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### Interview transcript participant #12

Auriluz Pacheco

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**NEW YORK CITY MATERNAL HEALTH ORAL HISTORY  
PROJECT**

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INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT PARTICIPANT #12

Interviewer: Auriluz Pacheco

Date of Interview: October 16th, 2020

Location of Interview: New York, NY

NYC MHOP Interview Transcript #12

Transcribed by Auriluz Pacheco

**Auriluz:** It is October 16th, 2020, and today I am conducting an interview 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 12: Sure

Auriluz: Would you be able to tell me your race?

Participant 12: Hispanic.

Auriluz: Your location?

Participant 12: Brooklyn.

Auriluz: Would you be able to tell me your income bracket?

Participant 12: 15,000-30,000.

Auriluz: Highest level of education completed?

Participant 12: Bachelors.

Auriluz: Okay great thank you. We can start. When did you first find out that you were pregnant, was it before or after the shutdown?

Participant 12: It was after.

Auriluz: How many months along were you?

Participant 12: I was actually 7 or 8 weeks before I found out.

Auriluz: How are you currently feeling and how were you feeling when you found out?

Participant 12: I was like scared or whatever cause I didn't know like what to do...I mean I do but like I didn't know how to feel. It's basically and me and my boyfriend have been together for a while so, it was weird, but now I'm happy and I know everything is going good and I'm in a better place

Auriluz: What concerns do you have moving forward around your health, if any? The baby and your pregnancy appointments?

Participant 12: I mean more for when I go to give birth, just because I know they have so many types of prescriptions and stuff like that. I'm not sure if I'll be able to be with my boyfriend they didn't even let me face time, which was weird.

Auriluz: How many months are you along?

Participant 12: About 6 months.

Auriluz: Could you describe how the days have been so far? You have mentioned some of it already when you said you were not able to face time your partner while you were at the hospital.

Participant 12: So far the doctor he made me go to two emergency rooms for something that's wrong. Basically they thought I was high risk so I had to go to the ER multiple times and I had to sit there by myself for hours...um and then he scheduled a lot of doctor appointments but then when things picked up I had to go alone. And then maybe I just started again like two months ago. So like my boyfriend missed like 90% of basically all of the appointments.

Auriluz: So does your provider provide any additional sources given like there are a lot of things that you do?

Participant 12: Uhh, no. Like not at all actually because I have wanted to like take childbirth class or whatever, because I'm in my third trimester and he was like "Well you are going to have to look for them yourself like outside of the hospital because we don't offer nothing like that. And like no, I haven't been able to like go even see the maternity ward because of COVID. So I found like two weeks classes and I have to pay out of pocket for them and I have to do them through zoom now.

Auriluz: So are there any resources that you wish they provided, let's say like some of the things you just mentioned?

Participant 12: Umm, you know I think that, the mothering classes. That was like my biggest thing. Doing classes like breast feeding classes, maybe yoga classes, I also wish they did like CPR breathing classes

Auriluz: Okay. So how knowledgeable would you say that you are around your options around giving birth and childbirth I know that you mentioned like a midwife and the birthing classes so it seems like you've been doing research.

Participant 12: Yea, So basically I took one of those health classes actually during college and I'm very like knowledgeable but I also got a doula to basically help me because my biggest fear is that, they are gonna try to like try to force me or induce labor. So one of the things my doula told me was that because the baby doesn't wanna come out but it's been a long time and they want me to...I didn't like that. So I got her just to help advocate for myself. I thought about hiring a mid wife too.

Auriluz: So do you intend on having your birth at home or at the hospital?

Participant 12: The hospital

Auriluz: So in addition to that, what are some things you have learned during your pregnancy and what are some things you want to learn?

Participant 12: Some things that I learned are that doctors don't really give you information unless you ask for it and they are very like everything is normal or like nonchalant. So if I'm like, oh I'm feeling this pain that I never felt before, they are like oh you are pregnant. It's like I became pregnant and after that people and doctors are very just like ehh, you are just pregnant. As long as the baby is moving  
You're ok, you're fine.

Auriluz: And how do you feel about that?

