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

Casey Groulx

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## Personal Pandemic Timeline – Casey Groulx

NOTE: I was very fortunate to have a friend working at the manufacturing plant for the Abbott rapid tests at the time. I was able to get rapid tests pretty much on-demand, and tested myself and my family frequently.

### - March

- 3/8 - GRLZ Weekend
  - I work for a concert company and this was the last show before everything got shut down. This event is important for a variety of reasons: first, it was an all-women run event on International Women's Day; but most importantly, it was the last concert that I would attend/shoot before the pandemic shut everything down. It has now been almost a year and a half since I've worked/shot a concert, which is insane and tragic considering I was shooting usually 4 per week pre-COVID and it's probably my favorite thing to do in the entire world.
- 3/12 - CCC classes get cancelled
  - I was initially super excited about this. My friends and I had a party that night to celebrate no more in person classes for the rest of the year. However, online courses proved way more difficult than I had initially thought, and by fall of 2020 I was itching to be back on campus with my peers and more effective classes. Though my grades started to slip, teachers were very understanding.
- 3/15 - Chicago Oyster House – last night/dinner in the city
  - Besides concert photography, one of my favorite things to do is to go out to eat at nice restaurants. This dinner was beyond delicious and made even better by being 50% off due to the looming pandemic (and thus lack of business). But it signified the end of one of my favorite activities for the foreseeable future.
- 3/16 - Me and Parker (boyfriend) move into my mom's house in Oak Park (with my brother and sister)
  - When the pandemic hit, my boyfriend, mom, and I all felt that not only would it be difficult to stay in the city, but also more dangerous and risky. We moved into my mom's house in the suburbs, which was nice not only because my mom would cook for us, but it was also a larger space and we were less confined. Also, Oak Park has forest preserves (unlike the city), so we were able to go outside without risking any contamination or social distancing more regularly. Trips to the forest were the bright light in my life at the time and kept me going. Though it was a little interesting having my boyfriend of only 6 months at the time moving in with pretty much my entire family, everyone appreciate his presence – especially my mom, due to his commitment to cleaning and chores.

### - April

- 4/10 - My sister moves to my dad's because she is sick of everyone at my mom's
  - My sister really caught cabin fever at this point. Living in a house with 4 other people where you can't really get space or leave at any time is definitely challenging. She decided to go stay at my dad's (less than a mile away) for awhile to get some distance, which I think was a good decision at the time. This

was significant for me personally because she is kind of a volatile person so I felt like it was beneficial to get some distance for a bit.

- 4/18 - My sister moves back to my mom's
  - That move didn't last long. My mom's house is much bigger than my dad's condo, and my sister really missed her bed. I think that this temporary move did help create a buffer for a bit, and also made her more appreciative of the environment of my mom's. She was less volatile and angry when she moved back in, which was easier on all of us in the house.
- May
  - 5/1 - Kitties 1<sup>st</sup> Bday!
    - My cats turned 1! And while I had planned on having a small party for them (I know, kind of lame and catlady-ish), I enjoyed not making a huge deal about it. They got extra love from all of us that day. Moving into my mom's house from my 400 sqft studio definitely made them super happy, and they had space to run and play as much as they wanted, which chilled them out instead of being super crazy all the time.
  - 5/17 - Parker graduates!
    - My boyfriend graduated from Columbia. His grandma and mom sent plenty of supplies and photos for us to have a "party" (just my family) with him. It was very sad, though, that he couldn't be with his family on this momentous day. Still, I think he had fun, and the 4-hour long zoom call with all of his relatives definitely helped to lift the mood.
  - 5/20 - I cut my dad's hair
    - My dad had gotten super scruffy, so I tried my hand at being a hairdresser. This was a great bonding experience and I did way better than I thought I would. This was also the first time any of us had any sort of like formal grooming since the onset of the pandemic. While I visit the nail salon at least twice a month and couldn't do this anymore, it was nice to give my dad at least a bit of pampering.
  - 5/25 - Socially distanced bonfire
    - My friends and I decided that it had been way too long since any of us had seen each other, but we still wanted to be safe. We set up a bonfire in my backyard with chairs spaced out at least 6 feet away from each other (most of them more than that). It was good to reconnect and get some social interaction, but was still hard as they were so close but so far away at the same time.
  - 5/29 - Leave to Florida
    - Though it may not have been the safest decision, my boyfriend decided to head back to his home in Florida and I joined him. While much of Florida denied the pandemic and refused to take any necessary precautions, it was much better to enjoy the weather by the pool at his mom's than being cooped up at my mom's. We barely left the house, and when we did we were the only ones wearing masks or trying to distance at all. I took COVID tests on a weekly basis out of paranoia and luckily never contracted it.
- June
  - 6/7 - Protest in Mount Dora

