

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Tessa Martinez

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Tumultuous 2020 Oral History project

Interview # T20-A-L-2021-047

Tessa Martinez, a non-profit worker and artist, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Tumultuous 2020* Oral History project.

Interview date & location:

Date: October 12, 2021 Location: Peoria Playhouse Children's Museum,
Peoria, Illinois

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Amanda Riggenbach, *Tumultuous 2020* project manager, ALPLM

Transcription by: _____

Edited by: _____

Total Pages: _____ Total Time: 2:27 / 2.45

Transcript being
processed.

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on December 1, 2021.

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

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Abstract

Tessa Martinez, *Tumultuous 2020*, T20-A-L-2021-047

Biographical Information/Overview of Interview: Tessa Martinez was born in March of 1992 in Laredo, Texas. The oldest of four girls, Martinez grew up in a tight-knit family and Hispanic community. Despite their age differences, the Martinez girls were close. Talented dancers, the Martinez sisters could be found at any family gathering performing their own choreographed dances. Martinez graduated from Texas A&M International University in 2014 with a Bachelor of Art degree. She pursued a Master of Art degree, specializing in ceramics, at West Virginia University. There she met her then boyfriend, now fiancé, Jacob Guzan. Following graduation in 2018, they moved to Peoria, Illinois, for an artist residency for which Guzan was selected. Martinez found work at Lowes before becoming employed at the Peoria PlayHouse Children’s Museum.

Martinez describes the fulfilling nature of her work as a “playologist,” and later in her role as Family and Public Programs Manager. She details her excitement as she began to prepare for summer programming in the beginning of 2020. Martinez highlights the anxiety that the COVID-19 pandemic caused, especially in the early days of uncertainty. When it became clear that it was not safe to keep the PlayHouse doors open, the majority of staff were laid off. By the end of April, Martinez was forced to find a new job.

Despite the resulting financial instability, Martinez was able to find some positives amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. She was able to devote time to her emotional and physical well-being since she was working part-time hours at Lowes in the Lawn and Garden Center. She also was able to take a road trip with Guzan. It was on this trip that he proposed. By the end of the summer of 2020, Martinez was employed in the non-profit sector once again. This time with a smaller and newer non-profit, Artists Re-Envisioning Tomorrow, Inc. (ART, Inc.). There, she served as a program manager, which entailed a broad variety of duties. As program manager, Martinez was able to plan and execute a summer camp in the summer of 2021. Following her departure from ART, Inc., she returned to the PlayHouse as an educator at the end of the summer in 2021.

Subject Headings/Key Words: non-profit sector; pandemic; unemployment; arts; children’s museum; Peoria PlayHouse Children’s Museum; Artists Re-Envisioning Tomorrow, Inc; Lowe’s of Peoria, Illinois

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 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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