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Capturing Quarantine: Student Pandemic Experience Journal

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Personal Pandemic Timeline

1. March 2020
 - a. March 6th: Missing Unofficial with my friends because I had to work, last big outing of the year
 - b. March 14th: My brother came home to celebrate my mom's birthday... and ended up staying until August
 - c. March 15: show up for my brunch shift at the restaurant, find out I wasn't needed and went back home, a couple hours later we find out that the Governor ordered all bars and restaurants to close dine-in operations. Just like that, I was done working until June. As things were still not feeling extremely serious, my two oldest best friends and I had a multi-day sleepover before one headed back home to New York. We just hung out, played games, watched Bollywood movies, and went out by the lake in the middle of the night; it was really reminiscent of when we were in middle school because from high school, onwards, we haven't been able to spend that kind of time together with none of us having anything to do or anywhere to go
 - d. March 17th: voted in the primaries
2. April 2020
 - a. April 14th: did a zoom call celebrating the class of 2020 seniors from my business fraternity at my former college. As these are the people I would've graduated with and this was something that I would've been involved in, it was emotional for me but I wanted to join to celebrate my people. What we would always do is go through each and every person and they give their advice to all of the underclassmen in the fraternity. Considering I was not graduating, didn't go to the school anymore, and hadn't had the best or most successful time in college so far, I did not expect for my name to be called, I was simply just there to listen and see everyone, but they called my name and asked me to say something too. It was a special moment for me because, despite the academic moments at IU bringing me to my lowest point, the social aspect of IU, aka the community that I surrounded myself with, has provided me with some of my best friends and best memories. To be included, despite all my struggles, was so special and heartwarming, because no matter what, I'll always be a member of the Class of 2020.
 - b. April 18th: Did a zoom call with my extended family. Despite many of us not having seen each other in a couple years (aka a couple years worth of opportunities to set up zoom calls), COVID and quarantine was the little push that we needed to finally make it happen.
3. May 2020
 - a. May 13th: Got my columbia acceptance email
 - b. May 14th: Zoom call with some of my closest friends from IU to celebrate their official graduation

- c. May 23rd: What would've been my flight to Colombia with my 2 best friends had they not closed the borders until May 31st (and obviously longer, but at the time things still felt temporary)
 - d. May 26th: Started my internship with CIOGC
 - e. May 23rd: Eid, got dressed up and put on makeup for the first time in quarantine, had family over for dinner (everyone lives within 15 minutes of each other so throughout the pandemic, we kept our circle/covid bubble to just us that way we could continue seeing each other.
 - f. May 27: With the charging of the murders of Ahmaud Arbery on May 7th and the murder of George Floyd, plus the murder of Breonna Taylor in March, conversations about black lives matter are really picking up again and my friend makes a post saying “she dislikes reading the news and reading negative political stuff because most of the time it will not affect [her]. [...] I like remaining ignorant and as apolitical as possible. [...] I pay attention to the important things on the news that might affect me and that’s it.” This really upset me and came across as SO insensitive to the conversations that were happening on social media at the time, so this was the beginning of quite a few long conversations about her understanding her privilege as a white woman who is able to simply look away when injustice and murder is happening because it will never affect her personally.
 - g. May 29th: Open air dining starts operating so I am able to see two of my best friends for the first time in person since March
4. June 2020
- a. June 1st-June 2nd: A peaceful BLM protest in Naperville was overrun by people who traveled in from different towns to start looting the downtown area. After trying to stop an altercation between a group of men and a child, a boy from my high school graduating class, Jai, was stabbed. Witnesses specifically told the police that they witnessed “a young black man get stabbed because he was trying to keep the peach by telling a group of looters to stop”. Despite clear eyewitness accounts, in their official statement, the Naperville Police Department stated “one individual participating in the unlawful protest suffered a stab wound from another protester. This case is under investigation. Businesses in other parts of the city were also burglarized and vandalized.” This started a whole campaign on social media from people around Naperville, especially people from my high school, that resulted in Jai’s hospital bills being paid through a Gofundme and the NPD releasing another statement clearing Jai’s name.
 - b. June 10th: First shift back working at the restaurant. Being the person that had to take temperatures and ask people to wear masks was really stressful and caused a lot of interactions that probably would have made me cry 6 months earlier.
 - c. June 17th: Chopped off 11 inches of my hair
5. July 2020
- a. July 11th: last shift at Santo Cielo
 - b. July 18th: Road trip to Michigan with my family
 - c. July 29th: Beginning the process of designing the Shapiro+Raj office

