

Rhyma Castillo

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SPEAKERS

Rhyma Castillo, Rimsha Syed



Rimsha Syed 00:02

Hi this is Rimsha Syed, the date is March 14, 2021. I am the program coordinator with the Institute of Diversity and Civic Life, IDCL for short. I am currently in Austin, Texas on a Zoom call with Rhyma Castillo for the Texas Freeze oral history project. So Rhyma, would you like to introduce yourself and also tell us where you're joining the call from today?



Rhyma Castillo 00:31

Yes, my name is Rhyma Castillo, I am currently in Austin, Texas, and I've been living here for the past year. I am a first generation resident of the US, my parents immigrated from Mexico, when I was a kid, and I've been here ever since. I've been living in Texas, and this winter freeze has honestly been something that I've never experienced in my entire life the entire time that I've been living here.



Rimsha Syed 01:18

Yeah, same. Lovely. So you mentioned a little bit about your background, but to start this interview, I would love it, if you could share a little bit about your childhood, or even were where you grew up.



Rhyma Castillo 01:35

Yeah, so my parents immigrated here from Mexico, and I was born in San Antonio, Texas. I did spend a lot of my childhood in Mexico, I would live on and off with my grandmother, as my parents had to work to earn a living for our family. So that was it, some parts were very difficult because I had to spend some time away from them. Now looking back, I understand that everything they did was to support me and support my siblings, and our family. I'm very thankful for everything that they did, and all the sacrifices that they made for me, essentially, to have a better life here in the US.



Rhyma Castillo 02:41

So I grew up in San Antonio, Texas. And I went to college, on scholarship at Texas A&M University, which was kind of a culture shock for me, because San Antonio is such a Latino base city, where all the the culture is very celebratory of Mexican history, Mexican ways and customs, and going to school at Texas A&M, a lot of that just isn't there. So, moving from San Antonio to Texas A&M, that was, kind of placing me in a spot where I was the minority, which is the case for the for the most part in America. But it was really highlighted for me at Texas A&M. And I did experience a lot of racism and a lot of microaggressions there that I didn't really understand until after I had left.



Rhyma Castillo 04:04

And then it started to really sink in that that's what was going on. When my counselor who helped me pick my classes, and pick what major and stuff told me, "Maybe you don't want to shoot for a STEM career. You don't want to shoot for a STEM degree, you can't really - I don't really see see it in the cards for you as being successful in math or science." I didn't realize that was part of a larger system of racism that was working against me, and she was contributing to that. And when someone tells me I can't do something then I only want to do it even more, that's just the kind of person I am. So I ended up pursuing degrees in math and geophysics anyways. And I graduated with three degrees in math, geophysics, and English. In the end, I decided to pursue a career more in writing and journalism, and art and design. Just having those degrees with me is kind of an "F you" to the system who told me that I wouldn't be able to succeed in those things. So here I am. I'm in Austin right now. And I currently work for a newspaper in New York as as a reporter.



Rimsha Syed 06:00

Wow. All those are definitely things that I'd love to hear more about. But I did want to say I'm sorry about the racism and microaggressions you experienced down in College

Station, which led me to be curious about how your experience in that regard has been so far here in Austin. I know that you mentioned that you've been in Austin for about a year now. So I'm curious as to what you have to say about Austin versus being in College Station.

R

Rhyma Castillo 06:31

Yeah. So that's kind of an interesting question, because when I was in College Station, I did participate in a lot of student protests there. There was one point where a lot of the student body, who - during 2016, during the 2016 presidential election there, there was a speaker there, and he was a White nationalist. I can't remember exactly what his name is, but he was one of the most popular and the White nationalist who had the biggest platform at the time. I think his name was Richard Spencer. He came to speak at A&M. And even though he touted ideas and perspectives that were racist, were blatantly White supremacist, were sexist, and just incredibly violent, violent ideologies, the university allowed him to speak. But we wouldn't allow speakers from the Black Lives Matter movement to come and speak at our university. And yet, we allowed this White nationalist, Richard Spencer, to come and use our facilities to spew violent ideologies and hate against people of color, against gay people, against women, and we went and protested.

