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Capturing Quarantine: Student Pandemic Experience Journal

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Personal Pandemic Timeline

2020

March 2020

3/12/20: Had to cancel my Spring Break trip to New York City due to surging COVID cases

This was an event that really solidified for me that COVID was a much bigger deal than I had originally thought. I remember really being upset that we had to cancel and thought that we should still go...definitely glad we made the right decision.

3/15/20: Columbia officially shutting down due to COVID-19

Extra two weeks of Spring Break!! Or so we all thought. Columbia shutting down was yet another realization for me that this pandemic was going to have a significant impact on the next year of my life. Because of the shut down, I also in turn lost my on-campus job as a tour guide until further notice.

3/25/20: Moved back to Naperville to live with my mom

Moving back to one's hometown is not an ideal scenario and was an incredibly hard adjustment for me. It was great to be surrounded by my family during such an uncertain time, however being back in the suburbs reverted me back into a mindset that I had worked so hard to grow from.

April 2020

4/2/20: Coronavirus Cases hit 1 Mil in the US

This was another one of those moments that really caused me to reflect on the world that we live in. Living through something that children will be reading about in history textbooks, especially such a negative event, is a hard reality to accept.

4/7/20: Adjusting to Zoom school

At the time that zoom classes began I was still a full-fledged BFA Musical Theatre student and learning how to do ballet in the middle of my kitchen and irritating my family members with constant self-taping for shows I did not think would even happen caused stress and really made me start to overthink the work that I was doing in theatre.

4/26/20: Watched the TV Show *Fleabag* for the first time

The early times of the pandemic was a huge time of binge watching tv shows all day in midst of trying to escape from all the chaos in the world, and although it sounds silly to make this a note in my timeline, this show is a huge catalyst for what made me decide to completely change the course of my future career, and what made me want to become a writer.

May 2020

5/1/20: Mask Mandate is enacted in Illinois

It is quite honestly so crazy to think of how much of a big deal the mask mandate was when it first began, as opposed to now since it has become second nature. I remember rushing to Etsy to make sure I was able to stock up on masks in time.

5/12/20: Finished Sophomore Year of College

My sophomore year of college was not at all what I expected. Amid burn out and feeling unmotivated, I still feel as though this was one of the most influential years of schooling for me because it taught me a lot about myself and, genuinely, what I am capable of.

5/25/20: George Floyd is killed by police

2020 is a year that will always be remembered, unfortunately not for the most positive of events. Police brutality is not something that is a foreign concept in the United States. This event was a catalyst that ignited a demand for a necessary change.

June 2020

6/3/20: Moved in with my friends in the city for a little bit of the month

This was a very significant event for me because I had been separated from some of the most important people in my life for the past few months and I had a hard time adjusting to living with my family and being in my hometown. This was a nice escape from all of that amidst the chaos.

6/7/20: Attended a Black Lives Matter Protest in Chicago

I have always been an advocate for fighting against the corrupt system that constantly affects our society in a negative way. This was a huge event for me, getting to hear people speak and share their stories. It was a difficult yet beautiful way to see people come together in this way.

6/20/20: Signed a lease on a new apartment in Lincoln Park

When the pandemic hit, I had no idea when I would be officially returning to Chicago or where I would be living. It was so exciting to find an apartment with my best friends and in a location that we absolutely loved.

6/27/20: Drove to Minneapolis to celebrate my best friend's birthday

Because of the pandemic, I was separated from some of the most important people in my life for a long time. For my best friend's birthday, I secretly drove to Minneapolis and surprised her. Definitely a strenuous drive, but so worth it!

July 2020

7/6/20: Started working on campus again

The entire month of July I spent commuting from Naperville to Chicago returning to my job as a Tour Guide. It was difficult to manage my time well, but it was nice to feel some sense of normalcy returning to a job that I love.

August 2020

8/1/20: Moved back to Chicago

A day that I had waited for, for so long! I honestly struggled a lot living at home and being back in Chicago brought me back a sense of stability and comfortability. It is truly the place that I will always be able to call home.

