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Interview transcript participant #03

Auriluz Pacheco

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INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT PARTICIPANT #03

Interviewer: Auriluz Pacheco

Date of Interview: October 23rd, 2020

Location of Interview: New York, NY

Transcript link

NYC MHOP Interview Transcript #001

Transcribed by Auriluz Pacheco

Auriluz: It is October 23rd, 2020. Today I am conducting an interview with participant number 2 via Zoom, doing an oral history for the New York City Maternal Health Oral History Project, which aims to document the experiences of women who underwent or are currently undergoing pregnancy during the Covid-19 pandemic. Before we begin, I'll just be asking a few demographic questions, is that alright?

Participant 3: Yeah.

Auriluz: can you tell me your age please?

Participant 3: 26. I was 25 when I delivered.

Auriluz: Can you give me a range of your income?

Participant 3: I'm unemployed due to COVID.

Auriluz: Was it like that before you delivered?

Participant 3: Yeah.

Auriluz: Can you tell me what borough you live in?

Participant 3: Queens.

Auriluz: Race?

Participant 3: Hispanic.

Auriluz: Are you currently pregnant or did you already give birth?

Participant 3: I gave birth.

Auriluz: When did you first find out that you were pregnant? Was it before or during the shutdown?

Participant 3: It was before.

Auriluz: How are you currently feeling? And how did you feel throughout your pregnancy?

Participant 3: When the shutdown started I was a frustrated or very upset especially like not being able to have like a baby shower and the whole nine and things like that like not having like, people in the hospital, originally, not even spouses. There were definitely moments where I was frustrated but a majority of my pregnancy I was happy. After my pregnancy, postpartum depression, postpartum anxiety, definitely hit me like a truck. Like, I just found like a lot of moments where I'm feeling really stressed feeling like I wasn't being a good enough mother feeling like I wasn't doing enough for my child. She was having a hard time in the beginning

when it came to breastfeeding, she was sleeping more than she was awake, I mean that's normal for a newborn but she was sleeping to the point where like, she wasn't eating. And then her weight dropped and then we'd like go to the doctor like, can you tell me what happened and they dismissed it, as it it's normal. He never comforted me. Even though they'd give me tips to help me out like I just felt like he thought I was an insufficient mother. I just kept thinking like everybody was like judging me like I wasn't good enough, and I already had anxiety before my pregnancy and then during my pregnancy it actually went away but then after birth I'd wake up in the middle of the night like is she still breathing? Thinking of all of the things that can go wrong and internalized that made me think something was going wrong.

Auriluz: After going through all of that what concerns do you have moving forward on your health, the baby? And what do the appointments look like before being pregnant and after being pregnant?

Participant 3: I've always had good healthcare experiences. When I went in for checkups everything was totally okay. When it comes to me going in with an issue and sick, or I used to be very heavy into checking in with my doctor but couldn't. During my pregnancy I only had an experience with male doctors, whereas other usually you'd at least interact with both.

Auriluz: When you would go in would you have any conversations regarding what you heard about COVID and pregnancy?

Participant 3: Yeah that pregnant women were high risk so I was essentially locked in my house my whole pregnancy. My parents, my boyfriend, they wouldn't let me leave the house. If I wanted to leave the house I couldn't. I live in a cul de sac so it's just going in a circle if I ever wanted to go outside. It was frustrating. I wasn't going anywhere so I'd just walk around my circle. Many times, having a bad day would consist of sitting with my thoughts. So that was really frustrating.

Auriluz: Given all of these factors how would you describe your experience?

Participant 3: I think my experience like probably better than most. I already had started saving money for apartment with the intention of getting pregnant. I went in knowing that I wanted to stay home with my child for the first year, anything less to me seemed absolutely ridiculous. My child is three months now and I would only consider leaving now if I absolutely had to. I was in a very good financial state; I also was on unemployment which allowed me to be okay with losing the job. And I was able to really relax the middle and end of my pregnancy because in March I was only four months pregnant. And I was already feeling swollen and I'm a bartender and waitress so like I was on my feet for about a 12 hour day so it was a lot and I was definitely getting burnt out and suggesting me to think about time off. It really worked out for me because I didn't have to worry about finances as much and that I was lucky enough for my boyfriend to stay employed the entire time you know. I felt completely supported in the household.

Auriluz: Support is such an important factor and I'm glad you received that in your household. Early you mentioned you wished you received that from the hospitals. Can you elaborate on that?

