

Columbia College Chicago

Digital Commons @ Columbia College Chicago

Public History Journals

Response 2020

Summer 2021

Capturing Quarantine: Student Pandemic Experience Journal

Brianna Montesano

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](#).

Brianna Montesano

Public History- Erin McCarthy

August 10, 2021

Final Draft: Pandemic Timeline

March 2020:

March 8th- Best Friend's Birthday: This event was important since my best friend Christina and I celebrated her first birthday while living in Chicago. We spent the day all over the city, and had one of the best times of our lives, which made us love Chicago even more.

March 16th- Return from Mexico: I went on a trip to Mexico right before the pandemic started, and it was the last event that felt "normal", right before everything in the world turned "upside down". Although I had a ton of fun with friends, I was very unaware of what was about to occur for the following months, and even year.

March 17th- First day of Pandemic: The first day of the pandemic was my first day back home in Chicago, and I had to run a lot of errands this day with my roommate to stock up on groceries and supplies. There was a very eery feeling to the streets of Chicago, since there were absolutely zero cars on the road, and barely any other people besides ourselves. It felt very apocalyptic and we ended up watching the movie "Quarantine", which set us all up for nightmares that night.

April 2020:

April 3rd- First Brand Giveaway Contest: After using our spare time and creativity, my best friend/roomie and I decided to do our first ever giveaway contest for our brand that we created together! It was the first of many giveaways, which was a perfect way to help grow our following on our brand's Instagram account. We also got lots of people to sign up for notifications when we would have more giveaways in the future! It was a very exciting time and many of our friends and family were supporting us along the way.

April 19th- Started Hanging Out with my (current) Boyfriend: This date was important to me because I started to hang out with my ~now~ boyfriend, and we started bonding and becoming closer in our friendship. We both weren't sure where things were going to go, as per usual in this generation we're living in, but it was exciting to get along with someone other than my best friend and we lived down the street from each other, so it made it easy to quarantine together whenever I wanted to switch sceneries from my apartment.

April 25th- Little Sister's 21st Birthday: Everyone looks forward to their 21st birthday, and for my younger sister, she was pretty bummed out that she wasn't going to be able to celebrate with her friends and family in person. Instead, her boyfriend set up a surprise zoom party, where around 30 of her friends, including me, logged onto zoom and wished her a happy birthday and all had a drink with her in celebration of her 21st. In this moment where we had to improvise, I realized we were still having so much fun and making the best of a bad situation. It's not about what you're doing, but its about the people you're with. Life has much more meaning to it than we think it does at times.

May 2020:

May 15th- First Year at Columbia Completed: This event meant a lot to me since I had officially completed my first year at Columbia. Before starting, I remember being nervous and anxious about what the future held for me as a student at Columbia, especially while pursuing a new major and being a transfer student from South Florida. It was beyond motivating to know that I did so well my first year and I was on the right path to success. My best friend wrote me a card and decorated our apartment to celebrate— we love to celebrate the little things, it makes life worth living for!

May 27th- Surprised Mother for her Birthday: On this day, my best friends and I got tested and safely travelled to South Florida (the first time traveling since the pandemic) and we surprised my mother on her birthday! My mom does so much for us all,

including my siblings, family, and friends, and we wanted her to feel loved on her special day. It was so nice to see my family and give them a huge (safe) hug! I also missed the warmth of sunny South Florida and being able to go to the beach, secluded from the world.

June 2020:

June 2nd- Black Lives Matter: On this day, there was a "blackout" on social media, which was to make a statement that "black lives matter" and that you stood with those who had lost their lives in police brutality, etc. I remember there being a lot of controversy around the movement, especially on social media, and the world felt like it was about to blow up and come to an end, with the social, political, and economical issues occurring in the midst of a pandemic. Hope felt like it was at an all time low on this day and time.

