

Columbia College Chicago

## Digital Commons @ Columbia College Chicago

---

Public History Journals

Response 2020

---

Summer 2021

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

Ann Fernandez

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 International License](#).

---

## MY PERSONAL COVID-19 TIMELINE

### MARCH 2020

The world is currently still facing a major health crisis among the public. This crisis is known as the Coronavirus. On March 11<sup>th</sup> 2020, The World Health Organization declared that Coronavirus as a pandemic. A pandemic means a drastic increase in the number of cases that has been spread over several countries and continents affecting a larger number of people.

What is Coronavirus you ask? Well, the Coronavirus or Covid-19 is a type virus that causes an infection in your nose and upper throat. Coronavirus spreads fast from one person to another primarily through contact with infected person when they cough or sneeze. It also spreads when a person is in contact with a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touches their eyes, nose or mouth. Chinese health authorities said that the virus originated from a local seafood market in Wuhan, a city in the Hubei province of China where wildlife both dead and live animals were traded illegally. Such markets like this causes risk of virus jumping from animals to humans because hygiene standards are difficult to maintain. According to Aljazeera news official website, more than 37,000 people have died from Covid-19 while over 780,000 infections have been confirmed in at least 178 countries and territories. However, more than 166,000 people have recovered from the coronavirus.

The virus is spreading rapidly in many countries and the death toll is increasing day by day. The country that has the highest death cases now (March 2020) is Italy, Spain and now recently, the United States of America.

About a month ago, I was attending classes regularly at Columbia College Chicago when the Coronavirus news broke to the public. We, as students were told to stay at home if we were not feeling well. However, class was still going on as usual. Our English teacher, Ms. Kemble told all of us to be calm during this time of uncertainty and to take precautions such as always sanitizing our hands. Then later on, we received news that the college will be closing and moving all classes online. Most governments all around the world have temporarily closed public schools and

universities in an attempt to contain the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic. Also, all public events were cancelled. One of the many major annual events that Chicago was about to celebrate was the dyeing of the river green for St. Patrick's Day which they had to cancel due to the virus. Other than that, all the retail stores on the Magnificent Mile was closed.

Personally, I was feeling worried because all of my roommates were planning on going back to their respective hometowns. At the very last minute, I decided to leave Chicago and go back to my home country because I have mild asthma and I was worried that it might take a toll on me. Besides that, I would be able to see my family again after six long months of being away from home.

Covid-19 has created havoc across the globe and put the world's economy in the doldrums and my country, Malaysia is no exception to this. Our government has put drastic measures to control the spread of this disease. After the twenty-three hours of traveling on the plane, I safely arrived Malaysia. Before the baggage claim area, there were a few health officials there checking each passenger's temperatures. All of the unwell passengers were forced to a quarantined center for observation. Luckily, I was fine and my parents came to the airport to pick me up. During that time, Malaysia had just started going on their first lockdown. It was the third day of lockdown as I recalled.

The Movement Control Order was announced by our Prime Minister on March 16<sup>th</sup> 2020 to April 14<sup>th</sup> 2020. This movement's goal is to isolate the public from the coronavirus pandemic. This movement includes, prohibiting any movement and mass assembly nationwide, including all religious, sports and cultural activities. Also, all the religious activities have been suspended including, nurseries, government, private and international schools. All public events here are ordered to be closed during this partial lockdown period except for infrastructure services such as supermarkets, wet market, grocery stores and multi-functional stores selling daily necessities. We were told strictly to stay at home and practice social distancing for these next few months.

## APRIL – NOVEMBER 2020

I have been self-isolating myself at home with my family members for these past few months and it has been quite a challenge for me so far. I am that type of person who always wants to get out of the house and hang out at the mall with friends. Adjusting to the climate here was also difficult for me at first. Coming out from an extremely cold and windy climate to a hot and humid one really took a toll on me and for my lungs because I have asthma. On top of that, I have my allergies to smoke and dust. However, I did my breathing exercises to remain calm. On my first few days of being back at home, I was having a bad cold that would go on for the entire day. My mother would ask me to stay in my room and not come out. She was worried about it infecting my other family members. I tried to think positive during the whole time of it. I also kept myself busy by doing indoor activities such as yoga in my bedroom in the mornings, sketching and writing in the afternoons and catching up on movies at night. Besides that, I would also video call my friends on Facetime to see how they were doing. As the weeks went by, it became more of a routine for me and I found it therapeutic in a way.

Staying at home made me ponder about my life and what I want to achieve in the future. It was a good time to reflect and plan out how I would want to spend my spring and summer. I was feeling bored most of the time to be honest but I also learnt how to appreciate this time right now that I have with my family members.