- This was the least social distancing event I had attended through the pandemic at this point. After the cold-blooded murder of George Floyd, protests across the country had risen. As a Chicagoan, I felt sad and guilty about not being able to join my community in our expression of anger at this time, and most of my friends in Illinois protested in some shape or form. Surprisingly, there was a protest in Florida. My boyfriend's friend led the march, and we walked through the pouring rain. When the storm was classified as a tropical storm that could evolve into a hurricane, the police who escorted us made us all take shelter in a police station. The irony of this situation could not be ignored, as many of our "Fuck the Police" signs were still held high in front of the police in their conference room.
  - 6/10 - Parker's 23<sup>rd</sup>
    - My boyfriend turned 23 on the 10th of June. Like his graduation, he didn't get the celebration he deserved. His family did what they could to make the day special but it was definitely hard that he couldn't see any of his friends. It made me more anxious too (however selfishly) that my 21<sup>st</sup> birthday in September would not be as celebratory and exciting as I had hoped.
  - 6/23 - Got tested for COVID after returning to IL
    - I returned to Illinois, tired of Florida, and did the responsible thing by getting tested before encountering any family. I stayed in my room in quarantine until I got my results back, which was not fun considering I hadn't seen any family in a month. I was sad to not be able to hug them upon my return but knew I had to do whatever it took to keep them safe. Luckily, the results came back negative.
- July
  - 7/1 - Move into new apt in Pilsen! (Syd gets COVID)
    - On July 1<sup>st</sup>, I moved into a new apartment in Pilsen. I was excited to have a change in environment and to feel some independence that I felt I had lost when I moved back to my mom's house. But this excitement was quickly dampened when my mom called that night to tell my roommates and I that my sister had tested positive for COVID-19. My roommates and I all stayed in our respective rooms (though we had closer contact during move-in) until our test results came back. Luckily, we all tested negative in the next week or two --- which was somewhat surprising considering a roommate and I had hung out with my sister the night before.
  - 7/17 - Masked and distanced birthday party for my friends (Josh and Kyle) at my apt
    - I understand that hosting a party during this time was unsafe. My best friends, Josh and Kyle, turned 21 a few days apart. I have hosted their birthday party every day for the last 4 years and really was not okay with letting that go. So we required everyone attending (only 8 people) to show negative tests within 72 hours of the party and everyone was masked for the duration of the event. This was the closest contact I had had with any friends since the bonfire, and we all managed to stay safe – no one contracted the virus from this event.
  - 7/18 - Back on set!

- I had my first job on set since the onset of the pandemic. It was definitely weird having to keep distance between crew when usually we would be in such close quarters, but I appreciated the testing required before the shoot. It was great to be back in my element, even in this capacity, and showed that the pandemic truly wasn't going to last forever.
    - 7/26 - Eleven City Diner – first time eating at a restaurant since march!
      - My mom, her boyfriend, and my boyfriend went out to brunch at Eleven City Diner. Indoor dining had reopened but until this point, none of us were comfortable with attending. That day, we finally decided to go out and appreciated the distance and other measures the staff took to ensure safety. I was overjoyed to get back to a restaurant and this, too, inspired hope that the end was going to come.
- August
  - 8/4 - I start looking for jobs again
    - It was time for me to get off my ass. Not only was I bored, I was broke. I started applying for jobs, but was anxious about in-person interviews. It was also difficult because jobs were somewhat scarce unless it was for an essential business. Luckily, I got an interview with Petco and secured a position there.
  - 8/10 - Minor medical procedure
    - I had a somewhat minor but still terrifying medical procedure. My parents couldn't even come inside the building with me, and my anxiety was at an all-time high. I was glad to leave and go back to my parent's care once it was over.
  - 8/13 - I start working at Petco (an essential business)
    - I started working at Petco. Though everyone wore masks, no one was as safe with cleanliness practices as I had hoped. One time, I was wiping down the plastic dividers and card readers at the registers, and a coworker said, "Oh you don't have to do that to pretend like you're doing something, it's ok to not work for a bit!" This horrified me, because it meant no one was really taking safety precautions as much as me besides masking.
  - 8/19 - I have my first day of PHP (partial hospitalization program) for mental health
    - My mental health had been decreasing for awhile at this point. It had gotten so bad that my only option was to seek more intensive care, a partial hospitalization program at Compass Health Center. I had previously attended this program, but it was much different this time. Therapy groups were very small, and distancing was strongly enforced with markings on the floor and quick reprimands from staff if rules were not abided. Though of course I wanted to be safe, masks made it harder to read people's expressions and empathize when they shared something important in the group.
  - 8/26 - Sydney (sister) leaves for freshman year at UMich
    - My sister left for her freshman year of college on this day. I was excited for her, but also very sad because I knew I wouldn't see her for awhile. She wasn't scared of the pandemic at all at this point, heralding her earlier contraction of the virus as a shield against any possibility of reinfection. Though I wasn't as