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Rhyma Castillo 08:25

And at that time, we received a very violent response from campus police. The city police were called, reinforcements were called. We were pushed back with force. And that's something that I have experienced while protesting in Austin. Again, in 2020, during the summertime, when there was a resurgence of the - I mean, the Black Lives Matter movement has never died. And we saw it really, really come in full force during the summertime over the killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor and many other Black lives that hadn't received justice. We protested at the Capitol and at City Hall, and we were once again met with violent pushback from the police. We were met with tear gas. We were blockaded in by buses. We were pushed back with riot shields and it was it was just chaos for a lot of it, and it was terrifying.

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Rhyma Castillo 10:03

And that's kind of the terror that I remember feeling back when I was at Texas A&M, and it just really made me remember and think like, "Well, no matter where we do this, no matter how we do it, no matter how peaceful we are, we are always going to be met with violence. We are always going to be met with pushback from the status quo, because

we're trying to question it." I think that that's the case, whenever you try and question and push back against the status quo, it's going to push back even harder because it needs - the systems and structures that we have in place now need racism and violence and classism to continue flourishing. And I think that's something that really clicked with me is when we're trying to defend Black lives and defend the lives of people of color, that's something that's always going to be met with disdain from the powers that be.

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Rhyma Castillo 11:33

Yeah, so that was my, that was my experience in Austin, with stuff like that. I mean, other than that, it's just been the pandemic really [laughs]. Yeah, cause I moved in in March when the pandemic really picked up. And other than that, I feel like I haven't really gotten to live in Austin, I've experienced the ugly parts of it. I haven't been able to experience the best parts. And that makes me kind of sad.



Rimsha Syed 12:09

Yeah, hopefully, you're able to do that soon. So we've talked a little bit about Austin, and also a little bit about called station, but I do want to hear a little more about how you like San Antonio.

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Rhyma Castillo 12:25

Oh, I mean, I love San Antonio, it does have its own issues and stuff like that. But it's my hometown. It's where I would go downtown to the Riverwalk with my parents on special occasions, because we lived on the outskirts of the city, we lived in the northeast. It was always kind of a drive to go and see downtown and experience what the city is really all about. But we would do that on special occasions, and it was always really nice to see my culture reflected in the city. Because we would have like the little mercados and the little stands with the elote and stuff like that, and you can see that really all over the city. And I don't know, it carries very close ties to Mexico with me because there's so much there's so many aspects of it, that just make me feel like I'm at home, they make me feel like I'm with people who understand my experiences.

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Rhyma Castillo 13:49

So yeah, I love San Antonio, but at the same time, there's always stuff that can be done to make it better. There's always stuff that can be done to improve the situation and improve the lives of the people who are under underprivileged and cities like that. San Antonio is a

very big military city. We have a lot of military bases, and a lot of them have been shut down and are no longer active. But we can still see the effects of having them they're everywhere, in neighborhoods where people generally don't have the financial resources to afford a way of living that allows them to distance themselves from the certain environmental issues.

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Rhyma Castillo 15:00

So I wrote a piece, when I was working at the San Antonio Current, I wrote a piece about environmental racism in San Antonio, against Black and Brown communities who lived by these military bases and had the pollutants from testing, like testing airplanes and fuel runoff, and testing fire retardants, and things like that. So the chemicals from these tests would leach into the soil and the groundwater. And the people living in the neighborhoods around them who were largely Black and Brown communities had to drink water that was contaminated by these chemicals. So many people suffered from illnesses that were linked to these chemicals, like cancer. A lot of mothers had lost their, their babies, they had lost them during pregnancy, they had miscarriages. The people in these neighborhoods, their hair was falling out, their teeth were falling out, a lot of them had cancer, they were suffering just a wide variety of illnesses that were linked to these chemicals on military bases.

