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### *Capturing Quarantine: Student Pandemic Experience Journal*

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#### Recommended Citation

Fulford, Katelynne, "*Capturing Quarantine: Student Pandemic Experience Journal*" (2020). *Public History Journals*. 9.

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Katelynne Fulford

SU20-HIST 267-01

Dr. Erin McCarthy

06/04/2020

### **Quarantine Journal Entry #1**

The closest insights I can share as to why documenting the pandemic now is aligned with the wishes of David Kennedy, the Stanford University historian and Pulitzer Prize author, that Adam Popescu interviewed for his New York Times article, *How Will We Remember the Pandemic? Museums Are Already Deciding*. He wished “there had been cultural institutions focused on studying the 1918 Spanish flu or the bubonic plague of the 14th century, leaving historians and scientists to “scratch our heads and ask why we didn’t know more,” he said. “Any serious studying of the past has to be aware of not waiting too long,” he added. “You want to figure out what happened and why.” If you look closely at history, there is very little about the 1918 Spanish Influenza that was historically preserved. Much of it is information sought out in pieces years after the fact. The stories I find the most fascinating personally, are the ones of the people who are or nearly are a hundred years old that are now sharing their stories about the eerily similarities between then and now, *because they lived through both*. These are stories that were never told back then, they’ve been untold for nearly a century. We need to preserve the present if we want to remember it in the future, we cannot let the past happen again.

However, in my opinion, the question of *why* documenting this crisis is important isn’t the most important question we need to be asking. There’s one question Popescu writes, “And, [scholars and historians] ask, when everything is an artifact, what is truly historically important — and just whose Covid stories are being told in these archives, and whose are not?” The question of why documenting is merely a precursor to the bigger questions. “Why” explains that it’s to make sure we preserve the artifacts as they become to be during the historic time, so they aren’t lost to time. In the end, history will show whose COVID-19 stories are important and whose are archived, and it will reflect what is truly historically important to this time period.

Another interview Popescu conduct arises a different question on documenting the pandemic. Martha S. Jones of John Hopkins University comments that, “Museums are places where we convene to make sense of our shared human experience. Still, the burden, pain and grief of this pandemic are not

being experience in the same way across the nation's many communities." This perspective arises the question: *how* are we going to determine what is historically important? There are so many different stories and voices and faces right now. The social, economical, racial, political and cultural divides within the world have been to be highlighted now more than ever. There are so many views and realities when it comes to COVID-19, that how we determine what's historically important is more important than ever – because history will reflect these decisions and it will determine the world to come.

Another article from the New York Times, *Scattered to the Winds, College Students Mourn Last Semester* by Anemona Hartocollis, discusses one important voice and why it needs to be recognized. All over, college student's mental health has taken a plummet all over the world. According to the article, "Almost all of the 2,000 students surveyed said the virus had caused them stress or anxiety, and 80 percent said they had experienced loneliness or isolation because of it. Nearly half said that a major source of stress was the financial impact of the virus on them or their families" (NYT). I personally have struggled with mental health issues for years. Loneliness and isolation are major triggers for mental health problems, not to mention that financial strains, and global pandemics are very much triggers for mental health problems too. For many college students, they are being thrown back into their home lives, some of whom used college as an escape. Now, they must figure out how to maintain their found independence living as a dependent again.

Because of my personal experience with mental health, I feel it extremely to address the potentially harmful mindset from a in the *Scattered to the Winds* article. An interviewed psychiatrist, Victor Schwartz, said, "We don't need to tell people they're suffering from a mental health problem when they're having an appropriate response to very challenging circumstances" (NYT). I would introduce the argument of the long-lasting impacts that COVID-19 will have, and the stress and anxiety of those impacts may never go away. This could very well lead to many mental health problems amongst the current college generation and I feel it's a problem that needs to be addressed and not neglected simply because of the pandemic. I think it's this mindset we need to be concerned about, especially coming from the older generation, because the current college generation is our next workforce generation. We are the next generation to keep the world running, our voices need to be heard.

Over the next five weeks, I will keep my Quarantine Journal in pieces of writing, photographic essays, and graphic visuals. These are forms I am familiar with and express more eloquently and fluently in that actual speaking. I believe there to be power behind words and stories. Photographs capture the pieces of the stories that words cannot. Sometimes pieces just need to be put together in a visual way. These are mediums that I believe will capture what I want to document, express and share about what it's like to be a college student in the wake of COVID-19. Overall, the three journalistic methods will work

together to create a cohesive journal as elements that thoughtfully preserve the experience of living during the pandemic.