June 3rd- My 23rd Birthday!: Even though the world was going up in flames, or at least that's what it felt like; my birthday was the day after the social media "blackout", and I was not in the mood to celebrate. I just felt like the last thing I should be doing is celebrating, since the rest of the world was in shambles, and I felt ashamed of my privilege. I took the day to spend time with my family and three best friends, and we ordered wings and played card games and I took the time to stop and be grateful for everything I have. It wasn't the birthday I had expected for the year of 2020, but it was still a great time and I was beyond thankful.

June 16th- Little Brother's HS Graduation: My little brother graduated from high school virtually, which was definitely new for everyone. I couldn't believe that we were actually celebrating graduation in our living room and not in a big venue or auditorium. I felt bad because my little brother is the youngest of us three children, and he always got the short end of the stick when it came down to anything at all. My sister and I are a handful, and my brother just accepts what he can get, just because he's the simplest and doesn't need much in life. My mother still does her best to give him everything he wants and needs, but for this special day, he really wanted to keep it as simple as

possible. He didn't want anything big or fancy— just to cut a graduation cake and be done with the day. Although he didn't have the same "big graduation" as my sister and I did, I hope he still remembers it for the special day it was and can appreciate the simpleness and uniqueness of his graduation.

July 2020:

July 7th- Got Covid-19: On this day, I officially got Covid, and remember feeling slight symptoms. I had a bit of a headache, which is the first thing that really threw me off because I never get headaches. I thought it was possible because I quit drinking coffee, but at the same time, I felt very tired for no reason at all. I decided to quarantine and get tested, and sure enough my results came back positive. My roommate also came back positive, and we were disappointed that we had caught the virus, since we were trying to be as careful and safe as possible. Thankfully for my family, we were no longer staying with them in South Florida and had already been back in our apartment in Chicago by ourselves. We made the most of our quarantine and made home cooked meals, crocheted, watched movies, and played Chinese checkers. It was hard to not go outside to the park or leave the apartment, but we were able to go on our balcony for bits at a time to get some fresh air without infecting anyone. I'm so thankful that we got over the virus and did not have any bad side effects or permanent losses.

July 17th- Made my first crochet bikini: On this day, I made my first ever crochet bikini set! This was a huge moment because it was one of the first products I began to make that really sold out on our website for our brand. It received lots of attention on social media, and I began to model it on my own page to get people interested in purchasing their own set. I love crocheting, especially since it is something my grandmother taught me to do at a young age. I love being able to use my creativity to make something new, cool and fun!

August 2020:

August 6th- First Date: I went on my first date with a guy who I had been friends with for a while, but never romantically pursued. His name was Connor, and I always had a little bit of a "crush" on him, but never thought we would actually speak or go on a date. On this day, he reached out to me on social media, asked for my number and started texting me to see if I wanted to grab dinner (or order in food since we were still trying to be safe during the pandemic). We decided to order Velvet Taco to his apartment, and he was a complete gentlemen! We had lots of good conversation, and I

was curious to see where things were going to go, or if we were even going to go on a second date at all. Eventually, we did go on a second date, just the following week, and we actually went on multiple dates every week following. I thought that Connor was going to be someone I would eventually start dating within a couple of months, if not, weeks, just because things were going so well, so fast. But, unfortunately, he ended up “ghosting” me, AKA we went on a last date (that went very well, at least to my knowledge) and we never spoke again. When I say that I felt blindsided and devastated — I mean it! It was the first time that I felt like I was actually ready to be in a relationship again, with a guy that was actually “healthy”, and not toxic. But, I trusted that everything was happening for a reason, and that I needed to trust God’s plan.

August 29th- Launched First Website: After lots of planning and late nights and early mornings, my best friend and I launched our first ever website. It was a long time in the making, but we were able to figure it out and get all of our products on the website, while personalizing it to our own style and layout. We really do make the perfect team, and we couldn’t have done it without one another. Within minutes of launching our website, several of our styles and products began to sell out and it was the happiest moment of my life, just knowing that the hard work we put into everything had finally began to pay off. It was the first step of many of us creating a brand that we poured our hearts and souls into together.

