

Transcript – Kimberly Dan, Class of 2006

Narrator: Kimberly Dan

Interviewer: Mary Murphy, Nancy L. Buc '65 Pembroke Center Archivist

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Mary Murphy: Okay, so good morning to all of our listeners in the world. My name is Mary Murphy and I am the Nancy L. Buc Pembroke Center Archivist. This morning I am in Providence, Rhode Island. It is May 14, 2020, and I'm conducting another oral history interview with a Brown University member, member of our community, and I'm going to have her introduce herself now. Please go ahead. Good morning.

Kimberly Dan: Hi, good morning to the listeners. I'm in the Philippines. My name is Kimberly Dan, and I'm a proud Brown alumni member. I'm happy to be part of this interview for the purpose [1:00] of inspiring, that it might inspire and or help any member of the community.

MM: Okay, thank you. So what I would like to start with is to first ask you to explain your connection to Brown. Just tell us a little bit about what you're studying at Brown and what brought you to Brown University.

KD: Okay, well, I'm a graduate of 2006. It was a long journey to graduation since I had to come home to the Philippines – my other home, other than Rhode Island, Brown, what home was there – because of a condition I had. So, but I went through the, my last semester with two other universities here in the Philippines. But I finished with economics and [2:00] ever since then I worked here. I was 15 years with a company, my parents company. And then after that, I built my own company. It's a medium sized slow paced company based on the idea of growing knowledge of beauty and all in an umbrella aspect, using organic materials and advising middle aged to I would say 60s on using these products.

MM: If you –

KD: And, yes sorry.

MM: If you could just step back a little bit and tell us why did you choose to attend Brown University in the first place? What drew you to attend Brown?

KD: Okay, you know, I, at that time, I was very young I would say, and I was very [3:00] in a protected environment. Home and school and the mall was all I knew. And so I was 18 then. I had, most of the graduating seniors went to another country to study and at that, at that time, I was close friends with one that went to Johns Hopkins. And I said, I want to go abroad too. And I really worked hard, and I studied hard, and I thought I can, I think I had the confidence then to, to study in a good school. And my father said, “Only if you got in the Ivy League.” So I was very much into the musical scene, theater and singing, dancing. But he said, “You have to stop all of that [4:00] and focus on getting to where you want to get to if you want to get there.” At that time, my father had a little hotel at Providence. And the letter came in from Brown that said I was accepted at Brown. I, honestly, at that time, did not know very much about Brown or, or any other of the Ivy League schools. So it was quite a deep adventure for me. I say because I never experienced snow nor fall. Then, then that letter came in and then that hotel was quite nearby, and he had a college friend who was manning the, the small hotel. And I, I [5:00] packed up everything I had at that time and was, was really excited. And I had all the energy to study and like embark on this new journey.

I loved Brown. I loved the people, but at that time not, not as deep as it strikes me now. I don’t think I communicated very well then. I mean, even now I’m still in the process of knowing how to relate well, but I knew, I know now that I was with likeminded or very driven who thought a lot [6:00] about other people, maybe. I don’t want to say that of myself too much, but, but for a greater good.

So it’s been, since graduation, I took a midyear, midyear walk after three and a half years, but I still had eight credits, two credits, oh, two subjects to finish. Six credits or eight credits – anyway. So I came back home, I had a condition and my father said not to go back and I think it was in his heart just not to let me go. And I was on full support by my dad then and [7:00] I said, I, so, it was something – I can’t I can’t go without finishing a task that I needed to do. So I took another four years for the last two subjects in two, two universities here that I don’t really feel as

comfortable studying in. I went to an international school before Brown so studying here was not an option then for me really, because well, I don't want to say anything so negative, but I wasn't as comfortable.

And so after that time I went on to work. It was not as fast paced as the United States. [8:00] And I didn't know how to, I didn't know what to bring, or give back to the company at that time in the beginning. And I think I might have gone to a full drive that they thought maybe I wasn't fit to be in the company anymore. So –

MM: Let me, let me – So let me push forward. So it sounds like you came home, or went to the, home to the Philippines to finish your education and then –

KD: Righ.

MM: Began to work, which, which for a number of years, which brings us up to the current time, and –

KD: Yes.