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SU20-HIST 267-01

Dr. Erin McCarthy

06/11/2020

### **Quarantine Journal Entry #2**

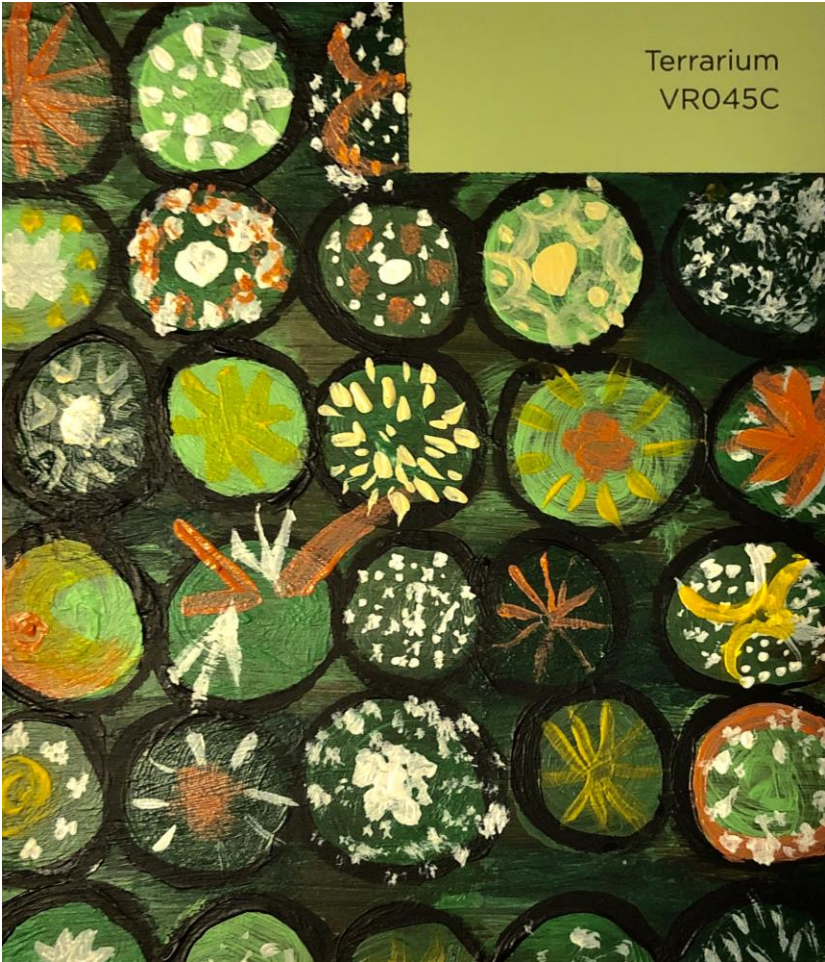
I don't remember my last normal day. It was more like the world started to fall apart little by little instead. My partner's university went online almost a week before mine did. I was still going to school and working by then. I slowly started walking more to avoid public transit, but I told myself it was to stay healthy. It's only a ten-minute walk from my apartment to my campus buildings. The reality of coronavirus was much like the onset of its symptoms, it took two to fourteen days.

There's one day that comes to mind. It was still fairly a normal day, I think. I woke up early to work in the digital print center on campus at 7:45am. Before I get on the elevator I mobile order a drink from the Starbucks on the corner by my apartment building, as I do every morning I work. After I walked to work. The only thing abnormal about that day was there was little traffic in the print center, almost nobody came in to print. When my shift was done, I went to Ace Hardware to get paint swatches. I had done this before; I had seen a video where an artist took paint swatches and then painted the swatch name on the swatch. Until then, I had been putting off getting more swatches but there was this gut feeling I had. If I didn't grab them now, I didn't know when I'd been able to. Some might call it a sixth sense, I call it anxiety, but I didn't know if things were going to shut down or what would.

Once quarantine started, I started painting those paint swatches I thankfully bought before shutdown to ward off isolation. A week and a half into isolation, my partner came to quarantine with me. While it was nice to have someone, it was also lonely. Overall, the effect that the quarantine had most on me was destabilizing me. I have something called borderline personality disorder. Before quarantine started, I was working on rehabilitating myself after hospitalizing myself the fall before. I was working on putting my life back together, balancing my classes and working to keep myself busy. I started reaching back out to the people I had lost touch with as I went to therapy. Almost three months into the new lifestyle, coronavirus made that life disappear quickly. This disruption to my routine was enough to make me symptomatic again. The loss of my daily routine and interactions activated my never-ending identity crisis. Isolation and abandonment feel like me. My moods continuously shift. It's been a lot of self-love and patience to carry on during quarantine.

Terrarium Paint Swatch

Painted June of 2020



**Exploring and developing new relationships is an important part of the undergraduate experience, how has this aspect of your life been affected and how are you dealing with the limits on or absence of physical contact?**

I am terrible at being alone. It overwhelms me immensely. I have something called Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) which affects me socially in different ways. In addition to BPD, I also have extreme anxiety. At the beginning of quarantine, I thought I'd be okay alone. I didn't realize how dependent I had become on my rigid schedule that I followed. Having my clockwork like schedule was a way I managed my BPD symptom of instability. It also helped with my compromised sense of identity, by reminding me of things I inherently value by engaging in them. It also didn't give me time to be alone, something I didn't put together before. I've come to realize I'm more symptomatic alone. Quarantine became all about trying to figure out how to get back some sort of routine to soothe my symptoms.