September 2020:

September 2nd- Little Brother Visited Chicago: My little brother visited me in Chicago for the first time, and it was his first time traveling since the pandemic started. I was excited to show him around the city, and we visited plenty of museums and art exhibits; my brother loves science and history the most though! He really helped me

ground myself and enjoy the little things in life, and he also keeps me on my toes with all of his constant trivia history questions. We even had a very deep conversation one of the nights when watching a movie and ordering pizza, and he made me realize how important it is to slow down and hear other opinions out. My brother is a huge fan of US history, and he educated me a lot on this trip.

September 23rd- First Interview: On this day, I had my first ever interview regarding my new clothing and accessory brand! It was very exciting, and I met up with my friend from Columbia who is a professional photographer and was also in journalism for the school’s paper at the time. It was cool to get interviewed on something that I spent so much hard time working on, and I felt like it was going to be the first of many more interviews for my future in the fashion industry. I realized how natural it felt, and it was something I desired to continue doing, hopefully when I make it “big” in my career, no matter what brand I’m working for (even though I hope it’s my own!).

October 2020:

October 4th- Product Photoshoot: On this day, I had my first photoshoot with a new product I customized myself; Dior fabric Nike sneakers! It was so exciting to have an

actual photoshoot of the shoes with myself included, and my friend who interviewed me was the same person who shot me. It was the most fun experience and I was able to use the photos from the photoshoot for my brand website. This also made me realize how important my social networking at Columbia has been, and how I need to continue to make these lasting relationships with those in other industries besides my own. I love sharing others' work as well as my own, and I've met so many people because of it! Hopefully I am able to do more shoots in the future with new products.

October (around 13th)- Started Befriending (now) Boyfriend: Around this date, I started reconnecting with my (now) boyfriend, and the last we heard of him we had begun to hang out a lot and get close. That didn't end too well, because we had a huge difference in political views and were unable to see eye-to-eye. For about two months, we decided to not speak and we didn't hang out, until mid-October, when we were

both bored and wanted to give things another try (maybe). We were both skeptical about each other, but put our differences aside and realized we were both better than that. We also knew that we had a lot in common, and there had been an immense amount of growth on both ends where we could somehow meet in the middle and rekindle our friendship. At this time, we started getting close again and the hangout-dates were commencing.

October 22nd: Mom visited me in Chicago: I finally convinced my mom to come visit me in Chicago, and this was very exciting for me because she is my ROCK! My mom means the entire world to me, and being away from her for 5 months was 5 months too many. She had never visited me while living in Chicago, so it was a big moment for us and we were able to go take walks in the park while it was still nice outside (before winter hit us), while grabbing yummy bites to eat at different restaurants and food spots. It was such a nice time and mother-daughter experience for the both of us.

November 2020:

November 6th- First Manifestation at the Lake: On this day, I remember feeling very emotionally "in-touch" with myself. It felt unexplainable, like I couldn't really put it into verbal words, but I felt like I had a lot that I wanted to get off my chest while journaling. So, I headed down to Lake Michigan just a couple blocks over from my apartment at the time, and I sat down with my journal and some of my crystals, and I listened to calming music and wrote down in my journal some of my manifestations for my near future and the upcoming year. I reflected on the past year, and then reflected on my current situation and envisioned what I truly wanted for myself. I remember EXACTLY what I wrote down, and then I threw the paper away and knew that the universe was listening. From that day forward, I felt like the world has been on my side and everything has slowly but surely come true in its own divine timing.

November 7th- Biden Won Election: This day was exhilarating! I remember waking up to people cheering on Wabash Ave, outside of my friend's apartment who I slept over,

and we rushed over to the balcony to check out the scene. Others who were also on their balcony were cheering and cars were honking their horns in unison. We quickly checked our phones to see the update on the election and there it was— Biden had won! We were honestly very excited at the time, mostly because we wanted anyone but Trump to win again. Whether that was the right mindset or not, we just wanted to be on the side of history that cares about the wellbeing of others, and we had hope for a new president leading our country in the right direction.