convinced of this as she was, it was out of my hands. She attended parties with no masks and distancing, which horrified me.

- September

- 9/8 - My 21<sup>st</sup>
  - My 21st birthday was uneventful and very lame, to say the least. I couldn't go to bars and didn't really see any of my friends. My roommates went to dinner with my parents and I, but that was pretty much the extent of it. I was very depressed at the time and this was made worse by the lack of celebration of such a milestone birthday.
- 9/12 - I move down from PHP to IOP (intensive outpatient program, half a day vs PHP is a full day)
  - Compass decided that I was ready to move from the full day partial hospitalization program to the half day intensive outpatient program. I was excited but also nervous that I wasn't ready. I still felt my mental health needed major work and more progress.
- 9/19-9/21 - dad and I go to Michigan
  - My dad really wanted to visit my sister at school. We met only at meals and kept distance and masking, which was super hard after not seeing her for a month. Still, she seemed very happy with her new friends. We tried to ask her not to go to as many parties, but what college freshman would listen to that?

- October

- 10/9 - First set that does not require COVID tests (still masked and distanced)
  - I had another shoot on set. This was the first that didn't require preemptive COVID testing, which made me nervous. Everyone still wore masks, but didn't distance as much as the previous.
- 10/13 - Finally get prescribed a medication that changes my whole outlook on life and increases my productivity by 30000000%
  - I got put on a new medication and finally felt equipped to deal with school. Online classes were very challenging, and my lack of motivation made that worse. This medication motivated me to not only do my schoolwork, but do it well (and on time). I had always done ok in school but frequently fell behind, so this was a huge step.
- 10/16 - I graduate IOP and am no longer in intensive care
  - I graduated my mental health program and felt confident to deal with my brain and other issues head on. I was definitely nervous, but was glad to not have to drive all the way to the program every weekday.
- 10/24 - Sister comes home from school for a weekend
  - My sister came home from school for the weekend. I understand my parents wanting to see her, but I still felt it wasn't the most responsible thing to do considering she had been attending parties and living in a dorm. They told her to get tested before she arrived, but I'm not sure if she actually followed through on that. Luckily, we all tested negative after she left.
- 10/31 - I go to Chance's house for a Halloween party and am the only one wearing a mask

