally have \$13 in the bank account," I know what that means as a six-year-old. That did create a sense of stress and anxiety and just having to be aware of kind of our situation. Like I said, at some point, I think it stabilized a little bit more and we were not always super stressed in that regard. But I think now that my parents are getting a little bit older, and I actually work with the aging population, and I see how difficult it is to be lower class and an aging person, it stresses me out a lot. Like, "What are my parents gonna do? How am I going to support them when they get older and they can't work anymore?" Social Security is not going to cut it. I mean, you really don't get much in Social Security. It continues to be a stressor, and I think it always will be a stressor.



Emily Nash 15:03

Right now, I'm a part time student, and I'm working full time. I remember my dad was in a similar situation when I was younger, and I remember how stressful it was for him. And now I'm stressed. It's just kind of a constant. I mean, being stressed, for money, it's a whole other base level, just a weight on your shoulders. It's pretty constant. I think with that lived experience and that perspective, I really empathize with people who are working class. I can connect with a lot of my clients who are working class. I think that has radicalized me in a lot of ways. Despite my parents being conservative people, I think I always had this understanding that this system is designed to keep the majority of the people down financially, while other people stay way up here. These people who are way

up here are exploiting the lower class. You come to this understanding even as a young person when you have that lived experience. It feels really unfair and it's really hard to grapple with because being working class, that's going to be a constant stressor because you can't really just work your way out of being poor. It doesn't necessarily work that way, unless you win the lottery. It's just not that simple. It's a tough one. Being poor sucks. Being lower class is really hard. But, that's why I am doing the work that I do. I think I'm very passionate about working with marginalized people and people who just need advocacy.



Rimsha Syed 18:36

I hear you. It's definitely a struggle being part of the working class. I'm glad you're doing the work that you do. I was actually hoping you could tell me a little bit more about it.



Emily Nash 18:48

Sure. I currently work as a case manager. I work with adults with disabilities, mostly aging adults. I've been doing this for about three years now, since I graduated from undergrad at UT. I have a degree in sociology. I always kind of knew I wanted to do something that involves advocacy and social justice type work and then I kind of just fell into this position. I'm also a part time graduate student. I'm working on my MSW at the University of Houston. I'm going to continue on this path of social work. I don't know that I specifically want to work with this population forever. I've really, really enjoyed it so far. I'm definitely not opposed to it and I've made some really amazing connections with so many different people. But I would like to try different things in my career.



Rimsha Syed 19:56

Thanks for sharing that. You mentioned that your parents are a little bit more on the conservative side. I was curious if you ever have like any clash, like in your moral views and any sort of discussions on things like that?



Emily Nash 20:15

Oh yeah, we clash quite a bit. My dad typically votes Republican. My mom is more or less apolitical, but I think because she is very much a Christian she has these traditional beliefs. We clash quite a bit. I think because of the dynamics of our relationships, my parents often just feel like my friends, in a lot of ways. They're very open to having these discussions with me, which I really appreciate and sometimes we meet in the middle. Sometimes we don't, and we end up returning to the same conversations. But despite our

differences in opinions, I appreciate that they have encouraged me to think for myself and come to my own conclusions and do my own kind of research and have my own beliefs. So We really don't see eye to eye on many things, but now that I'm a little bit older - I think when I was younger, I had more of like an aggro approach to the way that I would bring up these conversations. But now I've tried to just approach it with curiosity and open discussions, and "Maybe let's think about it in this different way. Let's have this new perspective, have you considered this?" and I found that to be a little bit more successful than my previous strategies. But yeah, I'm still very close to them. When we have these conversations, it's hard and it's really uncomfortable and sometimes, my blood pressure really raises, but I try not to let that happen for my own inner peace, and I try to just keep it very open. If we need to leave the conversation, we'll leave the conversation and return to it later when we've all cooled off a little bit. But I think I've made a little bit of progress in radicalizing my parents, maybe, I like to think that I have.