November 22nd- First Podcast: On this day, I went on a podcast for the first time ever as a guest! This was such a great time, especially because I'm a HUGE talker, and I was just excited to be able to be apart of something creative other than fashion-related things. The two hosts, Leo and Luis, asked me a range of different questions as conversation-starters, and we ended up going down a rabbit hole into many other topics. It was definitely one of the longest conversations I had that was made public, and I was only little nervous about saying the wrong thing, but I remembered to stay true to myself and to have fun! I really hope I get the opportunity to be on other podcasts and share my thoughts and opinions in a fun and light-hearted way again soon!

December 2020:

December 10th- Phoenix, AZ with Joe: This event was special to me because Joe, my current boyfriend (but at the time we were still friends), had asked me to visit him on his work trip to Phoenix, Arizona. I had never been to AZ, so I was intrigued to live a little and check it out, and I also figured "why not". Although we weren't yet dating, this invitation made me think about our friendship in a new light, and I got the hint that we were going to become something more than friends in no time. He set up an itinerary of different things we could do together while I was there for a few days, and we did things like visit a historical Japanese garden, walked around town, ate at cool restaurants and grabbed drinks at rooftop spots. My favorite night was when we grabbed food and then walked around and came across a cute, hidden coffee bar that had a bunch of different trinkets and things going on in there. Another highlight of the trip was meeting his coworker friends, since I felt like it was a step in the right direction for this "relationship" :). I was excited to see what was going to happen next in our love story, and I felt like there was lots more to come. (I was right!)

December 25th- Christmas Day: This day is always an important one for me, because I always spend it with my family in South Florida. I couldn't imagine spending a holiday without them, especially Christmas! My mom loves to make it a very big deal in terms of decorations... she goes ALL out! I think that's what makes Christmas so special for our family; my mother. She really is the backbone of our family and I don't know what we'd do without her. I don't care much about gifts as I care about the time I spend with my loved ones, and I hope that we're able to celebrate the same way this year as we did in 2020. I felt so grateful and cherished every moment, especially knowing that it had been such a tough year on everyone, and we were lucky to all have each other.

December 31st- New Years Eve: This night was a special night, since I finally successfully celebrated a New Years Eve with loved ones! The past years had been mediocre, and I feel like it is hard to have a “perfectly planned” NYE, but this one had finally been a great one, ironically since it was the end of 2020. I remember going to a nice dinner with my best friends and my (almost) boyfriend. It was freezing outside, but we had a heat warmer surrounding the table that was inside of a tent outdoors. After having a few drinks and very full bellies, we went over to Joe’s apartment to finish up the rest of the night and start our NYE countdown. We accidentally had the wrong countdown (I don’t know how we messed that up, but it was 2020 after all), and we ended up doing two or three countdowns, just for the sake of it. Once we cheers’d and gave out hugs and kisses, we all shared a big sigh of relief as we said farewell to a crazy, yet meaningful year. We didn’t know what the new year had in-store for us, but we were ready for it and welcoming it with open arms.

2021!

January 2021:

1/17- Officially Got a Boyfriend - This event means a lot to me since my boyfriend officially asked me out, and I was waiting for that moment to happen for a long time. It was the beginning of a great relationship that was going to teach me a lot of things and make me really grow as a human being, and into the best version of myself to date. Little did I know that this event would change the course of my near-future so drastically, for the better! Without getting too mushy—it’s probably been the best thing to happen to me in a very long time.

1/31- Vax Records- More Americans were reported to be vaccinated rather than infected with Covid-19, which is a huge, monumental moment for the US. It was a promising moment that gave me hope that the world was going to return to a certain level of “normalcy” and that we were seeing the light at the end of the tunnel soon. After digesting this information, I realized the importance of getting vaccinated and was waiting patiently for my turn to get the shot.

February 2021:

2/2- First Nashville Trip- I went to Nashville with my boyfriend since he was looking to buy his first house there, and being invited on the trip was a huge step in our relationship. Although we were early in our relationship, I felt special being apart of his decision-making process on something as big as buying a house. I also enjoyed getting away for a quick trip while being safe and masked while there. I remember going on stage and singing for the first time ever in my life and I had the best time ever! I felt so happy to get away for a few days and feel alive again, do something fun and try something new that’s outside of my immediate comfort zone.

