

Dalilah Rodriguez

Interviewed by Theresa Valli
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Corpus Christi, Texas

Theresa Valli: My name is Theresa Valli and it October 5, 2017 and it's 7:20 p.m. and were here at 5802 Everhart Road and I'm interviewing Dalilah Rodriguez to talk to her about her experience in Hurricane Harvey. So, for starters, tell me a little about yourself?

Dalilah Rodriguez: My name is Dalilah. I'm from Chicago. I've lived in Corpus Christi for three years, well November will make three years, um, and I work at a salon. Um I, love to eat. (both laughs) I love to paint; I love to write, and um, I just took up um guitar lessons.

TV: Cool

DR: So that's a little bit I guess about myself.

TV: Why did you move out here?

DR: Umm, I moved out here because I wanted to try something different. Um I, I wanted to move ordinary um to L.A., but I didn't have any money saved up, so um, my aunt convinced me to move out here. She said, "Hey if you move down here you can, um you know, I can get you a job, and you can um stay with me and you know, you can go ahead and move wherever you want." I'm like "yeah, yeah. Sure why not?"

TV: So, she lives here in Corpus?

DR: Yeah. She lives here with her mom, which is my grandma, which I know it's kind of weird, were the same age, but um

TV: Oh wow!

DR: Yeah, we grew up together, um my grandma um was pregnant with her while my mom was also pregnant with me, so that's, that's why it's a little weird I guess. (laughs)

TV: (laughs) Interesting. Is this your first encounter with a hurricane ever or?

DR: Yes! This is my first one and let me tell you it was scary, and I didn't know what was going on.

TV: And when you started to hear about the Hurricane Harvey might make landfall, did you start to get concern or?

DR: (clears throat) Um, I wasn't, okay, I wasn't concern till um Thursday.

TV: What happened Thursday?

DR: Thursday was the day I went to work and it was very slow and everyone was freaking out and um and yeah that that I guess they were the ones they scared more than you know the tv did. I mean I didn't know what was going on this was the first time, I thought a zombie apocalypse was happening you know. I remember Wednesday seeing everything on tv, um, you know looking in the fridge and saying, "Okay well I have no food, one bottle of water, you know. What the hell is happening?" And Thursday that's when I really getting scared just because everyone was freaking out and saying, "Hey, I'm leaving." And I had, I didn't make any plans, you know, so I didn't know what to do. (laughs)

TV: Do you remember what time you left on Thursday?

DR: I left, let's see, I left early. I left around um I want to say three o'clock. Usually leave work around seven, so leaving at three, it um you know was early. I guess that's when I umm, I realized that how serious it was. You know everyone was going home, everyone was saying, "hey I need to leave because you know were leaving town." And so I just went home by myself. (laughs)

TV: You didn't stop for gas or for food?

DR: No, I, I didn't know what to do. I just went home and nobody was there. I was by myself because, I live with my grandma, you know and her husband and my aunt Jasmine and nobody was home. So, I just um sat there and kind of you know just looked around and I was outside and I remember seeing everyone outside boarding up their windows and either boarding up their windows or leaving. And I just sat there on the stairs and I was like, "Holy crap, I'm going to die." (both laugh) And I cried, I cried on the stairs.

TV: You were really that scared?

DR: I was that scared! That's when I, that's when it hit me, just seeing how everyone was and um you know, I was didn't know what to do. I never been though anything like that before.

TV: And where was your family at?

DR: Um so, my grandma was still at work, she works at Home Depot and I'm guessing it had to have been busy, umm her husband was working also and Jasmine, she was um, I think at work too, yeah so.

TV: Did they prepared or no?

DR: Well no, so um, when I had seen that on the news, um everybody at H.E.B going crazy, that's when I had looked you know looked at my fridge and I didn't see anything in there, I'm like "You guys," you know, "Hey!" and I also um you know heard something about sandbags and stuff. You know my grandma works at Home Depot; I'm like "Hey Grandma, hook it up." You know, "What's going on? You could get wood; you could get sandbags." We didn't have

anything. So I was like “Damn, we’re going to die” and then on Thursday when I was sitting outside and you know after I was done crying and whatever, that’s when my grandma and um her husband you know and they pulled up and she had wood in the back of her truck. And I was like “All right. Okay.” (laughs) And they had dropped off the wood and said, “We’re going to H.E.B. to get some food,” and I was like “okay.” So I guess I felt a little better. But also, umm, I guess I also was sad because at work you know everyone was offering like “hey you know if you need a place to stay, come with us; were leaving,” um so the fact that my grandma was staying, I kind of you know, kind of upset me a little bit, um and I just and everyone you know everyone had left already. So, I was just there at home, and I was like fuck, I have nowhere (laughs) I have nowhere to go umm.