MM: And I want to change, just move the conversation into our current very historic moment. So I would like you, if you could, [9:00] to tell us about your life now in this moment. You saw the call for us to interview people about their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. So tell, let me just start out by saying what, why did you want to share your experience today? And then please do share about your experience.

KD: I think all of us in the world are connected. Some energy, some source, a big God, if those who believe there must. And no matter how far Brown is from here, from the Philippines, or the people that are there, I have a strong, [10:00] I feel attachment to, or not attaching, codependent, well, so I don't know how to explain it, but it keeps me going. Brown keeps me going. For the purpose that it's there for, for the purpose that university is, is present for, it keeps me going for my daily work. My work is not just the business I do or my, I have like I love my son, that the daily chores I do for him. But just that like every minute, every second for me counts. And when,

when I want to do something what, what, when I long to do for a task I searched for what I think is meaningful [11:00] and important. And if I live in a house, I'm a solo parent, with my grand, with the grandparents, so they have their own set of what they find is important as a couple. And I've always stood strong that I have my own family though I live with them. I have my son to take care of, A little bit, I don't know if it's detached or I try to detach so that I can bring something good for my son. So there is a little bit of friction at times which may be normal or abnormal. But I, I was going through a tough time in the beginning and a lot of crying. A lot of feeling of [12:00] I didn't know why I was crying.

MM: Can you tell us –

KD: Seven days straight.

MM: Can you tell us about, can you tell us about when you first heard about the pandemic and when it started to have an impact in your own life?

KD: Okay, so it was the second day. It was the first day and it was still like this news of staying in the house. There was a quarantine here in March, it was March 15 it began, two days after my brother's birthday. And the first thing I thought of was food. How am I going to get groceries, just to feel better about just to be able to cope. And even my, my extra supplements that I get aside from my medicines. [13:00] Then I heard over social media, which I'm very active on Facebook, that the pediatric of my son caught the, caught the disease, the virus and he gave 24 shots to my son. So I've said, that hit hard on me because how life was so fragile and so invaluable at the same time. And I want, and he really supplemented my son with so much. He, he was there when he was born. So, so that made me active about COVID and whatever news I read about, what medicines I heard were effective in [14:00] conversations here with my family, with my dad and his friends who caught it, what they were taking. And so I was trying to get this medicine to the doctor. It was not, it was, I can't say the wrong name, but it's by Fujitsu, Fuji, Fuji, Fuji, by Fuji of Japan. So I got the news, and I saw the stocks rose for that and other medicines and I was reading on doctors, doctors' Instagram sites from the States and I was trying to put two and two together. So I sent the materials that I could to help Brown research maybe or

at least for those that were affected. And I think the energy that I [15:00] put out maybe you could have helped some way for that doctor to, I was email, you know, I'm not very close with him personally like by phone or text, but I was trying to get through his system like the email or the secretary might, might read it. But I don't, I honestly don't have a strong trust, if I may say. I don't trust so easily in where I'm at.

MM: Can I ask you a question about your community? Are your neighbors and people in your community, are they, everyone is basically at home, correct? Tell us tell us about what's happening in your community.

KD: Very much. [16:00] Everyone is maybe, I haven't gone out for about a month and a half at all. I took one day to the grocery store then I came home really exhausted and almost having –

MM: Anxiety?

KD: Feeling like I had a cough or something. And I, and my parents are 65 and above. One, one of them is 65 and, so I didn't go out again. But the police are out on the road roving and they really like to make rules and their rules seem to dictate a lot of things, especially with a governance now.

MM: Can you tell us about, can you tell us [17:00] about some of the rules that are in place?

KD: There is a, there is a curfew between I don't know what time it is at night to five to eight. You know I'm sorry I don't like to listen to all the bad –

MM: Yes. Understandable.

KD: Negative things and so, but there is a curfew and if you're out you must have an ID to go to the office and if you don't you are, you're held. I don't, I've, my, one of my friends got held for going to the grocery store. He was brought to the precinct.

MM: So to –

KD: There is no one but delivery, delivery, delivery motorcycles that deliver packages. So that's how I receive my groceries now. [18:00] And it's amazing.