In a nutshell, we all know that Covid-19 isn't going anywhere and that we have to learn how to adapt to the new normal. However, there are preventions that we can take to help prevent the spread of the virus to others. Firstly, do not touch your eye, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean. Secondly, always wash your hands regularly for 20 seconds with soap and water or any alcohol based hand rub. Next, cover your nose and mouth with a disposable tissue when you cough or sneeze. Lastly, stay at home and self-isolate from others in the household if you feel unwell.

## DECEMBER 2020

By the end of a crazy year, I was lucky enough to get myself a full time job at a startup fashion company here in Malaysia. I got the role as a fashion consultant and an assistant social media marketer. That kept me busy for the past 6 months until only recently I decided to leave because I wanted to focus more on my summer classes. And now here I am.



This is a picture collage of my journey back home from Chicago. You can see from top left is me being back home with my mother, me in a face mask doing part of my skin care routine, my dog, Whiskey who passed on at the end of 2020, a selfie of me in downtown Chicago wearing a face mask, international students moving out from their dorms, my roommate, Moira leaving our apartment and people at the airport and on the plane observing the standard operating procedures.

## JANUARY 2021

During the week 28th December 2020 to 3rd January 2021, there have been a total of 119 077 confirmed cases of COVID-19 reported in Malaysia. Our Prime Minister of Malaysia announced the five priorities for 2021, as part of an integrated national recovery strategy. The first strategy is to increase public health measures through the procurement of COVID-19 vaccines and launching of a nationwide vaccination programmed. The government extended the recovery movement control order (RMCO) throughout Malaysia until 31 March 2021. The Ministry Health is working on the National Vaccination Deployment Plan (NVDP). Authorities aim to launch the implementation plan upon acquiring COVID-19 vaccine supplies. Vaccination of priority groups including front-line workers and health-care workers is expected to commence in February 2021. High-risk groups that were also targeted in the second phase of the vaccination plan will include elderly people and those diagnosed with comorbidities, including diabetes, kidney, heart and lung diseases. The second vaccination phase is expected to commence in April or May 2021. Vaccines would be free for all Malaysians.

## FEBRUARY 2021

As of 7 February 2021, there have been a total of 242 452 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Malaysia. In the past seven days, 27 493 new cases have been reported, an 11.8% decrease of cases compared to the previous week. Of the newly reported cases, only 39 (0.1%) were imported. In the past seven days, 112 new deaths have been reported. This brings the total number of COVID19 deaths in Malaysia to 872. The highest single-day increase in COVID-19 deaths was reported on 2 February with 21 deaths. Between 1 December 2020 and 7 February 2021, a total of 312 623 foreign workers have undergone COVID-19 screening. A total of

6093 (1.9%) have tested positive for infection. A total of 1268 clinics nationwide are involved in foreign worker screenings. Between January 2020 and 5 February 2021, a total of 4756 medical personnel have contracted COVID-19. Of these, 3101 (65.2%) cases were among women. A total of 43% were infected through community transmission. Additionally, 936 non-health front-line workers have tested positive for COVID-19. On 5 February, the Ministry of Health (MOH) reported a second case of the B.1.1.7 SARS-CoV-2 variant detected in Malaysia. The case was detected in a Malaysian traveler returning from the United Arab Emirates.

Our government released standard operating procedures (SOPs) for the upcoming Chinese New Year celebrations. The Prime Minister has announced that Malaysia's National COVID-19 Immunisation Programme will begin at the end of February. The programme will be rolled out in three phases. The programme aims to vaccinate over 80% of the population. The first phase will be carried out starting in February 2021 and aims to vaccinate 500 000 health-care workers and front-line workers. The second phase will commence in May 2021 and will immunize about 9.4 million individuals in high-risk groups. High-risk groups include senior citizens aged 60 years and older and vulnerable groups who suffer chronic underlying diseases. The third phase will cover the general public except children possibly starting in August 2021.

Doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine are expected to arrive in the country this month.

## MARCH 2021

As of 21 March 2021, there have been 333 040 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Malaysia. In the past seven days, 9277 new cases have been reported – a 10.0% decrease compared to the previous week. Of the newly reported cases, only 52 (0.6%) were imported. Twenty-three new deaths have been reported, bringing the total number of COVID-19 deaths in Malaysia to 1,233. While indicators show a promising trend of decreasing transmission, multisource and event-based surveillance of risks warns of rising population mobility trends and lack of adherence to public health and social measures. Upcoming events related to religious and social traditions, including the month of Ramadan, Eid and Easter celebrations,

warrant some caution, especially regarding the operation of daily food bazaars for the breaking of the fast. The risks of importation of cases from other regions continue to be managed through effective point-of-entry control measures, including testing and quarantine protocols. The National Immunization Programme is currently in Phase 1, prioritizing front-line workers and targeting 500 000 people to be vaccinated by April 2021.