TV: And have your grandparents ever been through a hurricane before?

DR: Umm I’m pretty sure her husband has because he is from Corpus. My grandma she’s from Chicago.

TV: Oh okay!

DR: Yeah, she, we have family here in San Antonio, um so I don’t know. I don’t think she ever been through a hurricane. I think she’s been here eleven years. I don’t know when the last one was.

TV: Were they just as worried as you were or a little bit less worried?

DR: Well, um, he wasn’t worried at all. Umm, his name is Geno. He wasn’t worried. I even asked him um the day before, I said “Hey, if they tell us we need to evacuate, are you leaving?” He goes, “no I’m staying with the dogs.” I’m like you’re crazy, but my grandma she wanted to leave. She wanted to go to San Antonio and because he was staying, she was not going to leave him alone, so she was freaking out more than I was. Honestly, I was really scared, but I think people back home in Chicago were more scared than I was. And my grandma was really scared. She really thought she was going to die. She was being weird and texting me weird stuff and yeah. (both laugh)

TV: So (clears throat) where did you end up staying? With your grandparents or

DR: Oh, so um, no so when I was there you know and after my grandma came and they left, you know I felt a little better but I was still a little upset because you know its Thursday and their just now getting prepared with you know everything um so uh Nick called me, my, my boyfriend and um he said hey you know, you can come stay with us” and I said okay and I felt a little better, so he picked me up. I got all my things together and then um he picked me up and yeah, we, I got to his house. There was batteries. There was you know flashlights. The windows were boarded up, like they had sandbags. They had food for days; they were prepared. They were really prepared.

TV: So you felt safe?

DR: I felt safe. I felt better. I still, I honestly thought the worse was going to happen. Like I remember going into the house and trying to locate the um the attic. Because um before he picked me up, I was, I had went inside and had to get all my things ready, but I had got on YouTube and I was trying to find like little videos of um on how to survive a hurricane which is kind of funny but, I seriously was that scared. I was looking up videos like how to survive a hurricane, and I was getting myself like a little hurricane kit or whatever, I don't know, like rope and batteries and all that, but yeah so, I was really scared and you know and I went back and they were really prepared, so I felt a little better but yeah. In that video, he had told or that guy told us or whoever was watching (laughs), he was like you know when the place starts flooding go to the attic and that why I was like okay where the attic. Like I got to know now because I got, I literally thought that it was going to flood, I thought the house was going to be under water, were going to have to swim up to the roof, that's what I thought was going to happen.

TV: And did your boyfriend Nick like have a lot of family at his house or was it just him by himself?

DR: Well yeah so um, so his sister ah stayed also um, just because the sister's husband had to go to work so um she didn't want to be alone and the parents didn't want her to be alone either you know because it's scary and she was freaking out too. She came to the house with her three dogs plus Nick, Nick's dog, so it was a full house, um and then it was me and his parents.

TV: Were they scared or?

DR: No, they were laughing at me because I was you know freaking out. They were fine. They're like "You're going to be fine. Nothing's going to happen," um yeah so, they weren't scared. But the sister was scared. Nick wasn't scared at all. He was, he wanted this to happen. Not, I don't know, he's weird.

TV: And where does he live?

DR: Um they live um by Saratoga and um Saratoga and Everhart. Yeah, I think so (laughs)

TV: Okay and so you went Thursday night right or Friday?

DR: Thursday night

TV: Okay

DR: Um- hm

TV: And then um what happened that night?

DR: So okay, so Thursday night um you know everyone was fine. They had cooked because they had said that this was going to be the last time that we could use the stove or whatever, so they cooked, and um we had a good meal, and everyone took a shower um because they said the

water, you know we weren't going to be able to use the water anymore. Um so we showered and um yeah that was and we just hung out. We yeah, we hung out and watched tv. That was about it.