8/10/20: Found out that school was going to be completely virtual for another semester

Although I didn't have super high expectations for what my junior year of college would look like, it was not exciting to find out that all my classes were moved to online learning for another semester.

September 2020

9/2/2020: Gave my last in person tour of Columbia for the foreseeable future

I had been giving in person tours at Columbia for about the entire summer and it was sad to have that come to an end for a second time, but throughout all of it, I was very grateful to not have to experience unemployment during this pandemic.

9/9/2020: Began my junior year of college...Virtual

The first day of school is always a mix of exciting and nerve-wracking. Although it was virtual, I loved being able to be surrounded by my classmates and professors and feel a sense of togetherness.

October 2020

10/19/20: Celebrated my 21st Birthday

I did not expect to be celebrating one of my most important birthdays amid a pandemic, however it was still very special because I am always grateful to get to spend another year being surrounded by people I love and having a fun time.

10/22/20: Received an 'A' grade on the first script I had ever written

When I decided to take a screenwriting class as an elective I had absolutely no idea how much it would be a catalyst for change in my life. I had written my very first short film script for this class and was so surprised when I received very high praise from my professor, and an 'A' grade. It gave me the confidence I needed to show myself that this is something I could see myself pursuing a career in.

10/27/20: Voted for the first time for a presidential candidate

This was a huge personal event for me. I have voted in elections before but nothing quite of this scale. I knew how important this election was and it was exciting to feel as though I was a part of a historical change.

10/31/20: Got to celebrate Halloween with my friends

Halloween is one of my favorite holidays, so I was glad to be able to celebrate with my friends. If there is one thing, we all know how to do well, it is to put together some fun costumes!

November 2020

11/7/20: Joe Biden was elected as President

An incredible conclusion to quite honestly some of the most stressful few days of my life. This was the first time, besides 2016, where I had paid close attention to everything that was going on during the election. It was a beautiful day waking up to the news that Donald Trump would not be continuing his reign of terror.

11/11/2020: Got cast in my first Mainstage production at Columbia

Although I was in a place where I was struggling to figure out what I wanted to do as a major, I was cast in the production *Edges*. While I knew it was going to be unlike any production I have ever been in because of COVID restrictions, getting cast in this show was one of the first times I had felt genuinely proud of myself and accomplished.

11/22/20: Dropped the BFA Musical Theatre program

This was a huge step for me committing to changing the entire course of the rest of my college experience. I didn't feel like I was giving up on something I had worked so hard for, but rather closing a chapter in order to start a new, fresh one.

11/25/20: Finished my second script for a short film

At this point in time, I was becoming more confident in my skills as a writer. This short film I wrote entitled *Waiting at the Gate*, is a piece that I was incredibly proud of because it heavily revolved around my own personal family experiences.

December 2020

12/1/20: Officially Changed Majors

One of my biggest personal challenges of this year was realizing that I was so unsure of what I actually wanted to do with my life. Musical theatre was my first love and what I always imagined myself doing for the rest of my life. Finally making the switch to Television Writing and Producing really gave me clarity as to what I should be doing and committing to something I was fully passionate about.

12/11/20: FDA approved the Pfizer vaccine

The Pfizer vaccine getting approved was an exciting little glimmer of hope in a time where it was hard to see a light at the end of this pandemic tunnel.

12/20/20: Visited the suburbs to see my High School friends

Every year my friends from high school and I get together and celebrate the holiday season together. I was so glad we were able to keep up the tradition this year and it is always great to reconnect with familiar faces.

12/25/20: Celebrated Christmas with my family

To conclude an absolutely insane and long year, it was nice to close it all out being surrounded by my family and reflecting on what the year 2020 had both brought and taught me.

2021

January 2021

1/1/21: Celebrated the New Year with my best friends

2021 was the beginning of a year that no one knew what was going to be in store. Being able to celebrate the start of something new with people that I love was a great start.

1/6/21: Insurrection at the Capitol

Just a few days into a new year. The insurrection at the Capitol is one of the most horrifying events I have ever witnessed in my life. It is devastating to realize how much hate people can hold in their hearts.