Participant 3: There is just a one time during pregnancy that I had a male doctor which I never usually have always usually had female doctors, so I felt actually the day before I went into hospital for a checkup I felt like a sharp pain. I wasn't sure if my water broke or not because I had to pee and like half asleep. I just peed and I was like I'm not sure like what that was at the time. And I thought maybe like I was going into labor so when I did get to my appointment and I told him he kind of looked at me like I don't know what I'm talking about like I would be in way more pain like I would have had contractions and like pretty much all the reasons why I'm wrong and like I am a very confrontational person. I feel like I need to be comforted and acknowledged. So I got very confrontational very quickly. Pregnancy was a little bit more fragile than most so I wanted to make sure I got there in time to my doctors. I didn't really have time to go there and go back and waste any time. And sure enough, he checked and I was already four centimeters dilated. Yeah. So I mean, we were, we were kind of there.

Auriluz: How did you experience change either like attention wise or appointment wise, like that?

Participant 3: In the beginning my boyfriend was allowed to go, even my mom, I was in the office, pretty cool, especially for sonogram appointments to share that. And towards the end, it was just me which really sucks. Because, like as mentioned, there was a few moments in my pregnancy, where things didn't look as good as I would have hoped they would. And it really sucks having to go to those appointments by myself and only getting like the comfort of being able to call them when I got out.

Auriluz: Can you tell me a little bit more about your labor experience?

Participant 3: My labor experience in regards to like, just, in general or how my experience was on the healthcare side of it?

Auriluz: It can be both so like when you actually went and gave birth, but also make you mentioned before you know?

Participant 3: Okay so I go to the doctor to check for centimeters. I call my boyfriend who works really far away and he came. He actually cried on the phone, I told him and I kind of just walked around in front of my hospital, because if I would have went in to check myself in labor by myself, he wouldn't have been allowed in. You have to come in with your one guest together. If you guys don't come in together, he was not going to be allowed. So he can get there in about an hour and a half away on top of that. So that was fine. I started contracting. I went in. And this was not to my liking. When the healthcare side of it, I was clearly in labor, I was having contractions. But even though it's four centimeters, my contractions are pretty far apart. And it was a really, really hot day in July. And all my doctors told me like, in August, the chances of my daughter coming earlier was high because when it's really hot, sometimes it's like early labor. And it was a really hot day in July. And like a lot of people went into labor, like they were coming in left and right. It was like a scene on Oprah everybody had a partner like so, because they had so many people there and for the actual labor started asking me if I wanted to do and I was very adamant, I had everything that I wanted to do, I had a birth plan and wanted a natural

birth so what happened was not what I wanted at all. I also had family members that told me how painful it was and I do not like pain. So anything that I could avoid I was going to do if possible. So I was like badgered almost for hours to go in to get an induction. And I was very adamant about not doing it to the point where my boyfriend was like, man, like she says she doesn't want it because like she was just not hearing it. And she pretty much told me if I wasn't going to get induced that I had to leave. And pretty much go home and come back when my contractions are closer together, like two minutes apart. And like I'm a first time mom so like, at the time when I'm hearing like don't come back home two minutes apart. I'm like, I'm never gonna make it the hospital is too far away. It was like 20 minutes and there was no traffic with COVID, so it was a lot better but still, like, freaking out. I keep telling her I live like 45 minutes away. And I was like, all right, I call my mom. Should I leave, should I stay? She's like, Well, how do you feel? I'm like telling my father, I'm forced to get an induction like or I have to leave. She's like alright whatever you want to do so I told the lady I'm leaving. And then she takes two hours to discharge me super annoying. Like four hours and I wasn't dilating anymore and then two hours to discharge so I'm pretty pissed off at this point. So I got really bad vibes and was like I'm not going to deliver. So, I'm also starving, I want to get tacos. In Manhattan like somewhere behind like, I don't know, but I'm only 15 minutes away. And of course, my contractions are like picking up. Like they're getting way more forceful and they're getting closer. So not two minutes, a little closer. Remember how many minutes apart they were. I get tacos, I'm not eating spicy. The tacos were slightly spicier than I would of liked. So after I had that, forget about it, the babies aren't going to like this. But their contractions are still kind of erratic. Like one would be two minutes. We're sitting there for a while to try to figure out where my contractions were on in the car. Like, maybe two minutes apart, and then they jump to five minutes apart. And now we're back to two. So they were kind of all over the place. I call that nurse; they're still telling me like, no, you're not there. You know? Like, go home, and literally sit home for maybe 20 minutes before we're back on the road. Like the second I get in the house. I am in pain at this point in time, and they're still not exactly two minutes apart. We're still like five minutes apart at this point. But I am in immense pain. Like everybody thought something was wrong with me. Like in the sense that there might have been something going on with the baby and they're freaking out. The hospital has a delivery hotline so I decided to call them instead of calling the nurse's station. I was not happy with them already today. I did not want to deal with them again. I was telling them what's going on. I didn't know that at the time. Like what's going on? She's like oh my God come here right now... Oh, now I'm totally freaking out. Okay, it's like something that comes out right before birth like where either water or something comes out. So that came out and they were like yeah you need to get here right now. He was like, Okay, well, we'll try to wait for two minutes. And then he heard one of my contractions over the phone. He's like not getting here now. So I'm now on the way back to hospital I am absolutely screaming bloody murder. That is the triage area where I was when I was reading earlier that day. And I was screaming bloody murder and like, it was ridiculous. I'm trying to get an IV line in between my contractions, and they had the nursing students come in to do my IV and like I get it if I was like there for the normal time or whatever, but during labor they'd keep stabbing me in my arm, extremely painful they almost pierced through one of my veins. I'm very insistent about doing a natural birth. Very, very stressful. At the time, like every movie, the typical pregnant woman but real life. Every emotion imaginable, angry one second crying one second. The day after that they finally get me into a room. They had a lack of delivery rooms and we really had to wait until you were like right there. He put me into a room. The whole thing was 31 hours. I was screaming bloody