2/28- Moving Day- On this date, my roommate/best friend and I moved into our new apartment in downtown Chicago, where we were in a great location with the most beautiful views of the city. It was such a happy moment for us, since we were able to find an insane deal due to the rates being lowered and specials going on at most buildings due to the pandemic. We were so excited to have more space than our last apartment and live out our city girl dreams from when we were little and even prior to moving to Chicago when living in FL. Our dreams were becoming a reality and I will always remember this day.

March 2021:

3/8- Tina's Birthday - I decorated my apartment with a bunch of cute decorations for my best friend/ roommate's birthday, and it was very special to me and her both, since we always spend our birthdays together. She also started a new job and never really had time to celebrate, so it made me feel good to give her a special night to make her feel better about her work life. My friends mean a lot to me!

3/18- Chicago Dyed the River Green - This event was special to me since it was my first time seeing the river dyed green, especially since they were unable to do this for St. Patrick's Day the year before due to the pandemic. It was honestly the first time I felt hopefully for the future of this whole pandemic in our city and walking around and seeing so many people made me feel really alive again.

3/23- New Job- I started working for my best friend as her personal assistant, which was pretty great since we already live together and it was very convenient. I needed to find a way to start making extra money and the opportunity presented itself and I am grateful that we are in this position!

April 2021:

The month of April was very challenging for me and it is hard for me to reminisce on that month in particular; I was going through a lot of personal issues, between my relationship, family, and mental health. I don't think I am completely healed from the experiences I had to go through, but it made me grow immensely as a human being. I learned a lot of lessons, and it made me grow up very fast within a short amount of time. I rarely left my apartment in April, and had to practice mindfulness as a way to cope through the mental breakdown. I wouldn't change or do anything differently, just because I grew so much from the month itself.

May 2021:

5/12- BF Meets Family— My boyfriend and I went back to my home in South Florida where he met my whole family for the first time. I was so excited because our

relationship has been heading in the right direction and we were ready to take this next serious step. My family ended up loving him and vice versa!

5/25- Surgery— I got surgery to remove my gallbladder, since it was causing me a lot of pain and it was something that ran in my family. I had never had surgery before and it was scary at first, but I ended up recovering quick. I was bed ridden for a couple of weeks but I have a great support system and friends who helped me get through it all.

June 2021:

6/3- My birthday in Mexico- I travelled to Cabo San Lucas for the first time on my birthday and it was such a phenomenal time, and I had just finished my spring semester strong, and it felt very rewarding. I put in so much hard work and effort and it was a very well-needed break from reality.

6/10- Summer Classes Begun- This was my first summer semester ever and I was a bit nervous to see how I would like summer classes but it was great to be able to get some classes on my schedule and get ahead of the game for fall semester. It also made my schedule a bit more hectic but I think it was a good thing for me in the long run.

6/15- My Mom's Wedding— My mom is planning her wedding very soon and I was asked to be her bridesmaid. It is her third time getting married, and she has been divorced for a while now and I'm just happy for her special day and to see her fully happy again. It's a huge special moment for me and our family! It feels like things are finally coming back together and there's a lot of special, joyous moments on the horizon for us all. They weren't able to get married last year due to the pandemic, so this year is the year they are getting to it!

July 2021:

7/23- Boyfriend Moved Away- We are now in present-day, just a few days ago, where my boyfriend has officially moved to his new house that he purchased in Nashville. I helped him and his roommate move out and clean their apartment that they have been living in for the past two years, and it was very bittersweet. I was so happy that they're starting a new chapter of their life, and although we will have a bit of time apart, I am hopeful for the future and excited to see him again soon.

7/27- Fully Vaccinated! - Tomorrow, I will be considered "fully vaccinated", and it will be two weeks since my second dose of the Pfizer vaccine shot. I am very excited to not wear a mask around and to feel more protected in public and in crowds. Especially

with it being summertime, I am ready to live a little and enjoy the outdoors and sunshine here in the beautiful city of Chicago.