- Chance the Rapper PERSONALLY invited me to his Halloween party. I know this was irresponsible, but I could not resist this incredible invitation. I only attended the party for an hour and tried to distance myself from others as best I could, especially because I was only one consistently wearing a mask. This was the biggest and closest gathering I had been to since the pandemic began, and it made me both nervous and excited. (I tested negative after)
- November
  - 11/7 - I direct and DP a film, masks required still
    - I headed a shoot this day – my first time ever! It was hard to enforce some of my not-as-responsible crew members wearing masks and harder to enforce the artist starring in the music video to do so, but I did the best I could. It was frustrating that the artist kept inviting his friends to join us and I tried to resist this as much as possible, but this was also very difficult considering he was a paying client and I didn't want to lose the opportunity.
  - 11/20 - Ice skating at the ribbon – first time doing an activity besides work not in the apt
    - My boyfriend and I went skating at the ribbon in Maggie Daley Park. It has been one of our favorite winter activities and I was excited to get outside. I appreciated that they now had enforced time slots that reduced the amount of people there and that everyone was wearing masks the whole time.
  - 11/26 - Thanksgiving // My dog dies
    - My family held Thanksgiving with just us – a rarity. I have never had a Thanksgiving dinner with less than at least 10 people, so this group of 7 was bizarre to me. It was made worse when my dog had a seizure as soon as we sat down to dinner. My mom took her to the vet and they told us it was her time to go. My dad, siblings, and I couldn't even enter the facility due to COVID, but a nurse broke a rule for us and brought her outside on a stretcher so we could say our goodbyes. I am tearing up writing this, as this is one of the hardest and most painful things that has ever happened to me.
- December
  - 12/10 - I start working for Half Evil Co
    - I get a new job doing various content creation for Half Evil Co – a brand I have loved for quite some time. My new boss was also very excited about my access to rapid tests and I was able to make some extra cash by selling them to him. Since he has a baby, I felt great about being able to provide him with that extra safety. No one else at the store at the time was wearing masks, and I ended up taking mine off when I got comfortable.
  - 12/16 - I quit Petco
    - I had no need for my Petco job anymore, and I finally quit. This was significant because it meant way less contact with people as I wouldn't be working in a storefront environment anymore.
  - 12/18 - Back to Florida, first unmasked set
    - Though it was no surprise that my first unmasked set experience would be in Florida, we were able to keep distance as much as possible. This was certainly a milestone in the return to normalcy. I still wore a mask though no one else did.

- 12/25 - Christmas with only my nuclear family
  - This was my first Christmas EVER with any less than 20 people. We have a large extended family and somehow manage to get together every year, so this was an especially quiet one. We did Zoom with the extendeds but it just wasn't the same.
- 12/27 - Puerto Rico
  - Despite travel advisories, my dad takes us to Puerto Rico. Before leaving the hotel room or going into any restaurant/store we have to take our temperatures and had to submit a negative test within 72 hours of travel.
- January
  - 1/18 - Trip to Ann Arbor
    - I have to drop stuff off to my sister at UMich, every girl in her house has had covid at this point (and everyone she knows). Luckily, I still didn't get COVID but was very nervous heading up to a college campus.
  - 1/26 - Second semester starts (all online)
    - The spring semester starts and all my classes are still online. I was registered for one hybrid class but our teacher chose not to ever meet in person, which I appreciated. Very hard to focus and stay on top of all online classes but I actually made it through.
  - 1/29 - Trip to Colorado for a shoot
    - Only my group wears masks but not as bad because we are mostly in the mountains and not really around people. It was good to get out in the fresh air and do some activities with no real risk of COVID.
- February
  - 2/5 - The week of the horrible snowstorms
    - I had to shovel my car out multiple times and everyone in my neighborhood starts using chairs as spot holders. This was my first Chicago winter with a car and since I only have street parking, I had to do a LOT of manual labor. It was very frustrating that I had to keep reshoveling but it was cool to see my neighborhood all use various chairs and other items to save their shoveled spots.
  - 2/14 - Valentine's Day
    - My boyfriend and I get an Airbnb so we didn't need to go to a restaurant and risk contamination. It was nice to get out of the apartment while still taking the necessary precautions.
  - 2/20 - Photo Shoot
    - I had to give the artist an ultimatum because they kept asking if more and more people could come when I had given them a 5 person capacity. It was frustrating also because the shoot ran 5 hours longer than expected because the artist wanted to wait for their friend to get there. I vowed to not book anymore shoots unless artists would sign a contract accepting the capacity rules I had set.
- March
  - 3/3 - Documentary series