MM: Oh, tell us about this.

KD: Amazing.

MM: In the United States food delivery has, has not, it hasn't really worked that well. So tell us about how it's working in the Philippines.

KD: So a lot of them are posting through messenger, grocery organic stores put up a small website, small link to a web, link to a list of things that they, a host, a host listing, I guess, and they link that to their messenger account, or Facebook, they post it through Facebook. And you can ask them through messenger.

MM: Cool.

KD: Because Facebook is linked to messenger, right? So when you ask them through messenger, they'll respond to you within [19:00] the hour, someone will, in that, in that organization, that small Co Op maybe. Like for me it's my fruits, vegetables, mango for me I wanted a shake during this time to freshen up and so I ordered \$8 worth of mangoes.

MM: Okay.

KD: And with delivery already. Delivery is \$2 for the motorbike.

MM: Cool.

KD: That's too cheap. Yeah. So and it gets to me and if I deposit through an account, it's directly

to, you know it. It should be a business account but it's a personal account. Maybe the value is not so large. These are for farmers for organic. [20:00]

MM: So delivery –

KD: Then once they get a deposit slip, you know, it's a banks now are operating through internet apps specifically for the them, for their company. So when you send a slip deposit to another bank, it happens, they lift it, they lift it, the, the fees during this time so it's not a transaction.

MM: It sounds like a lot of your daily systems are working like food and banking are moving along okay, quite well where you are.

KD: Yes.

MM: What is, do you know anything about the level of testing that's happening in the Philippines [21:00] right now, are people being allowed? Can they get tests for the virus if they're feeling ill?

KD: You know, the first medicine, we're not very far, I will be more, you know, we're not very far from Wuhan, China, or China, and the connections of the government now I can't be so, the connections the, the president is, has good ties with China. So – that's my opinion, my, what I, what I'm seeing. So a lot of the medicines are coming from there and the testing kits. That's why I tried to send this, this what seemed to be effective medicine for the doctor that I knew [22:00] because he wasn't, he was in a good hospital. But I don't know, didn't know whether they were administering, what tests they were administering, but I think it was from China.

MM: Okay.

KD: The testing kits are from China and they don't, it takes a, you know, there's, there are more expensive ones, but they chose this, this one that takes seven days, seven days.

MM: Seven days. So I'll turn, I'd like to ask you now about life in your home and about you know, how is, how has it been? Have you felt isolated in your home? Tell us, for the listeners who are going to be watching this 100 years from now, what is this like for you being in your home for so long?

KD: There are ups and downs definitely, [23:00] days of it. And a lot of adjustments, though you find the beauty, you end up finding the beauty in what's in your surroundings. And you also I find, I find my identity even more so, and I know what I should be filling my time with. And that's what keeps me going through the days that are mundane and which are most of the days unless – it's really what you put in and what you give out. And Brown has been there. I don't know how, through my phone, through messages they sent through to alumni [24:00] about coping skills and, and –

MM: Tell us about some of the things – tell us about some of the things you – tell us about some of the things that you have found beautiful at this time.

KD: Okay. We have a garden. Yeah, I mean it's, it's, we're, I'm not I should be grateful for what, what I have. Some people don't have a few cubic meters to live in here in the Philippines. But I never walked the grounds after, after I came home. You know, we have 8,000 square meters outside in the whole place. My sister planted beautiful plants that grew, grew, grew like Amazon forests. [25:00] I mean I took photos of them and I was just, these should be specimens! So, so I saw solutions to things and inspirational materials to things that, to, to nature. I saw for the first time I shot a, they call a spark bird – my father's into photography. I think it's a humming – before I shot the, took a photo of this spark bird there was a bird flying and dancing in front of me about, not in front of me, above me in the picture I sent.

MM: Yes.

KD: Yes. And it was, it was yeah, I never experienced that. I never, and I started taking pictures of flowers and which flowers I thought meant [26:00] more than the other flowers. Everything seems to have more meaning during these times and, and I don't think it's, I, I started adjusting,

and I thought this was how it was like before I went to college, like high school. I stayed in one place. I didn't move around very much. And I got a lot of things done that way. So I thought maybe this should be my lifestyle. And internet access. I'm able to get, I am able to choose with a press of a button in five minutes, rather than going out for three hours.