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Rhyma Castillo 16:50

And that's not the only thing that these communities had to deal with, they also had to deal with waste treatment plants being built in their neighborhoods. Power plants, like CPS [City Public Service] Energy being right in some people's backyards. These people had to live every day in the shadow of these factories, and they still do, they still do have to live every day in the shadow of these factories, breathing in toxic fumes that give their children childhood asthma, give them lung cancer, and illnesses like that, that's just really difficult to deal with when you're in a position like that. You can't afford to move away, you can't afford medical care. You can't afford to treat the things that are making your life more difficult than they need to be.

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Rhyma Castillo 17:58

So a lot of the people in these neighborhoods just have to live their everyday lives like that. And it just goes to show that inequities are everywhere. You really can't escape these things. And that when it comes to the environment and climate change, it goes to show how people who are underprivileged, Black and Brown communities are going to have to bear the brunt of those problems. And they always will. Because the underprivileged aren't

going to have the resources they need to distance themselves from environmental issues like that.



Rimsha Syed 18:48

Yeah, I totally agree with you. And sounds like a really important article that you were talking about, and you'll have to send it to me later, so I can read it, too.



Rhyma Castillo 18:57

Oh, yeah, definitely. I'll send you the link when we're done.



Rimsha Syed 19:01

So speaking about journalism, I was wondering if there was maybe a particular moment in your life where you decided that journalism was something you'd like to pursue?



Rhyma Castillo 19:16

I've been drawn to journalism since I was in high school, really, really young, 15-16 years old because I would love reading. I would love reading articles about different things. I would love reading the National Geographic publications, I would love reading the New York Times and just kind of expanding my perspective of what the world was, because when I was growing up, my family was super religious, very, very religious, and I was very limited to what I could read. I could only really read Christian-based things, I could only read the Bible. And when I got to high school, I had so many more resources at hand in public schools that I didn't have before.



Rhyma Castillo 20:15

So I just started reading anything I could get my hands on. And a lot of that was journalistic articles and journalistic publications. So I joined a journalism class in high school, and a photo journalism class. And I started learning the basics, and I loved it, really, and that had never died for me, that love had never died. So even when I was in college, pursuing STEM majors, it still was something in the back of my head that I had always wanted to do. So there was just one day where I was like, "Who am I kidding? What am I doing? I may as well just pursue this because this is obviously what I really want to do."



Rhyma Castillo 21:13

I jumped in, and I really dove in headfirst with it because while all of my research was going on, I really became passionate about dissecting the inequities that existed in America's institutions, and on a larger scale, in our global institutions, and I love being able to have a platform that lets me call out injustice where I see it. I think that's one of the biggest parts of journalism is speaking for the people who don't have a voice to speak for themselves, giving a platform to people who would otherwise have no other way to express how they feel, and what they're going through. I think that's the most important part for me is giving people a platform, who wouldn't otherwise have any way to express their experiences. Because the people in power have all the control, they essentially control the narrative.



Rhyma Castillo 22:35

So my goal as a journalist is to give the narrative back to the people from whom it was taken away from. That's kind of really where it clicked for me. When I had graduated and everything, my education was concluded, that's something that stuck with me. Cause you see those kinds of injustice is everywhere. It's really hard to distance yourself from them when you know what's going on. That's really where it clicked for me is just realizing that that was a way that I could call out injustices where I saw them.



Rimsha Syed 23:37

Thanks for sharing. I'm just sitting here realizing now that our stories about moving towards journalism are so similar. I had also taken a journalism class in high school and was always drawn to it but still pursued STEM my first two years of college, and then I switched majors, like my second year, about halfway through my sophomore year of college to journalism. So we have really similar stories in that regard, which is pretty cool.



Rhyma Castillo 24:15

Yeah, that's super cool. I don't know what it is. I don't know if it's an ethnic parents thing where they want you to, like, do something and in science or math, but I don't know, it's just, it's just something that I felt like I had to do.



Rimsha Syed 24:36

I'm sure that's part of it, but same. And I think we tend to write about very similar things, which is politics, exposing injustice, giving people a voice whose voice has been

intentionally subdued.