1/8/21: Donald Trump is banned from all social media following the Insurrection

This is most definitely something that should have happened a long time ago, as many would agree. It was comforting to know that the “Trump era” was starting to come to a close, and he wouldn’t be able to have access to the platforms that he misused throughout the entirety of his presidency.

1/20/21: Joe Biden and Kamala Harris are inaugurated

What a wonderful day in history. Biden and Harris being sworn into office felt like a giant breath of fresh air for America. What matters most is holding them accountable and ensuring that they do the work they intended, but for this moment in time it was so comforting to watch actual humans return to the White House.

1/22/21: Got to attend an in-person rehearsal for the mainstage I was in at Columbia

At this point in time, I hadn’t been in a performance space at Columbia in almost a year. Getting to be in a rehearsal room with some of my favorite professors and my talented peers was so rewarding.

February 2021

2/15/21: Started working at a new job

When starting my new job to make more money, I had no idea how much it would change my life. This job has brought me some of the best people and fun experiences and I am so glad I chose to interview at this place on a whim. Quite honestly, it makes me laugh when I say that working in a random restaurant in Wicker Park has changed me a lot for the better, but it really has.

2/18/21: Started going to therapy

I have always known that therapy is important and something that I have wanted to start. This past year was an incredibly difficult year for my mental health, and I knew I wasn't going to get better if I didn't get the help that I needed. Starting therapy has really helped me in learning to grow and understand myself better.

2/12/20: Got to perform in a Columbia mainstage

Although it was unconventional, getting to perform again was so exciting. This was a very ambitious project and I'm so proud of everyone involved. We recorded the entire show in a theatre and from there it was livestreamed. It was a really cool experience to get to watch this show from the comfort of my own home, very nerve-wracking for sure, but very rewarding.

March 2021

3/7/21: Prince Harry and Meghan Markle release an interview with Oprah exposing the harsh truths of the Royal Family

Ever since I was young, I have always been really invested in the Royal Family and when this interview was released, it really shed light into what goes on behind closed doors. I do believe Meghan and Harry are brave for speaking out against the powers that mistreated them and those before them.

3/13/21: Got my first dose of the Pfizer vaccine

I was lucky enough to get my Pfizer vaccine somewhat early in the distribution. Luckily no side effects except a sore arm for the rest of the day!

3/16/21: Atlanta Nail Salon Shootings

For a year that was supposed to be all about new beginnings and restoring peace in the country, it was absolutely devastating to see the news of the shooting at the Atlanta nail salon in which Asian women were targeted. This country is so full of hatred and violence, it is so exhausting.

April 2021

4/6/21: Got my second dose of the Pfizer vaccine

Getting my second dose of the Pfizer vaccine was exciting because it meant I was one step closer to being fully vaccinated and many of my fears with COVID would be put at ease. I will admit though, the side effects this time around weren't as easy. However, being sick for a few days was definitely worth it in the end.

4/11/21: Went to SoulCycle for the first time in a year

SoulCycle has been an important part of my life for the past couple of years. It is a healing practice for me, and something that keeps me calm and grounded. Getting to return to the studio made me feel like I was a part of that community again and got to be in a space that is so welcoming and fun.

4/20/21: Derek Chauvin is convicted for the murder of George Floyd

Genuinely, this is a day I will never forget. I was driving in my car with my phone propped up waiting for news of the trial verdict. However, my phone died whilst still in the car so I remember pulling up the first radio station I could find to ensure I wouldn't miss anything. When the verdict was announced, I just couldn't stop crying. Crying happy tears because justice was served, but also sad tears knowing that George Floyd could and should still be with us today.

4/23/21: Totaled my car

Losing your main form of transportation is hard, especially since I have been working a full-time job. I was okay, but unfortunately my car was not. It was stressful trying to figure out how I would pay for the damage and such, but it eventually was the best decision to get rid of the car.