- This part of the doc series was shot in Chicago and northwest Indiana. When we went to Indiana, all of our party (Chicagoans and Florida crew) were masked, while all of the hoosiers were not. Some of them even laughed at the fact that we “believed in the pandemic.”
  - 3/9 - Start having weekly picnics
    - My boyfriend and I started having weekly picnics, a great way to get some semblance of normalcy in a time that was so not. Since they were outdoors, they were super safe and as always we maintained our distance from others.
  - 3/16 - I GET VACCINATED (J&J)
    - My friend is a nurse at one of the primary COVID centers in Chicago. He was actually on the commission of vaccine distribution for the city. Because of this, I was able to get vaccinated relatively early. He texted me one day and said they had some extra doses that were going to go bad if left unused, so I sprinted over as fast as I could. I did feel pretty terrible after but was fine the next day.
  - 3/17 - My friend’s 21<sup>st</sup> (also St. Patrick’s Day)
    - One of my best friends, who is Irish, turned 21 on St. Patrick’s Day. I felt bad that we couldn’t really do all the things you should get to do on your 21<sup>st</sup>, and could really empathize considering mine was in September. Still, we had a good time and she and I got a hotel room to hang out.
- April
  - 4/19 - Sister’s Birthday – another UMich trip
    - I realize now that I went to visit my sister at University of Michigan way too many times. My friend and I went to visit my sister at UMich for her birthday, and though we didn’t get COVID, we both developed a major sinus infection after leaving. It was miserable and lasted nearly two weeks, but we were grateful that strep, COVID, and other tests all came back negative.
  - 4/26 - Anniversary and Aba
    - For my boyfriend and I’s anniversary, he got us a reservation at Aba in West Loop. I really thought I was out of the woods with my sinus infection so we figured that if we kept our masks on and stayed apart from others it would be ok. Aba even required temperature checks for entry to both the building and the dining room. Unfortunately, I started feeling terrible after our first course and we had to leave.
- May
  - 5/3 - I move back into my mom’s
    - I went back to my mom’s house and stayed for two weeks because my roommate situation had gotten so bad. At this point, they are bullying/intimidating me constantly and every step I make, including throwing away a trash can that had a massive hole in it, ended up with me getting screamed at. This was a step in the right direction for my mental health and maybe even my safety.
  - 5/7 - UIC Fraternity Formal
    - I work as an event photographer for a UIC fraternity formal, again the only one wearing a mask. It was my first event photography gig since COVID hit and it

was very exciting to get back to doing what I love, even if it was for a fraternity and not a concert yet.

- 5/18 - Los Angeles
  - I go to LA for the doc series and get to sit in on a bunch of studio sessions and rehearsals. My crew is still the only group wearing masks, with others even saying, “aww, you guys don’t have to do that!” LA still wasn’t that close to reopening yet, so we frequented the grocery store for food instead of restaurants.
- 5/30 - Naples
  - I go to Naples for my boyfriend’s family vacation. I had gone with them last year, when there were almost no people at the resort besides us. This year it was much different and nearly at capacity. We had to wake up early as all hell even to get seats by the pool, and were STILL (surprise, surprise) the only group wearing masks consistently.
- June
  - 6/1 - Summer Classes Begin
    - On this day, my first 2 summer classes began. They were still all online, but it was nice to consistently have something to do. I had been getting extremely bored, and tend to get depressed when that happens, so it was great for my motivation and mental health to have this semblance of structure.
  - 6/6 - Phoenix
    - We go to phoenix for the doc series. It is hot as hell but we still wear masks as much as possible. Being in the desert made it easier for us to social distance.
  - 6/10 - Boyfriend’s 24<sup>th</sup> birthday!
    - His friends were insistent on celebrating by taking us to a few bars in Orlando. I was very hesitant, but I went to support him. I was the only one wearing a mask and was honestly terrified to be around so many people at once.
  - 6/19 - San Diego
    - For my family vacation, we headed to a resort in San Diego. No one was wearing masks besides my boyfriend, the resort staff, and I – even most of my family. The staff made us feel safer by sanitizing everything constantly and spacing out pool chairs and dining tables.
  - 6/23 - I see my Marine friend!
    - My friend Ben, who’s in the Marines, came to see me at the resort. He and everyone else on base are supposed to wear masks but he tells me no one really does, which surprised and worried me because they were all in such close quarters
  - 6/30 - Six Flags
    - My boyfriend and I went to Six Flags Great America. We stayed apart from others and this was the first time we felt somewhat comfortable not wearing masks. I was mainly worried about losing my mask on the roller coasters.
- July
  - 7/1 - New lease starts

- My old roommates move out and I move back in, along with 1 new roommate. It was great to have a fresh start, and even better not to have a COVID scare like we did on move-in day the previous year.
- 7/4 - 4<sup>th</sup> of July
  - I host a small BBQ of 8 people. None of us were masked and it felt great to have a mostly normal party. As always, we tested ourselves a few days after and none of us contracted it.
- 7/6 - Public History begins
  - I start this class! The fieldwork assignments get me out and about and the content of the course is genuinely interesting.
- 7/29 - Lollapalooza is back!
  - I didn't plan on going but end up getting gifted a four-day. They required proof of vaccination on their website but their check of this upon entry was terrible. They only briefly looked at our cards, and my friend even showed a picture of another friend's card because he forgot his. We finally got tested today and luckily, no COVID!