Rimsha Syed 22:45

I'm glad to hear that you have like a close friendship type dynamic with your parents, because I think that makes it easier to have conversations about tough things. I relate to your struggle in that with my parents.



Emily Nash 23:03

Yeah, yeah, totally agree. I think having a certain dynamic where you don't feel afraid to have differing opinions from your parents or family members is really helpful. I certainly don't feel that way with every family member of mine. But I think that's just because I don't have an established relationship with them, a certain type of closeness with them. It does feel a lot more uncomfortable with certain family members than with my parents. I do feel very comfortable bringing up these these topics that I know that we disagree on, but it's important to have these conversations.



Rimsha Syed 23:43

I totally agree. I'm gonna segue a little. I learned today that your mom also has a social work degree, which I didn't know. Would you say your mom is a source of inspiration for you and your professional life?



Emily Nash 23:59

Oh, yeah, absolutely. I started out in journalism, like you, you're a journalist. I started out in

journalism in undergrad, and very quickly realized, "This just is not for me." Throughout undergrad I very much was like, "I don't know what to do. I don't know what my skills are. I don't know what I am passionate about, as far as careers go." I didn't really see it right away. I always admired the work that my mom did. I think social work in Honduras was different than it is here. Her role was [working] with women in more rural areas of Honduras. I think her work was specifically centered on teaching women about nutrition and the importance of hygiene, and parenting skills. Because these women were very poor, they didn't have a lot of resources. I think her role as a social worker there was to do the most with the resources that they did have and provide educational resources, which is actually kind of similar to social work in the US honestly. I always really admired that and loved that she did that.



Emily Nash 25:29

I actually have this photo of her, where she is standing in the middle of this circle of women and she's teaching. She has such a gift for that. She continues to be an educator and to teach. I always loved that about her. I loved how she could just connect with anyone. She would find some kind of common ground with people very easily and I really love that about her. I think at some point, I realized that I have this passion for social justice. I want to dedicate my life to helping people in the ways that I know how to - "Social work seems like a pretty good path to me," [laughs], and it kind of worked out that way. She's definitely a very, very big inspiration to me. I didn't see it right away, but now it seems pretty evident that she has inspired me.



Rimsha Syed 25:31

Wow, what a powerful story. Where do you see yourself in the next few years?



Emily Nash 26:35

Oh, I wish I knew [laughs]. I guess in the next few years, I hope to be done with school. I have two more years left of my graduate program. I am taking the clinical route of social work, just because I have more of a calling to the mental health side of social work. I would love to practice as a therapist. My goal is to get my licensure around graduation, so I'm not waiting around for that and then after that, I have to do supervision for a little while with another clinical social worker. I would love to, obviously practice as a therapist, but specifically I would love to just do different things with my licensure and my degree. I am somewhat interested in private practice, or at least like group, private practice, just to have that one-on-one connection and honestly have a decent salary. But I would love

to do work in my community. I think being able to offer low cost or free therapy would be incredible. I would love to do that. I love working with immigrant communities. I don't know, there's all kinds of things I want to do. I really don't know where I'm going to be in the next few years. I do hope that I'll be practicing as a therapist, and I will have my degree and a license in some capacity. But exactly where I want to be - I don't know. I am trying to keep my options as open as possible.



Rimsha Syed 28:24

Right, right. Speaking of school, how are you currently balancing your mental health while juggling a full time job, as well as being a student?



Emily Nash 28:36

[Laughs]. You know, I'm in therapy. I am very open about being on medication, I take antidepressants. Sometimes you just got to do it, and it's totally fine. That's been very helpful. I'm very fortunate and privileged to have healthcare, I have pretty good benefits with my job. I have access to therapy. I have access to a psychiatrist. That is really huge and it's everything. I don't know where I would be without that. I mean, I really don't know. As far as time management, it's been doable. Honestly, I think the conditions that we're in now because of the pandemic have kind of worked in my favor a little bit. I'm working full time. I also do field work, which is like an internship and I do schoolwork in the evenings. I'm mostly working from home for my job. It's given me a little bit more flexibility than I would have had before when I was doing home visits and being in the office all the time. It's been manageable.



