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Capturing Quarantine: Student Pandemic Experience Journal

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Caroline Robinson

March 16, 2020

- Cases of COVID-19 increasing. People are talking about wearing masks and almost panicking. There is talk that universities may close.
- Just after all universities and colleges announced remote learning. This including Columbia's campus, Chicago's residents, packed their bags and many relocated out of the state for the remainder of the year.
- Columbia College closed and we were asked to leave our dorms. My brother, who was a Loyola student, and I took Amtrak home to Tennessee.
- On March 20th, I was home. It felt surreal. Classes did not resume till the last week of March on Zoom. Many students and faculty worried about how classes would resume and if we would succeed.

April 2020

- COVID was the only thing prioritized on national and local news outlets every-day.
- COVID death tolls rose significantly every week.
- Dr. Fauci, and the CDC required all businesses and persons to wear masks out in public as a mandatory effect.
- Symptoms of COVID became varied as reported by those who contracted the virus (not disease.)
- All movie theaters closed permanently for the remainder of the year due to the outbreak, especially where I live.
- Everyone started to speculate about the origins of the virus.
- Since April, I had not left my town or house except to go to the grocery store since I had come home in March. Thankfully school during this time was my main concern of distraction. Also, Netflix too!

May 2020

- Many businesses nationwide, and local, such as Artist's and Craftsman on Columbia's campus were closed due to loss of income.
- In Tennessee, where I live many things started to open up and resume.
- The talk of COVID on the news constantly and everyone talking about it felt tiring...when was this going to be over?

- My mother, brother and I went to Chicago. I needed allergy testing and my brother was going to go back and live in Rogers Park, since he had just graduated from Loyola in May. There was not much open in Chicago, so we drove to Kenosha, WI since we had never been to Wisconsin. Soon after we got back to Tennessee, the riots happened in the South Loop and downtown. It made me sad that so many of the places I would go in Chicago were damaged, looted or destroyed. There has to be a better answer to these problems!

June 2020

- I worked for part of the summer at a Graphic Design shop the town over from me.
- Things were still in lockdown and many were afraid of in-person contact.
- I started two online summer classes during this time.
- Protests all over the country began after the death of George Floyd.
- Law enforcement became targets of hate and murder. Many politicians and people wanted to defund law enforcement.
- Although I was angry about the George Floyd situation, I was also angry how our law enforcement was being treated.

July 2020

- Suicide rates were beginning to skyrocket.
- Many notable artists used this period as a time to create like they never had before. such as Taylor Swift releasing Folklore. The only thing I listened to at the end of this month.
- Protests continued for Black Lives Matter around the country. Minneapolis and Seattle became confined by crime during these dangerous events.
- My mom, brother, and I took a road-trip to Mississippi for the week to get out even though a lot of things had limited capacity or were closed. We visited Ole Miss which is a beautiful campus. It was nice to just get out of the house and drive since Nashville was still pretty shut down.

August 2020

- My mom and I spent the day in Paducah, Kentucky. We also ate at my favorite restaurant this month at Patti's Settlement in Kentucky.
- The nation was getting more and more angry as businesses were getting shutdown.
- Mask mandate still in effect.
- Stimulus money was distributed during this time.
- I moved back into my dorm room at the end of this month on campus. I was worried that it was going to be too isolating. The campus and buildings felt way too quiet.

September 2020

- Chicago was very eerie and dead in the South Loop.
- One of my classes that was designated hybrid stayed online since many students would not show in person.
- No outside residents or guests were allowed in the residence halls.
- No one was in any of the campus buildings.
- There were many talks of a new strain of the virus.

October 2020

- I spent many weeks coming back home since campus was dead. Where I live in Tennessee, located about 1.5 hours from Nashville, life was quite normal. Fewer people were wearing masks, restaurants were open and generally people were not that concerned with COVID. Very few people were affected in our county and the people that I knew around Nashville that had COVID, were only sick briefly and it was no more than a regular flu/cold.
- Things remained dead as usual on campus.
- The 2020 Presidential debates began.