murder and my body was shot. I was having contractions. The doctor comes back in like an hour or two I'm like barely even able to talk these contractions but just don't come out nine and a half centimeters at this point. I'm like 10 centimeters is right there. And he pretty much tells me if I don't calm myself down like not scream and calm my body I'm never going to dilate like my brain at this point. Just the whole experience they shut off and at that point my boyfriend got the girl because I did not think I could have done it naturally. I did have the epidural and broke my water bag and was able to push her out the following day. I just woke up. The epidural at this point kicked in and I really had to use the bathroom. I had a catheter. I was there like how is this going to work? So I called the nurse. She said you haven't eaten anything. And I felt like I had always heard that women could poop while giving birth and the thought of that mortified me and I was like, there's no way this is happening to me. I'm going to make sure I go to the bathroom before I go to the hospital. It's possible that I had to do that. So then she's like, wait a minute, check the baby's head and can you believe it's almost out. I have an epidural so I don't feel much going on like at all I just feel pressure and they told me to push. My boyfriend watched the whole thing and I had my mom on the phone. They had me breastfeed her and it was great.

Auriluz: 31 hours! That so long! And I can't believe you didn't notice the baby was coming out because of the epidural. Do you wish anything was different? It sounds like seeing the baby made those 31 hours go away.

Participant 3: I wish I would've been able to just stay in the hospital the first time. Like going back and forth was very unnecessary.

Auriluz: How have your follow up appointments been?

Participant 3: My follow up appointment was very good, I had one she checked me out, and I'm fine I healed great. So I got lucky. I had a therapist there and she just sat there and really talked to me about how I was feeling and stuff. We discussed postpartum depression postpartum anxiety, it wasn't too bad but she really talked me through it, she was a mom too.

Auriluz: Did your provider give you any additional resources in regards to COVID or for your mental health? Overall?

Participant 3: She answered any questions; I'd email her or set up a video appointment. She even offered a psychologist beyond that appointment.

Auriluz: Things seemed to happen very suddenly. Did you always plan on giving birth in the hospital or have a plan around giving birth itself?

Participant 3: Yes, I wanted a natural birth but did not. I didn't even know birth centers were a thing until it was too late. Not even because of COVID but my own anxiety in case something happened they don't really handle things like that.

Auriluz: Where were you getting your information around the maternal experience? Was it like family and friends or your doctors? Online?

Participant 3: Um it was mainly family and friends and the doctors offered a lot. I read articles. All that.

Auriluz: Do you feel safe in medical settings?

Participant 3: That's a 50/50. It really depends. Things don't always go wrong. Sometimes things can go wrong but when something is wrong, something is wrong. You know what I mean? So like I don't think I'm being over the top about the way I feel especially in pain.

Auriluz: Did you feel like that especially during your pregnancy?

Participant 3: Um, yeah. I felt like some things didn't have been avoided. I wasn't dramatic.

Auriluz: What is something that you would tell your hospital?

Participant 3: Their nursing department and labor and delivery department is phenomenal.

Auriluz: I'm sure they'd be happy to hear that, especially now with everything going on. Do you have any information that you want to share or anything that you want to tell me that I may have not asked? Any feedback about questions or anything you think that I should include in the future?

Participant 3: No, I think this interview was great.

Auriluz: Okay, well, thank you so much for your responses and your time! I hope you have a great evening.

Participant 3: Thank you, same.