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Capturing Quarantine: Student Pandemic Experience Journal

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Why is documenting this crisis important?

Documenting this crisis is important because it has affected millions of people around the world and everyone is going through different situations. Documentation is like photography; it captures the moment which can be traced back and explored again. It is a tool that can be used to educate the next generation on redefining the role of the educator and reminding the importance of their life skills. Furthermore, sharing human experience has value. Museums display personal items for visitors to relive the past on a personal level. As mentioned in the first article, documents provide a “long-term historical perspective”. Hong Kong and Korea have been fairly successful against the coronavirus outbreak due to their experience with SARS. These documentations can educate future scientists and overall minimize further damage from another pandemic.

Why is the college-student voice important?

Majority of the college students have gone through the experience of moving to another country or city, living in a new home, and spending everyday to pursue their passion. The quality of life is essentially identified by their college experience. Hence, the pandemic has affected not only their education, but also their personal life. Their voices are important because it is personal and diverse; regardless of the college institution, people had to face this issue, or perhaps had to witness their family struggling with adapting to their new lifestyle.

What medium (or combination of mediums) will you use?

I will use photos, snapshots of articles, and my writing to document the pandemic from the perspective of a college student in the U.S. who now lives in Singapore.

Why do you want to use this form(s)?

I intend to use photos to capture the different landscapes I've witnessed in Singapore. It will be an informative visual representation and an effective tool to compare how different countries deal with the pandemic. I will also use snapshots of articles and other reliable sources to address the laws and regulations Singapore has created over the past 3 months. Furthermore, my writing will be personal and it will explain the current situation and how it has impacted my community.

June 9, 2020

My last normal day is when I went to class as per usual on March 11. I was taking the bus from the MPC and my classmate who sat next to me said "I don't think I'll be able to film next week". This was the day before we got an email that class will be suspended for the next 3 weeks, but some people had better predictions than I did.



Toilet paper and medical products were running low in supermarkets, but I still went to class on March 12, wondering if the rumours are true. From that day, I began to walk with my head down, wearing my beanie low, to avoid racist stares from strangers walking by.

Figure 1: Jewel Osco by Roosevelt

I also had to rebook my flight which I had a layover in Japan because Singapore announced a new law that travellers from ASEAN countries are required to quarantine at home for 14 days. But flying 27 hours surrounded by passengers wearing surgical suits and ponchos and staying alert in an airport I've never been to is a whole other story.

Flight	Departs	Arrives
1. Chicago to San Francisco - Total travel time: 5hrs 8mins Status: Confirmed		
AS 1203 Airbus Industrie A320-100/200 Operated by Alaska Airlines	ORD 17:40 17 Mar (Tue) Chicago, Ohare Intl, Terminal 3	SFO 20:48 17 Mar (Tue) San Francisco, San Francisco Intl, Terminal 2
	Flying time: 5hrs 8mins	
	Cabin class: Economy (R)*	
2. San Francisco to Singapore - Total travel time: 17hrs 30mins Status: Confirmed		
SQ 1 Airbus Industrie A350-900 Singapore Airlines	SFO 00:50 18 Mar (Wed) San Francisco, San Francisco Intl, Terminal Intl	SIN 09:20 19 Mar (Thu) Singapore, Changi
	Flying time: 17hrs 30mins	
	Cabin class: Economy (N)	

Figure 2: Flight Ticket

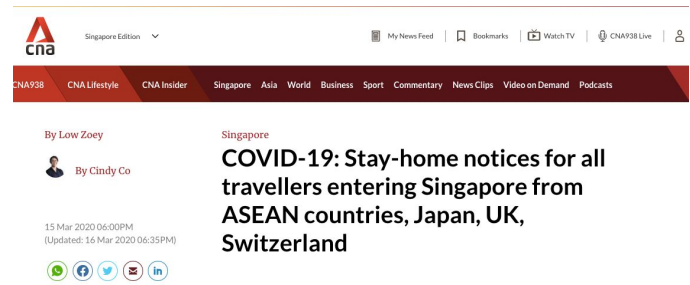


Figure 3: The law was announced right after booking my first flight ticket, so I had to fly by San Francisco transit.

June 9, 2020

My last normal day in Singapore was March 24, when I took a walk around Marina Bay Sands. Marina Bay Sands is Singapore's iconic hotel, where it is flooded with tourists from the infinity pool to the shopping mall everyday. As I walked past the temperature checker, I felt eerie to see the place so empty for the first time. There were tapes on the floor to line up a meter away from each other and seats were taped down so we could not sit next to people or eat facing each other. Soon after, the government enforced a new law of social distancing and limited gatherings.



Figure 4: Inside Marina Bay Sands

My isolation lifestyle has become pretty mundane, especially since I have a routine to keep my body clock stay on track and to maintain my mental health. Getting up around 8AM every morning, cleaning the house, cooking food for myself, getting work done, exercising in my room, and going to bed before midnight has been my daily routine for the past 2 months. This extremely helps because I am focused on one task at a time and it normalizes my life. I have not left my house at all because of the strict laws and potential risks, so the most physical contact I get is with my parents. However, I try to isolate myself as much as I can in the house by eating alone, and by staying in my room when they are in the living room/kitchen. I adapted to this social and physical isolation because I prefer to have personal space more than social interactions.

Furthermore, the social isolation and the absence of physical contact encouraged me to set a new goal. I decided to start intermittent fasting, where I eat a balanced breakfast and a small lunch for the day. There were a number of reasons why I decided to start intermittent fasting, such as for better sleep, health, and to avoid unnecessary snacking. Most importantly, staying at home all day negatively affects my self discipline, so I needed something to train my self control. Overall, keeping myself busy has been the best solution

June 9, 2020

for my mental health and productivity. Social isolation has allowed me to reflect on how I can use this time effectively, instead of giving up and blaming the change.