4/27/21: Assisted in producing a live television show

For my final in one of my classes, we had to create a talk show from the ground up and present it as if it were a true live television show. While this was merely a final for a class, it was so rewarding to get to be in the studio and get to learn the ins and outs of what it takes to be a television producer.

May 2021

5/2/21: Spent a week at a Wisconsin cabin with my best friends

Instead of a Spring Break this year, Columbia gave us a "Maker's Week" and what better way to spend that week than in a beautiful cabin in Wisconsin with my closest friends? I am not the biggest "nature girl", so being in the middle of nowhere took a little bit of getting used to, but it was definitely a great way to unwind from an otherwise stressful school year.

5/10/21: Wrote and directed my first short film

For one of my classes this previous semester, the final project was to create a short film from the ground up essentially. This was a huge task for me to take on, but I ended up being very proud of the work that I did, and it was well received by my professor and my peers. It was a project that really solidified that I made the right choice in changing my major.

5/25/21: Mask mandate lifted at my job

I had started working at my job at a time when we all still had to wear masks, rightfully so. When the mandate was lifted it was so crazy to actually be able to see all my coworkers for seemingly the first time.

June 2021

6/20/21: My dad moved to Chicago with my siblings

My dad moving to Chicago was an unexpected surprise this year. He moved to River North with my siblings and while it was surprising, it was nice to be closer to my family and get to be more involved in my siblings' lives.

6/11/21: Chicago enters Phase 5 (Fully reopened)

Chicago fully reopening allowed for a lot more opportunity to have a real 'Chicago Summer', getting to go out with all my friends and experience everything that Chicago has to offer was a great way to start the summer.

6/12/21: Went to the movie theatre for the first time in over a year

I have always been a huge film buff and pre-pandemic went to the movies at least once a week. Getting to finally see a movie in the theatre again was exciting and I felt like some sense of normalcy had been put back in my life.

6/17/21: My dad was hospitalized after testing positive for COVID

My dad is a very healthy person, however hearing that he was hospitalized due to COVID was a scary time. He was stable throughout his hospitalization, yet it was still scary knowing that something bad could happen to him. Luckily, he recovered quickly and was able to leave the hospital after a short stay.

6/23/21: Growing concern of the Delta Variant of COVID

Discovering that new variants of COVID were being discovered sadly wasn't that surprising. There are too many people who still just do not care about the public safety of themselves and others. Hopefully we can reach a point where everyone understands the gravity of this pandemic and will to their part to help it come to an end.

July 2021

7/1/21: My younger siblings were able to get their COVID vaccines

I have four siblings ranging in age from 11-19. Luckily my two brothers were able to get their COVID vaccines which put me at ease knowing that they are safe and healthy, especially now that they are living in a big city like Chicago.

7/13/21: Went to a family reunion

I was able to get to see so many of my family members that I haven't been able to see in a year, some even longer than that. On my mom's side of the family, we did experience some unexpected death in the family and so it was great to celebrate life and see people I love.

7/23/21: 2021 Olympics begin in Tokyo

The Olympics were held this year in Tokyo. Lasting a total of 17 days, it was quite honestly surprising to see such a large-scale event being held yet it was still enjoyable to watch.

7/29/21: Attended my first concert since COVID began

As controversial as it may be, I did attend Lollapalooza this year. I purchased the tickets at a time when I thought it was going to be a COVID safe event, however as we have seen that wasn't necessarily the case. Doing my absolute best to follow as many safety precautions as possible, I was able to have a great time and get to see some of my favorite artists. (And of course, isolated and got tested afterwards!)

August 2021

8/1/21: Signed a lease on a new apartment in Wrigleyville

Another year, another apartment! My roommates and I signed a lease on a new apartment a little further north from where we live in Lincoln Park now. We haven't moved yet, but I am looking forward to spending my last year in Chicago before moving to New York in an area surrounded by all my favorite people and places.

8/5/21: Mask mandate is on the path to returning

Somehow it feels like we are back to square one. I have hope that things will change, and it will take a lot to hold on to that hope. I am doing my part so that we can get out of this pandemic, and I know many others are too.