Participant 12: Its annoying especially like for first time moms, just because like yea I have my mom and I can like call and be like hey I have a question and like other people around me, but it's like most of these people have given birth 10 to 15 years ago where things have changed and like everybody's experience is different for me and you know vice versa it was very annoying and dismissive I don't like it.

Auriluz: So where would you say you have been getting information from around the maternal experience? Like even before the shutdown and now presently during the shutdown since doctors don't really seem to be doing much information wise.

Participant 12: Before the shut down, even before and after I feel like apps and googling things for like first time mothers and stuff like that that would help. And now I have my doula and she is this very helpful. At anytime I have like some random question I can go directly to her and if

she doesn't know the answer she will reach out to her circle of women that will know the answer. I wish that the OBGYN would give more information because they are still like hard to get to for even a regular pap smear, not just information.

Auriluz: So how often have you actually been in contact with your healthcare provider during your pregnancy?

Participant 12: Well before my pregnancy I would go my yearly appointment at the OBGYN for my regular appointments and if I missed anything I had to reschedule and I would just call them it was simple. I'd just call and they would tell me to just come in and then now after Covid it's been every four weeks, close to a month, getting checked over making sure everything is fine.

Auriluz: And you said they have been in person and not through zoom right?

Participant 12: Yeah. I mean so far everything to me has been like normal. The only thing that I thought would have happened is I thought you would get more sonograms in the beginning so far like I have had a lot more done and that's just because I have been to the ER multiple times. Every time I go I have to like go check the baby but yeah I thought like you get a lot more than four apparently, you are only supposed to get four done during the whole pregnancy.

Auriluz: Ohh, I didn't know that

Participant 12: Me neither, like there are some people that I have spoken to like "Yea I only actually got 2 done". So far I got an anatomy scan which is when they check between the baby make sure everything is fine and the baby is going correctly and then like one in the third trimester. So far it's only been those two. Apparently you need like shots throughout the pregnancy too. It's called the T-Dap that I didn't know about.

Auriluz: Did she tell you what the shot does?

Participant 12: Yea it's like the shot that protects against whooping cough.

Auriluz: So did you ever have a conversation with your healthcare provider around other preventative measures? Any Covid related? And how did that go?

Participant 12: Um no not really. They're trying to keep it as normal as possible.

Auriluz: How safe do you feel safe in medical settings Right now?

Participant 12: In the new office I feel safe yes In the old office that I was in I was hella concerned because they lost my paperwork multiple times They told me that I needed certain procedures done multiple times that I didn't need done. It was a very messy situation in the old office but I'm glad that I decided to switch over.

Auriluz: And what's different in the new setting?

Participant 12: So in the new one like I'm allowed to have my partner with me without questioning how well involved my partner is in the conversation or just make it only about me and the baby. So he, the doctor, tries to make it like a family thing and they're more like, if I call the office and have a question they're already available and willing to help as opposed to the other location I was in.

Auriluz: Do you have any concerns about when you do go to give birth?

Participant 12: Yeah so basically my first concern is getting like a nurse that's very dismissive. A nurse that's like "oh you're fine, you're not in a lot of pain don't worry". Just very like you know like its ok this is normal, just sit there, and those kinds of nurse. I have seen it happen like firsthand at the clinics around here and that's just a concern I have but I hope that I get secure and loving professionals. I wish Covid wasn't a thing so I can have the full experience of like you know my partner being there, doing it all and having people like my family, mom in the room if I wanted instead of just one person. Fighting to have visitors, just stuff like that.

Auriluz: What is something you wish you could tell your hospital or like your health care providers at this point?

Participant 12: That they need to get with the times. If everyone else is doing these Zoom meetings like I understand cause it's like up to age but I feel like they could somehow still do these virtual like classes for you know new moms or just be more available at least because they are so hard to get in contact with due to everything going on but there has to be alternatives I don't know. We all just need more information, even just for questions or things that I'm not concerned about, I believe the more information we have the better. They were testing me for things and I'm like, "I have never heard of that like is that" and they're just like, oh you know stuff for pregnant women and I'm like "okay...so I still don't know what this is but whatever" you gotta do what you got to do I guess.