TV: Were they able to sleep?

DR: Um yeah, they were, yeah um I got sleep on Thursday Friday not so much, but Thursday, Thursday I slept.

TV: Okay and on Friday how did you wake up feeling?

DR: So, Thursday or Friday morning um I remember everyone was up before I was because I can sleep forever, but um everyone was kind of running around you know doing their last-minute things and uh and Nick had to go to his grandma's house, and she lives on the westside. She lives by I couldn't even tell you, or I don't know the streets. I'm bad with the street names, but um she lives by westside; it's by a Burger King or an H.E.B. I don't know. Um so he said he wanted to go over there and go check you know go make sure she's fine. She like eighty, eighty-two or something, so she's pretty old you know, um but she's good, but he wanted check (laughs) on her. She's still walking; she's still working. You know, she's good, but you know, he loves his grandma, so he wanted to check up on her and see if everything was fine and um you know I went with him, but um that's when, you know, when it started raining, and I remember um walking out the house and looking down the block and just seeing everyone's windows you know boarded up. And to him and you know people that were born here, you know it's normal; that's what you do in a hurricane. Me I was like, "wow this is really weird; this doesn't feel real," but yeah everyone's windows were boarded up uh you know a lot of people were making their last stops. I remember we also stopped at uh the liquor store before (laughs). It was a lot of people there too. Um but yeah, we went to his grandma's house and um it started raining. He was like "Hey, you should call your mom." I was like "nah I don't want to call her." I didn't want to call her because I felt like she was going to make me cry, you know because I know she was scared. So I didn't. Well, I called her a little while later because he was like kept pushing me to call her, and I was like, "Fine I'll call her." And I called her. She was calm, which was surprising. When my dad called, he was yelling at me. He was like "Why didn't you leave?" um "You know this is serious. You guys need to get out of there. You have family in Laredo; I want you to leave right now." I was like "Dad, it's happening now. I can't leave," um so he was just really upset with me. Um but he didn't make me cry or anything. I cried that day too. I cried on Friday twice. I was really scared. Um and honestly what made me uh get really emotional was uh one of my friends, she I don't know she lives, on one of the islands, um she had you know, they had to evacuate and so she went to, I think she went to Laredo and she was sending me snaps of this house she was staying in with her parents. And it was a really nice house. It was this huge house. It was beautiful inside, and she's sending me snaps and she goes, you know "I'm in this beautiful house, but all I can think of is my own." And that just made me emotional because she has a kid and you know she's only 23 years old um and just to know that you know when you go back your house might not be there. It's sad, and I remember hearing a lot about Katrina when I was in Chicago. It's like yeah, it's sad, but you don't really know you know how something feels until you're going through it and I was like "Crap, I'm going through this," you know. It's crazy; it's sad and scary, so yeah that's what, you know, what Friday, that's what the morning was. Um then we went back and I think,

uh, I think we started watching tv for a little, and that's when the power started going on and off.

TV: You'll didn't have power for that long?

DR: Yeah it shut off Friday, but we had it for a while, but it was going on and off on Friday, and um and then I remember we were watching tv and that's when it cut off, when everything cut off and that's when we put candles everywhere. Um lets see, we put candles everywhere. They brought out a coloring book, and I was coloring and then that's when I texted my family, and I said "hey the power went out. Just letting you guys know." It was a group message and um later that's when I found out my mom started crying. My brother texted me and he's like "yeah mom started crying when you told her the power went out."

TV: Did you tell them yeah, I had to save my battery?

DR: Yeah, that's why because my whole family was like yeah just let us know what's going on. I'm like "hey, I'm not going to be able to text you because the power went out so." My family I think they were more scared than what I was, but I was still scared.

TV: Did you just hear rain or did you hear a lot of wind where you were at?