Rhyma Castillo 24:53

Yeah. No, that's awesome. I'm really glad that we're on the same page with out work.



Rimsha Syed 25:00

So earlier, you mentioned that you're currently working for a magazine in New York. And I was curious if you could tell me a little bit more about that. Are you planning on moving to New York eventually? And what do you write about?



Rhyma Castillo 25:16

So I work for a publication called Elite Daily. And it's a news publication. It's focused on current events and politics. And it's part of a larger media corporation called Bustle Digital Group. And under that umbrella, we have a bunch of different publications like Nylon Magazine, The Zoe Report, we have Bustle underneath that. It's just a media conglomerate that covers a bunch of different topics, and the publication I work under, specifically Elite Daily, I think it's perfect for me and for what my goals are as a journalist, because it's very rare, as a journalist, I feel, that you can have a platform that you're allowed to express your experiences, just to have just to have a platform where you don't have to censor yourself, really. And I feel like the publication network I'm at now, Elite Daily, does a really amazing job of supporting me in that I have a super supportive editor who has been amazing in helping me grow as a writer, and as a reporter.



Rhyma Castillo 27:03

I would love to move to New York at some point, I think that it's every writer's dream, to live in New York for a time. I definitely would not like to stay there. It's not a place that I would like to stay, but I think it's a place that I would love to live in for a while just to get the experience of living there. I think that being able to experience the fast paced city and being able to say that, "Hey, I've been a writer in New York," that would be really, really great. That would be really cool. Hopefully, I will have that opportunity in the future. And if all goes well, if all keeps going as it's currently going, then yes, I will probably have that opportunity soon. But for now, I'm just kind of laying the groundwork for things and for the future.



Rimsha Syed 28:19

Right. Yeah. I hope you get that experience, too. I think you'll really like it, even if it's temporary. So because I follow you on Instagram, I saw that you did an article recently where you interviewed SZA, who is probably one of my favorite musicians of all time, so I thought that was really awesome. And during that time, you also mentioned because it was during the winter storm, that you were sitting in your car, finishing up the last couple paragraphs of that article, or whatever you had to do. So I was wondering if you could tell me a little bit more about the article and then also what your experience was during the polar vortex that happened last month?



Rhyma Castillo 29:09

So SZA is also one of my favorite musicians of all time. Ctrl helped me get through 2017 and 2018. Still it is helping me through.



Rimsha Syed 29:28

So relatable.



Rhyma Castillo 29:30

Yes, so interviewing her was amazing. She is so wise, so personable. And she really, really understands, because I spoke with her about climate change, and how climate change, moving forward, is going to disproportionately impact communities of color, and not just in America, but globally. Globally, communities of color are going to suffer the most when it comes to climate change. So we spoke about that and it was just, it was really validating, and encouraging to hear someone else go through these experiences. Because she told me that her own family has directly experienced the negative effects of climate change when living in urban environments in the inner city.



Rhyma Castillo 30:50

It was sad, it was definitely sad to speak with her about that at some points. But it was also encouraging because I know that I'm not the only one whose family has undergone negative effects of environmental change as well. Speaking with her was amazing, it was honestly my dream interview to speak with her, and I made that happen. So I made that happen for myself. So I'm really, really happy and really proud that I was able to do that. We spoke about climate change and how she's doing this initiative to increase tree equity in inner city communities that are mostly populated by people of color. So just knowing

that taking action is something that's constantly on her mind, it really makes me look up to her from a different perspective, not just musically, but from a humanitarian point of view. It's amazing to know that someone that I really admire as an artist is also taking steps to ensure environmental justice in the future. And now and today.

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Rhyma Castillo 32:46

So for the Texas polar vortex, like I had mentioned before, it was something that I had really never experienced in my life while living in Texas. I mean, there had been flurries of snow that kind of melted away after a couple of hours as soon as the sun came out. UBT that didn't happen this time. That did not happen this time. The power went out the day after Valentine's Day. So it went out Monday, the 15th. It went out I think at late Sunday, think 2, 3, 4 am? Maybe 4am, 5am. I'm not sure, I was half asleep. I woke up and there was snow everywhere and no power. And all I could think about was, "Wow, I really hope the power comes back on soon because I have so many deadlines that I need to work on and wrap up."