Auriluz: That's so true everything is so up in the air we have no choice but to adapt or at least try to create temporary solutions. Thank you for this, I really enjoyed our conversation.

Participant 12: Of course thank you for having me

Auriluz: Hi! I'm really excited to follow up with you. Today is May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021. Congratulations on your baby!

Participant 12: Thank you. Thank you.

Auriluz: So would you be able to tell me what your experience was like from the last time that we spoke in terms of like appointments you received, the aftercare.

Participant 12: So, my birth labor and all of that was pretty easy. And just everything went really smoothly. I had a doula I'm not sure if I told you last time. Um, and she helped a lot, like I was able to do half natural and then half I got an epidural. Um, she came out really quickly, all the nurses were really nice, and everything was great... Everything went really good afterwards; the baby just had a lot of appointments. Basically, moms after you give birth, they don't care about you. I had that six week appointment, and now I have to see my doctor next year. So it's basically like, you give birth, that's it, we don't care about you, everything is about the baby. Which sucks little bit because there's like certain like breastfeeding, like; I need to help with that. So I had to, like, go out and like, talk to lactation consultants, like do my own research on everything. Because doctors didn't keep up, you know, on appointments and stuff like that, like a woman only has one. But overall, I mean, things were good postpartum. Like, I didn't have that many issues. The one thing I can say is that literally the moment you give birth, the first question out of people's mouths is out of doctors mouth is what birth control do you want to get on? And that's like, annoying because like you just spent hours in labor, and now you're just asking me, okay, now, how do you not want to do this again? Like, what? What birth control do you want this time so you don't go through this again? But that's like the only complain I can give when it comes to the postpartum care and all of that.

Auriluz: How was it for you in terms of getting access to these resources? You mentioned lactation courses. I know you also mentioned your hospital wasn't very supportive last time we spoke.

Participant 12: So the people that helped me with like, the lactation stuff was actually good. They gave me a lactation consultant, and we would just text back and forth. I got what you call thrush. So I and the baby had it. And it's basically a yeast infection. She had it in her mouth, and basically, I got it on my boobs. And it's very, very painful. Like, it's hard to breastfeed, my supply load. And the only way for me to get help was to go to urgent care. And even going to urgent care, they just focused on the baby. So like they gave her medicine and forgot to give me medicine. And when I called and I was like, Hey, I was told that like I also need medicine. They literally told me to go to her pediatrician. Like I'm 25 years old. I shouldn't have to go to see her

pediatrician to get care for something that like is pretty much the doctor for. But yeah, it was it's a lot of you doing your own research and you calling your insurance and calling the hospitals so you can see who you can see and who has time because 90% of the time, a lot of these people were hella busy so they didn't have appointments right away.

Auriluz: Yeah. So can you elaborate a little bit more on that in terms of like your financial situation healthcare, Medicaid, and like financial support?

Participant 12: So I was lucky enough that I do have Medicaid. And they paid for everything. I didn't come out of pocket for literally nothing. My care was taken care of Eliza's care was taken care of whatever food even my boyfriend ate at the hospital, like everything was just taken care of which I'm glad because I did speak to some people and they're like, no, I still had to pay out of pocket. Whether it was \$100 or \$5, but some people did still have to pay. And I was lucky enough that I didn't.

Auriluz: What about in terms of the doula?

Participant 12: So the doula I was lucky enough that I didn't have to pay for her either because she's working on her certification. So in order to be fully certified, she needs to see at least six births. And I was lucky enough that my professor actually hooked me up with her like they're friends. So that was a resource I had like my professor, she works a lot with the reproductive justice people up here, trying to fix the system and stuff like that. So she told me about her told me what a doula was because honestly, I didn't even know until I had one which a doula. Basically, they help you through your birth, emotionally, like, whatever you need, even postpartum. Like she came and helped me around the house checked up on me. She still checks up on me here and there. Versus like a midwife, which most people familiar with there. They help you medically so like, they can deliver your baby. But the doula care, so it's like having an extra support person with you.