DR: Yeah so um, so you know as the night went on that when the wind started to pick up a lot and um they were saying that it's going to sound like a train is coming through your house. They were literally scaring me a little more than what I was already, but um yeah, it was loud, but they said I guess because it had just missed us, that's when it had just had missed us, so um I guess it wasn't as bad, but uh yeah, it was still scary. I was still scared. I felt like the, the door was going to fly open, um so we had to put some weights right there by the door because it was making a weird noise. That was scary. Also, what was scary was that they were saying looters were out, and they were going around and breaking into people's houses, uh breaking into people's houses, and um that's what scared me too. I was like "oh crap" and then honestly everyone just bought out their guns. (both laugh) They were like "Let a looter come in here." I was like "Alright. I'm glad I'm here," but then my grandma was home and um she was sending text messages saying um you know "If I die tonight, just know that I love you and I'll be with mom." Her mom passed away a long time ago so yeah, she was saying she was going to be with her and making things a little worse. I was like "Ugh Grandma, don't say those things," but um yeah so it was a little scary but the whole looter thing that got me too. Just knowing that it passed us I felt a lot better, like this is all were going to get, like wind and rain, I'm like "okay" so I felt a little bit better.

TV: That's good. So did you sleep again good that night?

DR: No, actually I didn't. The wind was scary, so I didn't get a lot of sleep and um that's when I, you know, we had uh pulled out the wine and stuff that night, so I didn't get any sleep that night.

TV: How long was y'all's power out?

DR: Um, let see, I think it was out, I think it was out for two to three days, not too sure. I think it was out three. I don't, know maybe three or four.

TV: Did you stay with him or did you go back to your grandma's?

DR: No, I stayed with him for a while for a couple of days. I think it was out for a couple of days. Oh yeah, we didn't have to go back to work till that Tuesday, I think. That Tuesday, so um yeah, so, I stayed with him till Tuesday. Um-hm that's when we got our power back.

TV: Did your grandma power go out at her house?

DR: Um-hm, it did. It went out and uh, I don't know much about it (laughs.) Yeah, her power did go out, she told me. But honestly the house was fine; they were fine.

TV: Was Nick's house okay and everything?

DR: Yeah, um they didn't have any damage, which, which is good, and I guess that's kind of weird too because um there were a lot of places um you know, you had your places that didn't have any damage, and then you go down the street and there's a house that's destroyed and that was kind of crazy to me. And I'll tell you right now, I was pissed. I was so angry because everyone in Corpus, you know, they said "Hey, it's going to be fine," you know "We've been through this before, and were going to stay." And this is before they knew that the hurricane was going to miss us. Um, so they were preparing for the hurricane to hit us, category three right, that's when you know, they thought it was going to hit us. It was a category three. So, I just went along with whatever everyone else was saying like "Yeah, I guess we'll be okay. I don't know." Um, yeah, okay the hurricane didn't hit us, and look at all the damage that did happen. So that's what I was pissed about. "You guys, you know, wanted to stay along, you know, knowing what could happen." I don't know; I was just really upset. (laughs) I was like "wow." I mean I'm glad it didn't hit us, but at the same time if it did, it would of been really bad. And it was still bad. I mean it was still a lot, you know, there was a lot of damage done, um and it didn't even hit us. So I can't even imagine what, you know. I don't know.

TV: would've done, like the way it did to the surrounding areas?

DR: Yeah so, I don't know it's kind of crazy to think about. I honestly prepared for the worse, and I'm sure it would happened if it would of hit us. So I'm glad it didn't, but next time if there a hurricane, I am leaving. I am gone. (both laugh.)

TV: Back to Chicago?

DR: Oh no, probably not. (laughs) Probably drive, to I don't know, somewhere.

TV: Do you plan on staying and living in Corpus for the rest of your life?

DR: Definitely not. I've been here three years and I already want to move (DR laughs.)

TV: Did the hurricane scare you that much to move?

DR: Um, honestly, I don't want to go through that again. I really don't um, and it seems like it's a lot of work to have a house here, I don't have a house here, but it seems like it be a lot of work to have a house here and um or any place where there are hurricanes. In Chicago you don't have to worry about any of that, only thing you have to worry about are snowstorms. We get rain, we get lots of rain, but we'll get storms out there, but nothing, nothing like this. So, um I don't want to stay in Corpus not only because of the hurricanes, but I just want to travel. I want to keep you know trying new places out. Corpus was kind of like a baby step for me, to get out. I never thought I would leave Chicago um, but because all my family over there, but yeah, I want to see new places.

TV: That's good.

DR: Um-hm, I don't know when I'll move, but well, I just got started working at the salon, so I feel like I have to stick around for a little, save some money, and then you know, then make that move.