Emily Nash 29:57

It's honestly been pretty good timing. I don't know what I'm gonna do in the future when I do have to go back into the office and we are back to doing home visits. As much as I miss doing that, I don't know how I'm gonna manage everything. But you know what, that's a far away problem. I'm gonna figure that out later. As far as mental health, you have your good days, you have your bad days. Actually, just yesterday, I had this feeling where I was sitting at my desk at the office at my job, and I just had this sense of feeling so overwhelmed. I get these feelings in waves or I have such a long to do list and I'm just like, "I really don't want to do any of this, I just want to lay down, I want to watch TikToks, like no thoughts, brain empty. I just can't." But it's always passing. I get through the day, one day at a time. Right now, I'm just trying to get through the semester. It's gonna be a tough next couple of years, but I'm gonna figure it out and it's gonna be okay. That's what I tell myself.



Rimsha Syed 31:17

I'm sure you'll figure it out. And I'm really happy to hear that you have the tools and resources in your life to be able to take care of your mental health, because that's really, really important. I'm glad you brought up the pandemic, because I was actually just about to ask you how that's affected your life and how you feel about things returning to some sort of normalcy in the next few months?



Emily Nash 31:48

I think I have blocked out a lot of pandemic related feelings. I had a complete meltdown last summer about the pandemic and just all of the stress of everything. I think we've all been through that in some capacity, some sort of meltdown here and there, I don't know. But that was kind of a point where I was like, "For my own well being and to preserve my peace, I need to just not think about this so much." I stopped checking COVID [related] news. I muted the words "COVID, pandemic," from everything because I just couldn't handle it. That really helped my mental health in many ways, helped me calm down, just not to think about it. If there's anything I really needed to know, someone would tell me. I really haven't thought about us going back to some sort of normalcy. It just has felt like such a far away kind of feeling. At some point, things will be "normal," but when will that be? Who knows?



Emily Nash 33:13

But I'm actually vaccinated now, which is great. It's exciting, but it's also so many things need to change and I hope that we do push for that systemic change. I hope that it's not just something that we know to be true. As far as forty hour work weeks, or disability rights - so many things just have to shift and it's become so evident because of this pandemic. If we just go back to absolute normalcy, that'd be a little disappointing if we don't make very clear structural changes. At the same time, I would love to travel. I would love to see my friends. I miss things that I used to not love doing like going to a club. I never thought I would miss doing that, but I do. It's like a feeling of - I am excited for certain things that would bring me joy that I would do pre-pandemic, [but] at the same time, I would like to see certain changes in our society that have become very evident during this pandemic.



Rimsha Syed 34:34

Right, yeah, I agree that the pandemic has really shined a light on all of the things that just aren't working systemically and I do hope that means we're headed in a better direction moving forward. Also speaking of major catastrophes, I think now is a good time to talk about what happened in Texas about two months ago, now. I was hoping to hear from you about your experience with the winter storm, also known as the polar vortex, also known as the Texas freeze.

E

Emily Nash 35:13

Yes. Oh my gosh, we've been calling it the winter shit show because it was just absolutely horrendous, just a horrible week. For myself, personally, I was pretty fortunate in that I didn't experience any damages in my home. There was no flooding. I live in an apartment complex, Hyde Park area in Austin. It's an older complex, so I was a little bit worried something could very easily go wrong here. Luckily, nothing major happened. I didn't have water for about a week, which was literally awful. I will never take running water for granted again. My cats and I had to relocate to my partner's apartment. It was such a headache. So yeah, no water in my apartment. I never lost power though, which is good. My parents were without power for about three days. They were in Riverside area. That was very stressful, very scary, I think it was somewhat traumatizing for them and for me, just being worried about them.