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Rhyma Castillo 34:05

So I was kind of freaking out, but I wasn't really freaking out. It hadn't sunk in yet that shit had really hit the fan. And I didn't know, I didn't realize it yet. So it was kind of fun for the first day. You kind of went out and got to experience the snow, like the first real snow that I had ever seen in Texas. And it was pretty, it was beautiful. It had blanketed every corner of the outside, this neighborhood, really it was all over the place. It didn't last for very long. It started getting colder and the power wasn't coming back on. And my complex was sending out notifications, sayin they weren't sure when the power was going to come back on and it was out. I live in Riverside. I live South Austin, Riverside. So it's not really the most affluent neighborhood, not like Mueller, not like downtown. So, the entire neighborhood, Riverside didn't have power. And no one was sure when it was going to come back on.

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Rhyma Castillo 35:50

At first, they told us, "Oh, it'll be back on later this afternoon." And then we got another notification saying, "Oh, it'll be back on tomorrow, or maybe two days from now, maybe next week." So the messaging there was kind of all over the place. And we were getting those messages, as temperatures were dropping, as roads were iced over, and no one could drive, as there were food shortages and water shortages, because the pipes had frozen. A lot of pipes around the neighborhood had burst, causing leaks, causing floods. There were house fires. People had died in their homes trying to heat their spaces with their ovens and grills, and in their cars. So that kind of really made things sink in, this isn't

just a snow day, this is something that's really affecting communities that don't have the financial resources to be able to afford a better standard of living. The next day, I told my editor, "Hey, this is what's going on. I don't know if I'm going to be able to make my deadlines because nobody knows what's going on here in Texas," and she was totally okay with it.

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Rhyma Castillo 37:44

The next day, it was Tuesday morning, my partner and I had no water. We didn't have water. So we were thinking, "Hey, you know, there's got to be a place out there somewhere selling some water, selling some groceries." So we walked out because we couldn't, we couldn't drive. We had tried to drive and the roads were completely iced over. There were accidents, cars that had crashed into snowbanks. It was pandemonium really, I think that's the only way that you can describe the road conditions during those days.

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Rhyma Castillo 38:39

So we had walked to any corner store or grocery store that we could to see if they had any groceries available. And there were just people everywhere, just walking, lined up outside corner stores, trying to find anything that they could really get their hands on. It was everyone because the power for the entire neighborhood had gone out. And everyone was in a hard place. I couldn't help but notice that the people who were helping out, they were Mexican. And they were lined up outside the road, pushing cars out of snowbanks, working together to help people get their cars off the slippery roads, because once you were on those roads, you weren't getting off, you weren't able to get off by yourself with your car with no snow tires, without the gear that you needed.

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Rhyma Castillo 40:06

People were helping each other out and it was a dark situation, it was a very, very dark situation, it was very sad. And I remember that week sent me into a really, really dark depression that I thankfully have moved past now and I'm rehabilitating myself, but I remember feeling hopeful seeing the people in these communities help one another out and tell each other where the best place to get groceries was, where you could find water, and it touched my heart a lot. Because a lot of these people are Latino and Mexican and it kind of reminded me of just being back in my community. Being able to talk with one another and help each other out. And that was really encouraging during such a dark time.



Rhyma Castillo 41:30

It was later on that day, when things had warmed up a little, and the roads were safer to drive on that I had a driven to my sister's house. She lives in Mueller. And their power never went out. So the night before, I was trying to type up the draft on my phone in my car, trying to get some base ideas down for the article that I was going to publish with SZA. Then when I got to my sister's house, I was like, "Wow, all I really had to do was just live in Mueller, and I would have been able to do everything fine. Why didn't I just you know, live in Mueller?" No one in Mueller lost power. They had water. They had heat the entire time. I think she mentioned that their power went off for 30 seconds and then it came right back on.



