

Neighborhood Tales: Kuwait Under Lockdown

The Neighborhood Tales: Kuwait Under Lockdown project sprouted out of a painful realization that even as history was sure to remember the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, and its impacts on every aspect of our human life, there are some stories, some voices, some experiences that might never be recorded for posterity. In Kuwait, where history still struggles to break out of the official and mainstream narrative, there would be many who, if not completely unheard, would find their experiences subject to but an ephemeral burst of public interest in the newspapers and social media. They might be heard. But not listened to.

This project is an effort to prevent that loss. It's a community-based effort to document what we've lived through. So that we may all remember. But more importantly, so that we can act to bring change. What did we get right? What do we need to fix? Pessimism and conventional thinking come easy in crisis. And it's these two instincts we hope this project remedies against. We are guided by the belief that, no matter how challenging the times, there is always hope--waiting for us to wield it. Hiding, in unexpected places.

CASTILE - A nurse shares his experience as a frontline worker and volunteer during the pandemic

[In this clip, Castile reflects on the losses, deaths and mental struggles faced by many within the Filipino community during lockdown...]

Eleanor: You, you didn't do that. You didn't have to do that. Do you think, do you think, when you look at this pandemic, do you think it's gonna affect? Do you think many people went home and will not come back? Or, or, or do you think it changed the way the community--I mean, was it, did it change anything about how the Filipino community sort of lives in Kuwait or feels about Kuwait or their future, see their future in Kuwait?

Castile: Actually, this pandemic, it's like all your dreams stopped.

Eleanor: What?

Castile: Actually, what I'm saying is that when this pandemic came, all the dreams of the Filipino, it's like, it's just stopped. Because they cannot do anything. It's a force majeure. Not only the Filipinos is affected, even the-- everybody's affected, even their companies are affected. So they was-- they were terminated. They cut their salaries. Some of them already psych-- psychologically affected also, because of what is happening. They cannot go out, they cannot, they cannot send money to their families, which is the main point why we are here. So, many people also, try or have been succeeding--, succeeded to do, to harm themselves. I think around March or May is the, the number of self-inflecting death raise.

Eleanor: So this was people attempting suicide or self-harm--[incomp]]

Castile: Because they lost their job. It's like they were really affected, mentally,

Eleanor: Did the community lose a lot of people?

Castile: For the suicide, I think around maybe 10, maybe 10. Yeah. Maybe 10 people.

Eleanor: Did the community lose a lot to COVID also?

Castile: For the COVID, actually I have a friend also who is also a nurse, a friend of mine who is also a nurse who also work in the ambulance, as an ambulance, who died in the COVID.

Eleanor: Oh dear!

Castile: There is also some technician that I, that I knew

Eleanor: So everyone is affected? So everyone, do you feel like everyone knows someone who was affected in some way by this? Either, either psychologically or with illness or with loss of job or with, so all of these things that you're saying affected the community, would you, would you think most people have a friend or someone that they know that's been affected during this pandemic?

Castile: Yeah. Because like I told you earlier, we--me, me in particular, I lost some friends. Until now some of my friends still not having, coming back to work, they're still there waiting for the company to open... And then they really don't know what they have to do now because it's been a long time that they are not having their salaries. Even the, even the, in their families, knew that we are also affected. It's like they are, they cannot understand us-- why we are, why we cannot send money to them during this pandemic. Because this is the very important thing for the Filipino workers, here in Kuwait. We came here to give a, to send money to our loved ones in the, back in the Philippines. But this came and then the, our family, me and the family in the Philippines are already affected. The relationship sometimes it's getting.. It's getting a little bit shaky, shady. So I think that's it. But also those who are affected, should have somebody with them to talk to them. Not just to, just, just to support them that, tell him that this will be, it will be all right, sometimes, it will come back to normal after a while. But I think for this pandemic, it will make another, another year. For me personally, I think this will, this will stay for another year.

Eleanor: Yeah. How are you coping? Like when you're, you know, losing friends to this and, and you have friends, I'm sure who are, who are stressed about their families and they're not receiving their salaries, and you're sort of one of the, you know, maybe few who's actually in a stable position. How are you sort of coping with this in terms of your own life?

Castile: Actually. I feel fortunate because during this lockdown, I don't know why. I really don't know why I have so many extras. So many extra money. I already send to the Philippines my, my salary and still, I have still here. So, some savings here in the Kuwait. So I gave some money or food to my friends here. Okay? Because for me, really, this is the time that we help each other. Don't, don't talk about the money. Don't mind the money. Help them in every way you can. They are, they are hungry, give them food. Okay? They are crying. Stay with them. Talk to them. At least you have--you maintain a communication with

your friends, especially those who are most affected.

[For more stories click here.](#)

Important Note on Privacy: All narrators have given consent to the public dissemination of their recorded and written testimonies. The audio files contained below capture only a snippet from the full recorded interviews. The latter will only be made available to researchers and educators upon request. In order to protect the anonymity of our narrators, all their names have been changed, and any identifying details have been redacted. Some of the narrator's voices have also been modified for additional security.

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