

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Rachel Rubin

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library

Tumultuous 2020 Oral History project

Interview # T20-A-L-2022-39

Rachel Rubin, Senior Medical Officer and Co-Lead of the Cook County Department of Public Health was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Tumultuous 2020* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: July 18, 2022

Location: Telephone Interview

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Amanda Riggenbach, *Tumultuous 2020* project manager

Transcription by: _____

Edited by: _____

Transcript being
processed.

Total Pages: _____ Total Time: 1:21 / 1.31 hrs.

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on August 12, 2022.

The interview is archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

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Abstract

Rachel Rubin, *Tumultuous 2020*, T20-A-L-2022-39

Biographical Information/Overview of Interview: Rachel Rubin was born in Chicago, Illinois, in 1958. She was raised on the north side of Chicago until she was fourteen when her family left the city and moved to Evanston. Though her family grappled with the association of white flight, they continued their social activism in Evanston. She attended Evanston Township High School and graduated in 1976. Rubin was always a self-described science kid while also wanting to be immersed in the real world and working towards social change. She got her undergraduate degree in mathematics from the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana, graduating in 1980. She attended Rush Medical College and graduated with her MD in 1984. She completed her combined residency at Cook County Hospital, now called John H. Stroger Jr. Hospital, in internal and occupational medicine. She also earned a Master of Public Health from the University of Illinois Chicago, as a part of the occupational residency. This experience honed Rubin's interest in public health. When her residency was over, Rubin stayed on as an attending physician before she went overseas to Mozambique. She was involved in anti-apartheid advocacy while also working as a public health specialist. She returned to Cook County Health Department and worked in a variety of roles before becoming Division Chief of Occupational and Environmental Medicine in 1998. In 2007, the division was eliminated. She worked in the private sector for two years. She returned to Cook County Health Department in Primary Care and Internal Medicine before 2014, when she began working for the Cook County Department of Public Health as one of two senior medical officers. The communicable diseases unit, environmental health services unit, integrated health support services, and the Tuberculosis are all under her purview.

Rubin describes the start of the pandemic and the measures the Cook County Department of Public Health began taking, beginning with the first COVID case in Illinois in January 2020. In April 2020, the Chief Operating Officer of the Cook County Department of Public Health was fired and Rubin and her fellow senior medical officer, Dr. Kiran Joshi, were made co-leads of the department. Rubin details her experiences in this role, highlighting what it was like to be one of the very public faces of the department, along with Joshi. She shares her personal experiences with the pandemic, including the loss of her parents to COVID-19. She concludes by reflecting on the past two years and what she hopes her legacy to be.

Subject Headings/Key Words: Tumultuous 2020; Tumultuous 2020 oral history; Rachel Rubin; senior medical officer; Cook County Department of Public Health; public health; COVID-19; COVID-19 pandemic; loss due to the pandemic; pandemic grief

Notes to the Reader: Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, interviewee and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for the views expressed therein. We leave these for the reader to judge.

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