E

Emily Nash 36:33

I had to trek out on the roads and bring them some warm food. I mean, it just was awful, terrible. While all this is happening personally, just like everyone else, we also had to respond to crises that our clients were dealing with. That was just so stressful and chaotic. I have a giant caseload. I have about 300 clients. Most of my clients are on the east side. The east side is predominantly Black and Brown, very lower-class historically. So of course, pretty much all of the east side lost power for a while. My clients, they're older. I mean, they're medically vulnerable. Many of them rely on dialysis, many of them rely on oxygen, medications that have to be at a certain temperature. When you're older and medically vulnerable, just being cold is dangerous. I mean, that's not a safe environment for a lot of these folks. It's very stressful. We were kind of figuring out, "What do you need? Can we get you to a safe and warm place? How are we going to coordinate that? Do you have family members that you can stay with?" It was just chaos - very, very stressful that whole week. It was hard.

E

Emily Nash 38:12

I feel like I haven't quite recovered from it. I mean, it was about two months ago, but I

have this weird sense of not feeling settled in my apartment. I think some of that has to do with just being uncomfortable in my home without water and just all that stress. I keep feeling this feeling of being really unsettled and just kind of expecting the next catastrophe, the next crisis. It's not a great feeling. It's really weird. I know many other people who had similar experiences in Texas, have felt the same way. I know I'm not alone in that feeling. But yeah, it was just a crisis on top of an already ongoing crisis. It was a really hard, weird, stressful week for sure.



Rimsha Syed 39:17

I did want to say thank you for talking to me about this. I know that it's was a very traumatic experience for everyone. How are your clients doing now? I ask because I recently heard from a friend that their apartment complex is still having a shortage of running water. Their landlord is doing a very terrible job of letting them know what's happening or when things will be better for them. I don't think that people are talking about that enough. I think people think that just because it's warmer and the sun is out again in Texas that Black and Brown communities are not still reeling from the damages to their home, water related issues, just all sorts of problems.



Emily Nash 40:06

Totally agree. You can't see me, but I'm nodding my head in agreement. Yeah, I mean, most of my clients are okay now. I had one really, really tragic death of a client who died in a house fire on the east side. I think it was in the news. I actually found out by watching the news and it was just devastating. I work with an older, chronically ill population, my clients die, it happens, they're towards the end of their life. I have found my own way of processing that and grieving, without letting it distract me too much. This specific incident with this client just absolutely broke me. It made me feel so angry and so frustrated. She was eighty-something years old. She was a client that I had a relationship with. I knew her very well. I had been in her home many times. She was an important community member, and the way that she died was just so violent. And really, it was because of state negligence. It's so upsetting and hundreds of other people in Texas, died in similar ways. I mean, it's just infuriating. I have not moved on from that at all. I just feel more and more frustrated every day. I definitely am seeing the impact of the winter storm two months later. I knew I would, while it was happening. I mean, the emotional trauma on top of flooding. A lot of these people specifically in the east side, their homes are very, very old, they haven't been renovated in decades. There's already structural issues there. A lot of the apartments [do not have] infrastructure [that is] good. Even my apartment that I live in is old [and] has not been updated in probably many, many years.



Emily Nash 42:31

I have a client that I'm actually working with right now who lost everything because of ongoing flooding that happened for twelve hours in his apartment. He literally lost all of his furniture. We're trying to figure that out. I have a few clients in the Mount Carmel apartments on the east side. A lot of older folks who live there, and all of those tenants had to relocate because they were without gas for like two months now, since the winter storm happened. They had no gas, and they had to go somewhere else temporarily. I've spoken to a few of those clients and that's been incredibly stressful for them having to completely just move with very short notice. Many don't have the resources to do that. Again, similar to the pandemic, this Texas freeze, this Texas shit show, it really showed us how fucked up this system is. It's just absolute state negligence. So much blood in the hands of many politicians and of course, the most marginalized, vulnerable people are feeling the impact of this the most. It's really infuriating and unfortunate.



Rimsha Syed 44:05

I agree just absolutely enraging. A lot of the times it's just sitting here feeling powerless. But I did want to ask if you had any sort of recommendations for either the government or working class people on the small possibility of this happening, maybe not small, maybe very likely possibility of something like this happening in the near future. You have a lot of hands-on experience with how this is affecting hundreds of people. I wanted to ask if you had any recommendations for moving forward?