November 2020

- News outlets reported that Joe Biden had won the Presidency.
- Hearings and conflict began over election fraud.
- There were so many concerns still over COVID. I thought that it might not be the best to come back to campus for the Spring term, but instead do the semester online.

December 2020

- My birthday is December 17th and I turned 21. We had a great birthday dinner at my favorite restaurant in Kentucky called Patti's Settlement. I had my first "legal" drink! My mom and stepdad got married there. I painted the chapel where they were married and gave it to them for Christmas.
- Still much debate over election fraud.
- Many, nationwide, are still angry over stimulus rollout.
- I made the Dean's list which made me happy.
- Roasted smores outside on my front patio on Christmas.
- I stayed in Tennessee for the remainder of the month.
- Began working towards fluency in French.
- Now I seriously thought about not returning to campus for the Spring term. Chicago was very much still shutdown and Tennessee was back to normal.

January 2021

- Capitol riot took place at Capitol Hill in Washington D.C. January 26th. 140 Police officers were injured- and four people died including one officer.
- President Donald Trump was suspended indefinitely from social media platforms after the January 6th -riots causing uproar.
- Joe Biden won the 2020 presidency and was inaugurated January 20th.
- Moved out of my studio dorm at Columbia to spend the Spring semester at home in TN.
- Two days after coming home from Chicago my Stepfather passed away unexpectedly from a heart attack January 27th. It was very surprising since we never suspected heart issues. He called 911 when I was upstairs after my morning Zoom class. The ambulance came and they tried resuscitating him, but he did not make it. I was in shock and it felt surreal that he was just gone.
- Missed the rest of the first two weeks of classes.

February 2021

- Funeral and wake- were held the first week of February. People came from all over the country- he had a long career in Special Forces and was a Master Sergeant. It was a very sad day, he had full military honors and we were proud of his bravery and accomplishments in the military. He did so much for us, and I will miss him.
- Resumed and continued online classes.
- The impeachment trials against President Trump started after the Capitol riot which caused more pressure.

March 2021

- Went to Florida with my mother to clean out my Stepfather's law enforcement tactical training business in the Panhandle. This was a long and draining experience. After, we went to Panama City Beach for three days to relax.
- Continued the Spring semester online.
- Men from my Stepfather's military career would come and visit with us. It was good to meet them and hear their stories.

April 2021

- Continued my online classes.
- I started making jewelry to sell on my online website and on Etsy. I also sell prints of my paintings on the site as well. I just finished putting the whole thing together on the e-commerce platform this month.

May 2021

- My mom and I went to Lawrenceburg TN, to clean out and sell tactical gear and ammunition from my stepfather's business. His friend Blake was keeping the storage pod at his house and that really helped us a lot.
- May 17th was my Mom's birthday and we went shopping and had dinner. We always have lots of fun together!
- I started an internship at our local newspaper, the Stewart County Standard

June 2021

- My mom and I went to Cape Girardeau, Missouri to see some of John's friends (my Stepfather) and gather more of his belongings.
- We cleaned out our old storage unit and brought everything to the house.
- Started my first online summer class.
- The TV news and online are starting to talk of a "delta variant" that will make COVID hard to control with the vaccine. I am trying not to think about it; I just want things to return to normal.

July 2021

- I visited Chattanooga TN with my mom and brother for the 4th of July weekend. We found a distant relative's painting at the Hunter Museum of American Art. That was pretty amazing!
- We went to all four parks in Disney world in Orlando Florida for a week's long vacation. The parks were not nearly as crowded as in pre-pandemic days.
- Continued my internship.
- Finished my online Literature class and still working on my Public History class which will end on August 6th.
- I have to schedule getting my COVID vaccine soon to return back to school.
- I found an off-campus apartment on South Clark Street that is really nice. It is on the 8th floor, has a balcony and is facing east towards the Lake.
- More discussion of the "delta variant" on the news and social media. I really hope that this can get under control soon and we all can have a typical school year.