#### APRIL 2021

As of 4 April, there have been a total of 350 959 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Malaysia. In the past seven days, 9015 new cases have been reported – averaging about 1200 cases per day and a 1.2% increase compared to the previous week. While the number of reported cases appear to be plateauing, there has been a slight increase in the number of deaths reported and severe cases requiring intensive care. In the past seven days, 33 new deaths have been reported, bringing the total number of COVID-19 deaths in Malaysia to 1288. The National Immunization Programmed is currently in Phase One, prioritizing front-line workers and targeting 647 398 people to be vaccinated by April 2021. As of 4 April, 44.4% of the target population under Phase One have received their second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. Authorities across Malaysia have announced new standard operating procedures for the upcoming Ramadhan celebrations. Breaking fast and buffet events will be permitted with varying capacity limits depending on movement control orders (MCOs). Furthermore, the Ministry of Health (MOH) has reminded the public to limit non-essential travel and continue following COVID-19 measures.

#### MAY 2021

Phase 2 of the National Immunization Programmed, which commenced on 19 April 2021, prioritizes adults aged 60 years and above, persons with disabilities and those with comorbidities. As of 1 May, 2.34% of Malaysia's total target population (estimated 23.7 million individuals) have received their second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. Effective 17 May, travel between Malaysia and Singapore will be permitted for compassionate reasons. This includes visiting critically ill loved ones.



Further instructions will be announced soon by the Immigration Department of Malaysia. Following the rise in COVID-19 cases in India, effective 28 April, all foreign travelers departing from India will be prohibited entry into Malaysia. The directive will include those travelling via flights (including transiting) or ships. Malaysian nationals and their spouses departing from India will be permitted entry but will be required to undergo a 14-day quarantine at designated centers upon arrival.

## JUNE 2021

As of 13 June, there have been a total of 657 508 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Malaysia. On 15 June, the Prime Minister announced the National Recovery Plan for 2021. The phasic plan includes the progressive relaxation of public health and social measures if threshold indicators are met. Indicators include the number of daily COVID-19 cases, the ICU bed occupancy rates and national vaccination rates. Presently, Malaysia is in Phase One (total MCO) and is expected to transition to Phase Two in July. All existing standard operating procedures related to the MCO will remain in place.

## JULY 2021

Federal authorities are studying various factors before deciding on transitioning to Phase 2 of the National Recovery Plan. Variables taken into consideration include the daily number of COVID-19 cases, vaccination coverage and ICU occupancy rates. The Ministry of Education is working to improve standard operating procedures for the reopening of schools across Malaysia. Schools are expected to reopen for physical classes under Phase 3 of the National Recovery Plan. As of 22 June, 36% of the total number of educators in Malaysia have received at least one COVID-19 vaccine dose. Owing to reports of mental health issues or burnout among front-line workers and the public, the MOH has introduced various measures to provide mental and psychosocial support. Moreover, mental health and psychosocial support services have been established to care for targeted groups such as persons under surveillance and COVID-19 patients in hospitals. The Ministry of Health (MOH) aims to soon present guidelines for fully vaccinated individuals to the National

Security Council (NSC). Preliminary details in the guidelines will refer to other countries' best practices in COVID-19 management. As of 18 July, there have been a total of 916 561 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Malaysia. In the past seven days a total of 80 265 new cases have been reported with a 39.2% increase compared to the previous week. The highest single-day increase in COVID-19 cases was reported on 15 July with 13 215 cases. Fifteen out of 16 states and territories have reported an increase in new COVID-19 cases in the past week. The Ministry of Education has announced that schools are set to reopen for physical classes in stages from 1 September. As of 16 July, at least 61.3% of teachers and 46.3% of support staff have received at least one COVID-19 vaccine dose. The government expects to announce soon the relaxation of COVID-19 restrictions for individuals who have been fully vaccinated against COVID-19. The new measures are expected to include the relaxation of the inter-district travel ban for affected individuals.

On a personal note, I received my first vaccine on 6th July. It was a long process. The vaccination location was about a 45-minute drive from my house and we could not pick what type of vaccine we wanted. Fortunately, I was given Pfizer because I am an international student studying abroad. I'm feeling excited to be fully vaccinated so that I can go out and see my friends before I leave for America. Our government is currently relaxing some restrictions to those who are fully vaccinated. People who are fully vaccinated are now able to dine in restaurants, attend places of worship, travel to different states and are able to enjoy outdoor sports activities but all must be wearing a face mask and practice social distancing. Hearing that made me feel extremely happy and relieved.