My partner moved to Chicago to be with me when his school went remote, so I was completely alone. I was extremely grateful for this. In a sense, I found it ironic. Usually, we work long distance, as he attends the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. It's not too far, but we still don't see each other too often as we're both busy all the time. Most of my friends from back home went to school with their partners, experiencing the opposite of what we do. Now, they're separated, some of them by hundreds of miles.

Even though my partner was living with me, the loss of my schedule wasn't necessarily replaced. We had to put it together. Tuesday and Friday nights became take out night. For most of quarantine, class still occurred remotely, so that also took up some time.

Every three to four days I had to go to the grocery store to buy three to four heads of lettuce to feed my bunny, Mr. Pickles. He became a center piece of quarantine, and I think he absolutely hated it. Mr. Pickles does not like people and does not seem to enjoy us being home all the time. However, quarantine has also provided me a way to force him into bonding with me and I've started paying attention to his behavior. He very much as a personality, even though he's just a bunny, and he is the most grumpy but friendly bunny.

I started finding even the littlest events to make up my schedule, just to adhere to something. It's been very challenging, but it's also giving me ample room to grow and learn how to not need to be so tied to a schedule to function. I'm learning to be alone and be okay. It's not easy and most days I want to burn things down, but it's something I feel I need to accomplish.

## **How has your lived experience during the first six months of 2020 changed you, made you?**

I am amazed I am still alive, and I mean that in the most literal sense I can. To start, 2020 did not start well, because 2019 did not end well. In September of 2019, I unknowingly moved into an apartment right above a space that was being renovated for a restaurant, from the crack of dawn to sunset. In October of 2019, I admitted myself to the psychiatric facility at the hospital for suicidal ideation. In November of 2019, I was diagnosed with Borderline Personality Disorder and spent every day, 9am to 4pm, in therapy. I also did this through most of December, before I went home for the holidays. Within a week of returning home, I was displaced from my parents' home to my grandparents due to trauma.

When January of 2020 came, all I wanted to do was start over. I was finally in position to do so too. I had finally talked my way of my terrible lease and found a new place close to school, which is also very far away from home too. For a very good reason. I got a job on campus, I organized my classes, so they didn't overwhelm me. When everything got rolling at the beginning of the semester, it was okay. Sometimes it felt like I was treading water, but I never felt like I was drowning.

When COVID hit, all of that changed. Let's be real, it sucked. Everything I had worked on putting back together in my life was vigorously ripped away from something out of my control. But for me, this isn't an unknown feeling. The feeling of the world shattering, catastrophe, shock is not new to me. In fact, they're actually very common feelings for me because of my personality disorder. It's the distorted way my illness works.

For me, those feelings are closely connecting to my lack of and every changing self-identity. It's easily impacted and manipulated. My life is very much about diligently managing these feelings and extinguishing them, to prevent them from disrupting.

Right now, I can't explicit say how these last six months have impacted what little identifiable identity I have. If anything, it's reminded me of my resilience. It's reminded me the only thing that keeps this world spinning and alive is hope. While things are inherently different, I am so used to change, that although it easily detours me, I am more than capable of handling it.

I do not know when this COVID year will end, but I am excited to see who I come out as.



**You've witnessed and experienced so much (and we aren't even half-way through 2020!), what does the future look like to you? What are your hopes? Fears?**

I honestly have no idea what my future looks like. My hopes and fears are abundant. Having BPD and anxiety, looking at the future is so overwhelming. A lot of my days I spend just focus hour by hour.

I've been dependent on school as a means of a stable future, I know I have at least two years left. That's as in-advance as I feel capable of planning. I want to travel more, especially now more than ever being we can't go anywhere. My boyfriend asked me the other day if I could go anywhere in the world right now, where would I go? It was interesting, because I always used to say Malta, but I recently went there. After that, I didn't really take time to think about the new answer. I guess now is a better time than any other.

Fear is so relevant to my life that it's almost irrelevant. Anxiety is a subsection of fear, and I'm in a rather constant state of it. There's a quote that I like by Elisabeth Elliot: "Sometimes the fear does not subside, and you must do it anyways." That's kind of how I live every day. If I'm in a constant state of fear, am I ever actually fearful?

This is a time where I'm practicing mindfulness and being present more than ever. No one knows what the future is going to bring. There are somethings that just can't be planned with the uncertainties that the pandemic creates. Honestly, it seems like most things. I think that's what everyone is struggling with. As a society, we function often in future sense. We constantly plan, we move towards a better tomorrow. A lot of light has been drawn to the productivity frenzy America seems to run on ever since it came to a complete stop. We, as a society, do not know how to simply just exist and be content with that.

Personally, I'm just looking forward to leaving home again. It isn't always a happy place for me, and since returning home, I've realized I do a lot better mentally, emotionally, and physically on my own. I want to continue this really twisted path of recovery and rehabilitation more than ever, and I really didn't have a desire to before. I guess of all the things to come out of COVID-19 for me, that's the best part.