Auriluz: How knowledgeable would you say you are now? You've mentioned something that has changed since the first time we spoke and prior to giving birth.

Participant 12: Honestly, going in, I didn't have that much knowledge. Like, I know, I wanted a hospital birth just because I'm paranoid sometimes. I didn't know if I wanted a midwife or a doctor. But once like, I got doula and started doing my own research, which was I was like seven months pregnant by then. It was like I had basically three months left. That's when I got a lot more information. The doula gave me different courses I could take. So she helped me find a birthing class. And through that birthing class, I learned that there's different ways that doctors tried to, like medically induced you without you even knowing there's ways that they would want to intervene if like your water breaks, they always want to like, have the baby out within 24

hours of your water breaking, and things like that. So I became knowledgeable towards the end. And mostly because of because of my doula, not my own doctors.

Auriluz: What were some resources that you wish you received or had maybe received earlier on?

Participant 12: Not even like a resource that I received. I wish that the Obgyn would be more knowledgeable about certain things because I was talking to my doctor like about my birth plan. And I was like, I want to go as natural as possible. And he said, well, if you're in labor for over 24 hours, we're going to want to give you medicine. Versus my doula that was like, there's other ways for you to cope with the pain you don't need pain medication all the time. So it's like a mixture of just ideas, I guess. And I feel like Obgyn, some physicians should be a little bit more open to other things \*pause\*. In terms of the beginning, just because after I got thrush, like we stopped breastfeeding because it was tough to get my supply back up. And then and then like, I went back to work everything was just difficult when it came to breastfeeding. And I feel like, if I would have had lactation courses from the beginning, and people helping me with that, I would still probably be breastfeeding.

Auriluz: So what are some things that you learned during your pregnancy? And what are some things you wish you knew?

Participant 12: Some things that I learned are mothers are alone, basically, like, you get pregnant, it's just, well, if you need something, reach out, do your research, like everything is on the mom versus things I feel like it should be just there for them. The first doctor's appointment when you're pregnant shouldn't be, oh, well, this is your due date. Come back in six weeks, it should be like, Okay, well, this is your due date, these are things that you should know about the next couple of weeks, blah, blah. I think that's like a big thing that I learned because I thought doctors would be more involved. And they're not really. It feels like mostly a mom is alone. And if they don't have a good support system at home, it basically like, sucks. Because there's a lot of questions that do go unanswered unless you take the initiative to ask them. No one's sitting there like do you have any questions about this, this and that. Do you understand everything? Do you know why we're doing so much blood work every month, things like that. Luckily I'm outspoken.

Auriluz: So then with that, where have you been getting information from?

Participant 12: Internet, basically, and then I would go to my daughter doctors and double check with them. I'd be like, hey, so I read this article. And I just want to know more about it. And that's when they would elaborate on it. It was never like them being like, oh, so do you know

why we need to take your glucose levels every eight weeks, it was more like, hey, and I heard that you need to do this blood work. Why is that a thing?

Auriluz: Was there anything that you thought was that would happen? But didn't?

Participant 12: I thought that you would get more sonograms done than what I did. I think I only got like, four done. And apparently that was a lot. I think I mentioned this last time too. Apparently people only get to the done pregnancy. So like one to date, the pregnancy. And then the other one to see the gender and make sure that like the baby has like all 10 toes and all their body parts.

Auriluz: So how did your attention change at any point in terms of how you how much how many times you were accessing, like your doctor, the number of appointments you were having? I know that you are pregnant during the peak of the lockdown, and then things started to ease up a little bit. So were there any changes in that?

Participant 12: Yeah, so like, in the beginning, I was seeing the doctor. I saw them when I first got pregnant, followed by six weeks, and then I didn't see them again. So I was three months. And then like I didn't see them again until six months. But once that happened, after six months appointment, I was seeing them every three to four weeks. And then towards the end like the last month and a half. I was seeing them every two weeks. And then the last like month, I was seeing them literally every week, sometimes twice a week. So towards the end of the pregnancy, things did get. I just searched the doctors more and things like that and checking up on the baby more.