Rhyma Castillo 42:48

People in Riverside didn't have power from Monday, February 15 to I think it was either Thursday or Friday that week. People in Riverside didn't have power or water for that entire week, pretty much. And yeah, we didn't have water for a couple of days after that because the pipes had burst. And we just didn't have the infrastructure to support a freeze like that. And so I didn't have water for a couple days after that, either. So yeah, it definitely took time to get the neighborhood back on its feet. And it took a toll. It really took a heavy toll on a lot of people. Especially with energy bills. People who had burst pipes and lost things in floods, house fires and things like that. It was really hard to deal with and have everything sink in like that.



Rimsha Syed 44:10

Right. Thank you so much for sharing. I know that this isn't necessarily an easy thing to talk about or think about, so I appreciate you talking about it with me. And earlier, you mentioned that the freeze took a toll on your mental health, which I think is an experience that a lot of people felt or are still feeling. So I just wanted to ask, maybe how did you cope with that? And what what were the signs of hope around that situation that helped make you feel a little bit better eventually?



Rhyma Castillo 44:53

So it was really hard for me to deal with because it just gave me feeling that I was completely out of control, there was nothing that I could do to help the situation. It was an experience of something more happening to you, rather than you playing an active role in the situation. Just having to let all of this happen with no say in the matter, no control over the situation. It was very traumatizing to see that everything that your life depends on

could be taken away in just a few seconds. We don't realize how important these things are, like power and water and heat, until we have them cut off. And then you're just hanging out there to dry with no sense of grounding in the situation and you don't know what's going to happen next. You don't know if the water that you have now is going to last you. You're in survival mode, really, and that's exhausting. That's incredibly exhausting.

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Rhyma Castillo 46:42

I was lucky enough to be able to have my sister's house to go to, to sort of rest and recuperate myself. But after two days of essentially being in survival mode, that was incredibly exhausting. I was anxious, I was depressed, I was kind of spiraling really, and coping with that as hard. I tried to do self care. I tried to really just be gentle with myself and step back and say, "Hey, none of this is your fault. You have no control over the situation, you cannot be critical on yourself for not acting better. For not being better to yourself." I just really had to be gentle with myself in that situation.

R

Rhyma Castillo 48:05

I wrote about it. Coping with it was writing about it for me. I wrote a couple of articles saying, "Here's what you can do to help people in Texas," where I named a bunch of mutual aid funds, who were helping people struggling in Texas with the freeze, people who were food insecure, people who are housing insecure. Because really, those communities are the ones that are suffering the most. And they're the ones who need the most help, the ones who we really need to direct our resources towards because being unhoused in an extreme weather situation like this, like Texas's is polar vortex is essentially a death sentence. And there are people all over Texas who lost their lives, simply because they were unhoused during extreme weather events, and thinking about that was extremely saddening and extremely depressing. But what really gave me hope during such a dark time was, again seeing our communities come together and work to provide these people with resources, with housing, with financial aid, with food, with health care. These mutual aid funds really did more for the community in Texas than the state or federal government had really stepped in to do ever.



Rimsha Syed 50:17

I was just about to ask how you felt about the government's response or lack of response, I should say, during the whole situation.

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Rhyma Castillo 50:28

It was angering, it was infuriating to me. And that's part of the reason why I felt so helpless and so depressed is because the people who aren't experiencing the brunt of this situation, the people who don't have housing insecurity, the people who have groceries and water for the week, they're not the ones who are suffering, and yet they're the ones who are making decisions for the state, for our communities, for the people who are actually suffering. And seeing the fallout of those irresponsible decisions unfold all around me, unfold in the people who are waiting in lines for water, for groceries, because they don't have those resources. It was infuriating. It was frustrating on a level that I can't describe.