MM: Yes.

KD: So I can, so I thought I could do more in one day, at least focus on my [27:00] priorities as much as I can, instead of being distracted, or be preoccupied with everything.

MM: So can I ask you about so the, maybe the stress or lack thereof, maybe it's easier now. You mentioned running a business and being a mom. What is it like balancing those two things when you're doing this all from home?

KD: My son used to be home schooled prior to this. I don't know if it's divine ordinance by God. But he's been in another school that I really don't like. So, and it's a, it's a Christian school, though I don't, I'm not, I didn't like the curriculum. So he was stuck at home with me, [28:00] which I didn't really mind, much more of, and he was happier because there was less bullying for him. So it's a lot of, well the stress is, it's the good kind of stress, because the outcome is fulfilling. He's with me, he's happy, he's thriving with me. And I don't have to go somewhere else for a few hours because I have to take care of my parents also, some of their needs. Like if they do the, I assist them. So I can, I am able to do what I feel is fulfilling for myself. So I can contribute more. The business is not, is all free now. [29:00] For me, I can't charge my clients for anything because they're, one they're older. They don't, they don't not use to running their own businesses at home. I do, I'm an economics major so I do little bits of investment so that keeps me afloat. I mean, I make do of what, what is. I think I strive a lot.

MM: Yeah. Well, so our time is running up just a little bit, but I want to allow you an opportunity, I want to make sure that you are able to share what you want to be preserved of your story. So please take this time and speak about whatever is really touching you right now that you think is important to be captured [30:00] for the history books about this time and how it has

affected your life.

KD: Okay, well, I want to thank you for most, Mary, for accepting my message on email. And I think this time of three months or two months being at home is like three years of what I could do for other people. And maybe for those that read or view my story it's, it's a message of hope for the Brunonian community that I played a music, you know, an anime music and I was calling for help and I always call from help [31:00] inside me when I am troubled. But for some super reason, all the alumni were emailing me and they, they were asking me how I was maybe four or five. And I don't I usually am the one trying to contribute to Brown. But I was so touched that I was taken out of my bed from crying for three days by the emails from these alumni, and I felt that we were, we're all connected by heart. And you know, I might be, I might be searching for Brown and tagging and liking pages on Facebook to, [32:00] to boost maybe or to be an encouragement to others. And that time came back to me by feeds, you know, how would I know I would receive an exercise material live from Providence? And I, I've been using other materials but I used what maybe is, like me or of my kind and after an hour, I feel like I can do so much more.

MM: Do you feel like, do you, it sounds to me like you're experiencing some sadness due to COVID-19 and being at home and you know, so many of us are. Is that correct? And do you feel [33:00] like online communities are really bringing you, are helping to uplift you?

KD: I feel like you know, how can I, if everything was going on correctly, and I don't want to be a more big person, but I wouldn't see you right, a few meters, one feet away.

MM: Yes.

KD: It's brought, it's brought the community closer through these online conversations. And I think it rekindled a big part of me that thought I didn't identify very well with, I mean, I was searching for people that I could be a part of and my parents [34:00] are very strong Christian group, and they have their Bible studies, but I was looking for something that was like me that I could be a part of that I could be have, say I am a part of a community. And I found that this, at

this time, and I would excuse myself and I had an excuse to excuse myself from their gatherings. I would say to students that never think, never, never to lose hope. And when you do, there is a family that you can go to, go to, but you'd have to reach out to. You'd have to reach out. I mean, it just doesn't, [35:00] and we're a group of likeminded individuals that strive for the best in this world. And identifying with each other brings better out of us. Yeah.

MM: I think that's a lovely, really lovely sentiment to think about Brown University even being virtual right now as a beacon in this storm. It's, it's really nice sentiments. With that I want to thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts with me today. Your interview becomes part of a collection that we have been building since 1982 about different subjects and different [36:00] womxn's lives. So your story now becomes part of that community. And we will share that with you and with the world in a very short time. So thank you today and I'm going to stop the recording now.

KD: Okay, thank you. Thank you, Mary.

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