COVID-19: PHASE 2 OF REOPENING SINGAPORE

Phase 2 starts from Jun 19

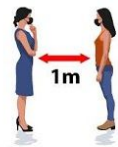
GATHERINGS



Small group gatherings of up to 5 people can resume



Households may receive up to 5 visitors at any one time



Individuals must maintain safe distancing of at least 1m at all times

Where not feasible to apply the 1m safe distancing rule between individuals, the 1m requirement can be enforced between groups of no more than 5 people each. Don't mix between groups

BUSINESS

Retail outlets can reopen, but places with high human traffic will be subject to capacity limits and operators must prevent crowds or long queues from building up



Dining in at F&B outlets to resume, but liquor sales and consumption must stop at 10.30pm



Live music, TV and video screenings will not be allowed at F&B outlets



Personal health and wellness and home-based services can resume



Healthcare services, including individual health screening and aesthetic services can resume



Tuition and other private enrichment classes can resume, except singing or voice training classes

RECREATION



Sports facilities, parks and others like playgrounds, beaches and swimming complexes to open



Gyms, fitness studios, bowling centres and function rooms to open

This applies to similar private facilities in condominiums and clubs

CARE FOR THE ELDERLY

Eldercare services in the community allowed to resume



Face-to-face visits at nursing homes, welfare homes and adult disability homes allowed

SCHOOL



Students from all levels will return to school daily from Jun 29

WORK



Telecommuting must remain the default for all businesses where feasible

June 20, 2020

Singapore entered phase 2 on June 19, Friday. This is a significant improvement because social gatherings, dine in, and retail stores are now permitted with safety measures.

I did not make any changes to my lifestyle yet because I am pretty wary about the risks of lifting restrictions. Japan, China, and Korea are dealing with the second wave, so I highly doubt that Singapore will be able to maintain or improve when people are dying to go out and socialize. Since schools have resumed a few weeks ago, clusters have been a problem and it will not get better with phase 2 starting on a Friday.

Although it is too soon to make any changes at the moment, I plan to first get back to the gym at my condominium on weekdays. I will most likely go grocery shopping with my parents to help them carry bags, but I do not plan to go out using public transportation for a while. Many are eager to go all out, but I believe this is the time to be cautious of our actions and keep in mind of the potential risks Singapore may face.

Infographic by Rafa Estrada Source: Ministry of Health



Figure 1: Infographic showing phase 2 rules

June 25, 2020

Surprisingly, the absence of physical contact has not affected as much as I expected. Since I am used to having my own time when I live in a dorm, living with my family is already giving me more than enough physical contact. Especially since we all stay at home together, which is better than being alone for the whole three months, I do not crave for more physical contact. Of course, I would love to meet my friends and have my usual summer holiday back, but I am also focused on summer courses and my filmmaking hobbies. I believe that keeping myself busy is healthy for me because I have a purpose, a goal, and a reason to maintain a daily routine.



Today, I went out for the first time in 85 days. I was aware of the QR code scanning system to keep track of crowds and possible clusters, but I did not know how quick and easy it was to adapt to it. The QR code was almost like a stamp rally; tapping in and out everywhere you go.

In my case, the absence of physical contact developed a new relationship with technology; we rely on our phones for communication and safety. This is a new strategy the government has implemented that is appropriate for this day and age, and I believe that innovation in technology will heavily contribute to research and innovation in the medical field.

July 2, 2020

2020 started ambitious and diligent because I flew back to Chicago ready to take my Directing 2 class, where I have the opportunity to team up with different students to work on two films over the course of the semester. This was my first time I got to write, produce, and direct in my sophomore year, which is more professional than any of my past filmmaking projects. On my way back to Chicago from my one week trip in Tokyo, I was alert of the COVID19 spreading in Asia. A month later, it began to take over the news, then another month later WHO announced it as a global pandemic. I remember watching the news anchor talking about “a new virus infecting lungs” in late January, but little did I know this was the end of everything. Or rather, the beginning. It was more than a disease; it brought racial discrimination, age discrimination, and hate crimes under the spotlight. A video post about an Asian person on a subway getting sprayed by an air freshener by an American was not rare, but it was a reminder that I could be next.

This definitely changed my self care expectations with hygiene and it was a reminder to thank those who work on the front line; doctors and nurses of course, but also janitors, deliveries, restaurant owners, grocery store staffs, and more. Singapore is known for being one of the cleanest countries in the world, but when I stepped out for the first time in 90 days it was my first time witnessing tall, overgrown grasses. It explained why I was suddenly getting bug bites and random moths in my room. Every scenery I am used to seeing is maintained by everyone’s hard work, and sometimes we only notice it when they are gone.

The incident of Goerge Floyd in Minneapolis was a shocker. His weakened body, the ruthless violence of the police, the witness crying voices, were all vividly captured and spread around the world. Systematic racism is nothing new to our modern society, but it was a reminder that we must continue educating ourselves. This summer course was thought provoking because it was perfectly relevant in this context. It felt like this class was meant to be taken in summer 2020. I am so grateful for the resources and the opportunities I have to educate myself on public history this summer.

The first half of 2020 outraged the world, but it also united the supportive communities. It changed me as a privileged citizen who learned racism instead of experiencing it. It changed me as an international student who had a safer home to fly back to. It changed me as a member of the global community whose duty is to make progress for a society - where people of any race, sexuality, and age feel valued just as they are.

Instead of holding onto every drop of rain
Rise from the piled ashes again
Instead of clinging onto the longing shadows
Become one of the colors in the afterglow

- Short Poem by Kalin