

Columbia College Chicago

Digital Commons @ Columbia College Chicago

Public History Journals

Response 2020

7-2020

Capturing Quarantine: Student Pandemic Experience Journal

Peyton Cooper

Columbia College Chicago

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.colum.edu/journals>



Part of the [Education Commons](#), [Social History Commons](#), and the [Sociology Commons](#)



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 4.0 License](#).

Recommended Citation

Cooper, Peyton, "*Capturing Quarantine: Student Pandemic Experience Journal*" (2020). *Public History Journals*. 5.

<https://digitalcommons.colum.edu/journals/5>

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Response 2020 at Digital Commons @ Columbia College Chicago. It has been accepted for inclusion in Public History Journals by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Columbia College Chicago. For more information, please contact drossetti@colum.edu.

Journal Week 1

1. Why is documenting this crisis important?

As one of the articles said, this is a defining event that is going to affect generations upon generations after us. Life will never be the same and I think it's important to document the transition. My dad and I talk about the pandemic frequently and how life is going to change. We talk about how in many cities in Asia, people regularly wear face masks and how that could potentially become something that will happen in America. It is also important to document this crisis so that we can look back on it and learn from our mistakes. If we had taken action earlier would this pandemic already be over? We need to save data as well as personal experiences so that one day we can study this.

2. Why is the college-student voice important?

Being a college student, I have seen and experienced first-hand how this pandemic has affected us all. For a lot of us, college is an escape; a transition into a new life of possibilities. And suddenly, all of these possibilities have been torn away. I am a stage management major and it's hard for me to see how I can continue on this path because theaters are probably going to be some of the last places to open up. How am I supposed to find a job or internship when none seem to exist anymore? College students have been drastically affected by this pandemic. We are also the next generation, the ones that will hopefully lead us to a better future. The college-student voice is important because we need to be able to hear each other. We need to know that we are not alone. And most importantly, we need to communicate in the hopes that we will be able to, not return to normal, but create a new normal.

3. What medium will you use?

I think I will mostly stick to written journal entries.

4. Why do you want to use this form?

I prefer to write my thoughts because it gives me more time to think on what I'm trying to get across. I want to make sure that what I'm putting out there makes sense and I think writing it is the best way to do that.

1. My last day was extremely busy because I think we all knew it was going to be our last normal day for a while. I was an assistant stage manager for Urinetown this past semester and we were just finishing up our last week of tech when we learned that Columbia was sending all of its students' home. After much deliberation between the staff, director, and stage managers, we decided to invite the school to come see a performance... a week before we were actually due to open. That night, over 300 people showed up and crammed into the Courtyard Theatre. It was the best performance we could have given. The energy was at an all-time high. After the show, we had an impromptu cast party and danced until 3 in the morning. We shared our favorite memories and cried over our lost performances. The next day, I packed up and drove home.
2. Zoom has been my biggest resource throughout this pandemic. I have had mass zoom calls with over 20 friends where we would just talk for hours upon hours. I have also picked up dog walking so that I can go out get some fresh air every once in a while. I may not be able to hug my friends, but I haven't heard any rules against hugging dogs. I've never been much of a touchy person but going almost completely without physical contact is hard. I've dealt with anxiety my entire life but it has definitely been amped up in the midst of this pandemic. I have picked up yoga and meditation to make sure that I take care of my self.

The first change I've made since quarantine restrictions have started to lift is allowing myself to hang out with friends. I make sure that they have been following quarantine rules up until now to make sure I'm not putting myself in a hazardous situation. We hang out at each other's places and I have learned that I am pretty good at Mario Kart. I also have been trying to get out more. There is a nice park about two blocks from my apartment where I like to go and read. Last time I went, cotton was falling from the trees and it almost looked like it was snowing. I also went to a farmer's market on Thursday where I got homemade, organic frozen yogurt in orange cream. The last thing that has changed is that I am now actively seeking a job. Now that I'm going out more, I am most likely going to be spending more money... but I need a job for that.

Honestly, I've been struggling a bit with the limits on physical contact since quarantine started. I live with a roommate and we now allow ourselves to go see a friend every once in a while, but it has still been pretty lonely. My dating life has for sure taken a downswing as I am no longer meeting new people. I frequently match with people on Tinder, but I get bored with messaging after a while. I've always disliked texting, you can ask any of my friends, but I will almost always answer a phone or facetime call. However, you can't facetime on Tinder. It may be old fashioned, but I really do prefer face to face communication. So much can be lost in translation through text and that has always bothered me. I also find that I can explain my self better and expand upon my points in person in a way that I can't do over text. The biggest help has been my cat. It's almost a little sad but she has become my whole heart. She frequently will sleep on my chest and has a thunder purr. I am very excited to start meeting new people again.