Auriluz: You mentioned earlier a little bit about your follow up appointments and how they went? Would you be able to elaborate a little bit on that? I know you mentioned you only see them once now.

Participant 12: Yeah, so I gave birth January 1st. And my doctor's appointment for me was February 6th. And basically, the day I gave birth, the nurse was like, Okay, well now that you gave birth, like you should start thinking about your birth control you want to get on and like I just looked at her and like ignored her. Um, and then like, they called me from the doctor's office, like a week prior. And it was like, well, do you know what birth control you want? So like, we can have it ready for you here? Literally the first question they asked was like, okay, and then we'll do your birth control. And then we'll make sure all of your stitches are gone. And check everything down there. And that was basically the appointment. They didn't ask me how's the baby, didn't ask me how I was feeling mentally. I was breastfeeding, no how's that going? Do you need any resources? Do you need any help? Any help finding childcare? Nothing like that. It was just get back on your birth control. Your stitches are gone. Move on with your life. Okay.

Auriluz: Oh, wow. And for the baby, has there been more than two inches?

Participant 12: Yeah. So she had her first week checkup, second week checkup, three week checkup and then her one month and then her two months her and then her four months but she just had like two weeks ago. And then her next appointment is her six months. And then her appointment after that would be her one year. Literally she's constantly getting checked up on.

Auriluz: You mentioned earlier as well that you had a half natural half birth. Would you be able to explain that?

Participant 12: Yeah, so I went to the hospital and I was in labor over 10 hours at home. So by tomorrow house problems, okay, like, I need a nap. So they gave me an epidural. And three hours after that, I slept for three hours, when I woke up, the epidural stopped working. So they gave me more medicine, and my body was just not taking it anymore like it, didn't want it. So I had to push naturally and all of that so basically, the last like six hours of labor were just all natural just because the epidural stopped working.

Auriluz: Did they explain to you why it may have stopped working.

Participant 12: They say this some people's body just metabolizes the medicine quicker than other people. So, honestly, it's like, a weird thing because there's like two different things you can go, there's epidural, and then there's like a spinal that you can get down. That's what like they call it. And the epidural should numb you, up until you give birth versus the spinal will just numb you for like an hour for you to like, just like relax. So I don't like I honestly don't know, it's more of a medical like mystery kind of situation because they're like it's the way your body metabolizes it. But like when you give more, it's like literally not working like I don't even feel it anymore. It didn't like catch me off guard, because I've heard of a lot of people where it stops working or just doesn't work even the first time they try it. So I wasn't caught off guard. But I was surprised that that happened to me. Just because I've had surgeries before where I had to like be put under and stuff. And I never had like Palmer anesthesia or any medicine. So I didn't think the epidural was gonna wear off or affect me differently than something else.

Auriluz: Did they mention the possibility of this happening?

Participant 12: They did.

Auriluz: How has motherhood been?

Participant 12: Things have been great. Like, she's a good sleeper, so I'm getting sleep. She's very easy baby. So far, I haven't had any issues with her. Um, I have a very good support system.

So like, my boyfriend, we're still together, we still live together. Everything's gonna go between us. He's working, I'm back to work. So my mom comes to visit once a month, his mom comes to visit once a month. So like I have a lot of people around me that are constantly helping, like my sister was living with me after I gave birth.

Auriluz: I'm so happy for you. Congrats, it's interesting seeing your responses now in comparison to the first interview. I just want to open up the space to see if you had anything that you wanted to add? Is there anything that you want to say to women that might look at this in the

Participant 12: I think one thing that I would say to somebody else would be x questions like, it does not matter if you think the question is dumb, because you never know what can happen like, I wish I would add more questions while I was breastfeeding and stuff but I thought I had the information I needed. So just ask questions, do a lot a lot of research and have fun. Just because you're pregnant doesn't mean your life is over. Some people think that just because you have a baby, you can't do anything like okay, you can still be a person, and motherhood does not define you is what I would tell somebody else.

Auriluz: Thank you so much I hope you have a great rest of your day.

Participant 12: Thank you too, say bye baby!