Emily Nash 44:50

I would say I mean, as far as the government goes and the infrastructure, it's just got to be there. The thing is, climate change is here, we're going to continue to experience the impacts of climate change. I think this was just one example. I think it's going to be just this ongoing catastrophe after catastrophe. I don't know too much about ERCOT [Electric Reliability Council of Texas] and all that, but it really seems like we just did not have the infrastructure in place. My partner is actually an engineer, and he had some thoughts on this, where he was like, "This could have been prevented." A similar thing happened in 2011, exactly a decade ago, where some recommendations were made, and nothing was changed. Nothing happened. Then we experience this winter storm ten years later. And it's like, "Why didn't we make the necessary changes to avoid this?" I mean, again - just complete negligence. So, I don't have all of the systemic solutions for that. As far as community goes, community and mutual aid is huge right now. During that whole shit show, I really turned to mutual aid efforts to help my clients out. The way that mutual aid in Austin specifically was able to raise funds and just give people straight up cash, getting food and water out to people, providing transportation for

people. The government is not going to show up for us, especially very marginalized people, so it's really up to the community to show up for each other. Community mutual aid will save us, not the government. As far as systemic recommendations, I don't really have any, because I just don't have that much faith in these systems.

E

Emily Nash 47:22

I mean, this is a larger discussion on a larger issue, but I very much have an abolitionist framework. I'm like, "I think we just need to tear it all down. Let's use our imaginations to come up with a better world for everybody where everyone can thrive." That's kind of where I'm at with that. Honestly, it's not the most helpful. Not the best recommendation.



Rimsha Syed 47:50

I'm so glad you shared that. I'm looking at the clock and I want to be mindful of your time today. I do have one last question. It's a bit more on the open-ended side. Take your time to think about it. But I like to ask, seeing as this is an oral history interview, I'm hoping that people fifty or even a hundred years down the line will be listening to it, hopefully. I was curious if you had a message or any last parting words, words of wisdom that you'd like to just put out in the world?

E

Emily Nash 48:29

Oh I like this question. I don't know the answer to that. Something that comes up for me again and again is this really specific memory. This is just what came to mind, almost immediately, when you asked me this, I have this really specific memory from when I was a kid. I was having some kind of conflict with one of my parents, I think either I was arguing with them, or they were fighting with each other. I really don't know. I don't remember. I just remember feeling so upset. This feeling of hopelessness and doom, and I just felt like I gotta get out of here. I gotta get out of this house. I called my best friend. She was my childhood best friend for many, many years. We are not close anymore. But her family was like second family to me. I called her and her mom came to pick me up. Her mom is actually a therapist. I don't know if she still practices as a therapist, at the time she was a therapist at the time though.

E

Emily Nash 49:42

I remember she was in the driver's seat. I was in the backseat and she turned around and she's trying to console me because I was like sobbing and just so upset. She just said these

words to me that were so profound. She turned around and she simply said, "It's gonna get better. It always does." And that was it. I don't remember how that impacted me right then in that moment, but those words have stuck with me fifteen years later and I think they always will. I think as simple as that is, I do think, for me that has kind of a deeper meaning. I have to have hope for a better world for everybody. I have to believe that we can create a society where everybody feels supported, and everybody can thrive and we can heal collectively. We can finally just start the process of healing and growing and living our best lives. Those words have stuck with me for many years. I hope that means something to other people because it's really meant a lot to me - just believing that it'll get better because it always does, and it really just has to. Those are my parting words. That was the first thing that came to mind when you asked me that, which is kind of silly, but that's all I got.



Rimsha Syed 51:23

No, not silly at all. That was actually perfect. You can't see me, but I'm smiling. Thank you so much, Emily, I had a really, really wonderful time speaking to you. I'm going to go ahead and end the recording now.



Emily Nash 51:39

Awesome. Thank you so much Rimsha. I've had a really good time with this too and I'm excited to see the final product.