TV: And then when you heard about there were other hurricanes in the Gulf did you get scared?

DR: I was really scared, I um, I told myself, "Hey, the moment that it says its coming towards Texas, bye, (DR laughs) I'm leaving." um no I don't want to go through that again. I don't even want to take that chance, and I have two friends, um two friends that live in Chicago, or lived in Chicago with me and um they moved to Florida. So, when um, when the hurricane, I think it was Hurricane Irma was going to Florida, I told them I said, "Hey guys, I just went through a hurricane. You don't want to stay, trust me on this" because they're from Chicago, and they don't know what to expect either, you know. So I guess they were scared too. They were boarding up their windows. But everything was fine; they're still living, breathing, which is good. (laughs) Yeah.

TV: So is there anything else you want to say about Hurricane Harvey?

DR: Um, I think that's it. I was just really scared. I just remember being really scared and not knowing what was happening, um I didn't even know, I honestly knew nothing. I mean I know what a hurricane is, but I knew nothing, you know, other than that. Um, I didn't know that the power was going to go out. I didn't know that we couldn't use the water, um so that, I honestly learned all that in three days. Um I guess that's why when I saw everyone at H.E.B. on tv going crazy, you know, in the stores that's when I started questioning "What's going on?" you know like "Why are people acting this way?" I really thought a zombie apocalypse was going to happen. Um that's what it felt like. I was like, "Crap, why is everybody acting crazy?" You know, people are stocking up on canned food. That's what got me was like the can food. "What's really going on?" (laughs) And then somebody like, "Yeah, you know the hurricane's coming. Your power's going to go out, and you can't use your water." I'm like "What? For real?" but I didn't think it was that serious until Thursday. I'm telling you that Thursday is what got me. That's when it really hit me.

TV: Do you think your prepared for another hurricane or no?

DR: No, no, no, I'm leaving, I'm, I was telling you, I don't want to stay, and um honestly uh I want to say some time last year, I remember I was working at the hotel and um there was a really bad storm, and I honestly thought I was going to die that day because I was actually driving in it, and I left work and it was raining so hard that people were staying. The employees were staying at the hotel and um I wanted to go home. I didn't want to stay there, and so I left. And I was in a truck, and I was driving down the street. There wasn't a soul outside. Nobody. It was so dark and um honestly, I remember driving past I think it was, I think it was past um, I'm pretty sure it was Saratoga, and it was just so dark and nothing. It didn't even look like anything was outside; it was so dark, and I remember it looked like um something out of The Day After Tomorrow, like just a wave. (laughs) I don't know, you know. I exaggerated in my head or whatever, but it looked like a damn wave was coming towards the truck, and the wind was so strong that it was pushing the truck. And I was like oh. I just remember crying, driving home, and I was so scared and that night. I think it was scarier than, than you know Friday night at, for Harvey. Because the power went out that night too for that storm, and I remember too I was so scared and the rain was bad so that, I think it was worse than that, but um that was just rain, so when they said the hurricane I was like "Oh no, I can't do this you guys" (laughs) so.

TV: But you did do it.

DR: Yeah, I did.

TV: And you made it.

DR: I did. I made it, but I don't want to go through that again. I heard a lot of bad stories um from other people you know, you know and people did die. And I, for a moment I was accepting you know, I was accepting it. You know, I really thought I was going to die. I guess that's why I cried so much on Friday. (laughs)

TV: Awe

DR: Um, but no, I don't want to go through that again, so next time you know, next one that comes, I, and um I even have family in Puerto Rico, and um I know the hurricane, you know, went over that um, and they're, over there, it's so bad over there. You know one of my cousin's businesses is a dentist, and it's destroyed. So just knowing people that, you know, like having family members that are in that situation and even me being in it just tough and it's just scary, you know, and it's sad. So um, I really don't know what's going on with the world right now, but I mean I wouldn't wish that upon anyone because it's bad. I'd rather go through a million snowstorms, and they're scary too. Your power can go out. They're scary, and you can get trapped in your own house. It's happened before, but I don't know, this is just so much scarier, a lot scarier. Yeah, that's all I have to say about that, but. (laughs)

TV: Okay well I'm going to be turning off the recorder now.