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Rhyma Castillo 51:33

Because it's a feeling of helplessness. And seeing them talk, in their meetings, on the news, talk about, "Oh, well, we're not sure when these issues are going to resolve," and seeing CPS issue statements saying, "Oh, well, we're going to come up with a plan to charge people for their energy usage during this time and spread it out over 10 years," when we're not the ones who decide the market prices, we're not the ones who decide to hike up energy prices in the stock market to maximize profits. And I can't remember, it was this one football team owner who was also the head of an energy corporation that dealt with gas and natural gas, saying, "We hit the jackpot with this polar vortex because people's gas usage is going to be heightened, there's going to be a surge in gas usage because of the cold weather. And we're hiking those prices up, so we can maximize our profits."

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Rhyma Castillo 53:07

It's just seeing those people, those executives and CEOs who don't have to suffer from those extreme weather events, glean their profits off the backs of suffering people. I think that was one of the most infuriating aspects for me. Seeing our government, our Texas government, who is so and has historically - it's not just been Greg Abbott who has sacrificed the well being of the people in order to maximize private profits and bolster corporate greed. It's been other governors as well, like Rick Perry and I can't remember. But it's such a Texas tradition to place quote-unquote "freedom" over the livelihoods of Texans themselves. And we really saw a culmination of that greed during the polar vortex just seeing how the infrastructure in Texas was not geared at all towards winterization to support the state during extreme weather events and seeing it all fall apart, it angered me.



Rhyma Castillo 54:58

It was very, very angering, and it was angering for a lot of people, and I think that it radicalized a lot of people and it made a lot of people see that our state government does not have our best interests at heart. And that everything you know and love could be uprooted in a second. And all the state has to do to disenfranchise you is cut your power off, cut your water off, for just a few days, and your life falls apart. And that's what happens to people who are in underserved communities of color, every day. They have their power and water cut out simply because they can't afford the cost. It makes me really think your livelihood shouldn't be tied to whether you have economic privilege, your livelihood should be your rights as a human being, you deserve the resources to sustain yourself. So I mean, it angered me, and I think that it did the same for a lot of people.



Rimsha Syed 56:26

I definitely agree with you. I do think this moment radicalized a lot of people, especially in realizing that we only have ourselves and our neighbors and our friends and our communities doing the organizing to rely on and that help will never really come from the state as it's supposed to. But it just isn't that way. So I think that definitely made people rely more on their communities.



Rhyma Castillo 56:56

Yeah, yeah. And that's really at the heart of what people have done throughout history. And it's human nature, in a lot of ways, to rely on your communities, because that's how we have evolved in the past, we've evolved by depending on one another. And I think that recent history shows that our current systems are not conducive to human survival. We thrive in communal environments. And I think that divorcing ourselves from those things could lead to a very grim future. And I think in many ways it already has.



Rimsha Syed 57:50

I agree. So Rhyma, I'm looking at the clock here, and I don't want to take too much of your time today. But I had one last question, and you can totally take a few seconds or a few minutes to think about this because it's a little bit more open ended. But seeing as this is an oral history interview, I'm anticipating that down the line, maybe fifty or a hundred years from now, someone will be listening to it. And I want to ask if you had any sort of message or closing thoughts, really, anything that you wanted to send out there?



Rhyma Castillo 58:33

Gosh, that is a hard one.



Rimsha Syed 58:37

Take your time.



Rhyma Castillo 58:47

This isn't so much a message as much as it is as a hopeful aspiration for me for the future. Because hopefully within 50 years, I'll still be alive. I hope things get better. I hope people realize that greed and profit isn't worth the toll on human life. I hope people realize that they deserve a full livelihood, no matter who they are, or how much they make or where they come from. I think that once we come together and work towards that change as a country, only then can we begin to see mitigation for a lot of the issues that plague us today.



Rhyma Castillo 1:00:16

I hope we realize what our issues are. Because we can't even begin to address those issues until we admit that they're issues. So I hope you know, we somehow work towards ending corporate greed, within the future, and that it leads to a better and more equitable life for everyone.



Rimsha Syed 1:00:49

I think that was lovely. Thank you so much for your time today Rhyma, I had a really great time speaking with you and getting to know you a little bit better. I'm going to go ahead and stop the recording now.