Jeez, I can't believe 6 months of 2020 has already flown by. I guess that is one positive of all this craziness, it keeps you on your toes. Before focusing on quarantine and the BLM movement, I want to talk about the calm before the storm. This year has been a wild ride from the very beginning for me. I wasn't even sure if I would be coming back to Columbia for the spring semester because I was going through a really rough time. Long story short, the end of a toxic, long-distance relationship, anxiety and depression had me feeling all sorts of ways over winter break. I remember, I was going to come back a week before school started so I could work and get comfortable. I ended up not going back until the weekend before because my mental health took a nosedive. Thank god I did though because this past semester provided me with the serotonin I needed to get through this quarantine. Never have I ever felt such a connection with a group of people as I did working on Urinetown. They truly became my family away from home and helped me to come out of the dark place I was stuck on over winter break. 2-3 months in and I already felt like a new person, and I didn't even know what was to come. I was just happy to be happy again and working on something I was passionate about.

Then came quarantine. I was so scared to go home because of what happened last time I was there. Home didn't feel safe anymore, in fact Chicago had become my new home so I didn't really know what Marysville, Ohio was to me anymore. As soon as I arrived in Ohio, I was planning a way to get back. I knew if I just sunk into my old routine of staying up until 5am and sleeping until sundown, I would backslide. So instead, I contacted my close friend Jac and we started apartment hunting in Chicago. We were back here by April and I couldn't have been happier, especially because I was able to bring my cat with me. Since then, I have not been home. I always say it's because I don't want to drive 5 hours, but I know it also has to do with the anxiety that I now connect to being home. But I am happy here in Chicago so for now I am going to focus on that.

Fast forward to the day of George Floyd's death. When it first happened, I feel bad, but I didn't really think much of it. I had seen it so many times and I thought, someone else will do something. I wasn't even planning on going to the big Chicago protest, but I saw a line of cars and people with signs walking outside my window and I felt inspired to join. My roommate and I made a quick sign and walked down to Federal Plaza. The energy was intense, and I remember feeling almost a bit scared because I really didn't want to get into an altercation with the police. We walked an hour and a half North, and then learned that all CTA had been shut down, then walked an hour and a half back to our apartment. I feet, calves, and knees were throbbing. That night, I listened to the police scanner and cried because I was so worried about all the people still out there. The next morning, I donated to bail funds, signed petitions, and used my voice on social media platforms to speak out. The march inspired me to do something myself instead of waiting for others.

Overall, even with all the chaos, I think 2020 has made me a happier and braver person than I was in 2019. I was stuck in a relationship that should've ended before I went to college and I didn't enjoy what I was doing with my life. Now, I get to look forward to a future that I couldn't envision before and I plan on doing everything I can to get there.

I hate when people say, "I can't wait for things to get back to normal". In my opinion, that is never going to happen. In fact, I don't want it to happen. I think we are going to create a new normal that we will eventually get used to. Being in quarantine almost feels normal at this point. I think there will be a lot of changes to everyday life. I think masks are going to become a staple, kind of how they are in places like China. I also think there will be a lot more health procedures in public places such as intense cleaning, social distancing, and maybe even regular temperature checks.

My biggest hope is that the BLM movement actually makes an impact and isn't just forgotten about like so many other ideas. I see some cities defunding police and investing that money in communities of color, which is a step in the right direction, but this needs to happen everywhere. People need to realize, especially white people, that we are all inherently racist. We need to be able to acknowledge that instead of becoming defensive so we can work through our prejudices.

My biggest fear is that, even with all this crazy stuff happening, Donald Trump will be re-elected president. He was bad before and he has only made our current social climate worse. It is a president's job to provide hope and solutions, not fear. I am scared that people are someone still blind to his faults and will willingly follow him into battle once again in this upcoming election. The entire administration needs an overhaul and I hope the events of the past 6 months will help people to realize this.

Another fear I have is for my own future. As I have said in previous journal entries, I am a stage management major. I think theatre is going to be one of the last things to come back because we require a large, in person audience. That is something we cannot do until the threat of Covid-19 has been neutralized. I only have a year left of college until I am supposed to leave the nest. The scary thing is, I don't think I will have many options other than working as a waitress until theater's open back up. And even then, the first jobs have probably already been promised to people or will go to people with more experience. Hopefully, I can make enough connections that someone will be able to get me in. I'd even be happy with an unpaid internship, as long as I am still gaining experience.

Overall, I think I have a lot of hopes, but it is hard to focus on them through the constant fears. No matter what, I know I have a strong support system who will help me if I fall on hard times.