6. August 2020
 - a. August 11th: Finished my internship with CIOGC, the final result was bringing together 31 masjid's from all over Chicagoland and challenging them to help their communities during one of the craziest times we have lived through. To accomplish that while being 100% virtual was really cool.
 - b. August 24th: My former "friend" who was a fairly big creator on Tik Tok with over 700,000 followers, went on an Islamophobic rant on a Tik Tok live and then doubled down on it in multiple videos and in the comments of those videos. Being someone who is Muslim and knew him personally as a former roommate and "friend", I decided to text him trying to have a conversation about his generalizations, ignorance, and blatant Islamophobia. That led to a stressful couple of days trying to talk to him while watching everything happen very publicly on Tik Tok, and resulted with me cutting off contact with him and him losing sponsorships he had gained through Tik Tok. His following also took a large hit, so he left the platform for a couple days before returning with an apology video, though there was no private apology or any contact at all directed towards me.
 - c. August 28th: Attended my first virtual wedding for one of my best friend's older sister.
7. September 2020
 - a. September 8th: Started at Columbia
 - b. September 22nd: My first in-person class at Columbia
 - c. September 29th: Debate night
8. October 2020
 - a. October 11th: Went apple picking with my family for the first time ever and finally got to try the apple cider donuts everyone always raves about
 - b. October 23rd: One of my best friends released her first ever single titled "Scared"
 - c. October 30th: Visited the Shapiro+Raj new office for the first time to see how building is going and to make some more design decisions
9. November 2020
 - a. November 3rd: Election day, I voted through my absentee ballot but I was able to visit the polling site a couple times throughout the day because my mom was working as a poll volunteer
 - b. November 7th: After legitimately watching nothing but the election coverage nonstop for days, I left the house to get my emissions test done, and while at the testing place, the official call of Joe Biden's victory was announced. That night my family and I went to the city to see the crowds and celebrate and then watched the speech at my aunt's house.
 - c. November 9th: Came across a number of Islamophobic tweets on my friend's new boyfriend's Twitter. Once again, days of stress followed as I had to confront whether to tell my friend about them or not. I ended up talking to her about it (and him inadvertently after she shared my messages with him and she sent his responses), and while he was fairly patronizing, dismissive, and unapologetic in his response, my friend heard me out, I said what I had to say, and I moved on.

They are still together but the rest of the friend group and I have yet to meet him and she doesn't really bring him up in conversations, so I rarely ever think about him or the situation, though it was extremely stressful at the time (I would say even more so than with my tik tok famous "friend").

- d. November 14th: Another Zoom call with my entire extended family, making it so that despite COVID (or maybe thanks to COVID), we have all seen each other more in 2020 than in the past few years.
- e. November 26th: Thanksgiving 2020, with a bunch of negative covid tests, we were able to have all of our family over for thanksgiving dinner just like every other year. It's my favorite holiday because my birthday is always right around then so I always get to celebrate with my family.

10. December 2020

- a. December 5th: A weekend late, but I finally got to celebrate my birthday with a few of my friends and one even drove up from Uofl to be there.
- b. December 25th: Drove around to see Christmas lights with my family, celebrated my grandma's 75th birthday, and opened presents for the first time in many years (we usually travel over Christmas and New Years so we don't put up a tree and do presents unless we are home).
- c. December 29th: Braved the snow storm and went out to see the zoo lights at Brookfield Zoo. It was basically a blizzard, so it was extremely empty compared to all the other nights, which made for a really fun, unique, and cold night out with my parents.

11. January 2021

- a. January 1st: Celebrating New Years with Liz in her basement, just a chill night watching movies
- b. January 4th: My mom works as an office administrator at my aunt and uncle's pediatric therapy clinic, so she was a part of the first group eligible for the vaccine. She got her first shot on the 4th, but was hesitant to tell people because she felt guilty since she wasn't an actual healthcare worker. In our extended family Whatsapp, there was a little bit of tension when my mom's cousin, who is a doctor, made a comment something along the lines of "even people at her clinic aren't vaccinated yet, but that's great for you". My mom felt guilty but everyone in our immediate family told her not to, because she does work in a healthcare practice and has to go into work and interact with people. At the end of the day, if you have the opportunity to get it, why not take it.
- c. January 6th: The insurrection... we all know what happened that day and how barely any of the perpetrators are paying for it. A certain group of people refuse to accept responsibility for what happened so it is still being investigated and discussed.
- d. January 14th: FINALLY got a refund for my trip to Colombia that was supposed to happen May 2020.
- e. January 24th: Went skiing with my brother, aunts, uncles, and cousins. While masks were required everywhere, there were a fair amount of people out there. I

guess it works out perfectly when your face is already covered with multiple layers to protect you from the cold.

12. February 2021

- a. February 1st: One of my best friends of 11 years was finally free from a toxic parental situation. After years of watching her struggle and having to deal much more than anyone her age should've had to, all college/court ordered payments were complete so she never again has to have any contact with that person again. It was such a moment of celebration because we all have been anxiously awaiting this day for years.
- b. February 5th: One of the many days I ranted to my friends about a project I was doing for a competition class here at Columbia. Not only was the amount of work within the 5 weeks extremely overwhelming, I was stuck working with two 35+ year old men who both used their gender and age to constantly undermine me and disregard me. I felt like I was stuck doing the majority of work for an idea that I didn't believe in, but overall I think it was an incredibly important learning experience and ended up turning out okay. Thankfully we did well, but not well enough to advance to the next round, so I didn't have to work with them past the half semester class.
- c. February 6th: Finally got to hang out with my friends from high school! All 5 of us hadn't seen each other since before the pandemic so that was really exciting.

13. March 2021

- a. March 17th: Amongst the rise in hate crimes against East and South-East Asian Americans, my good friend Grace posted about how she was verbally harassed in our former college town while out on a run. The attacks in general, of course, are extremely upsetting and infuriating, but it takes it to a whole other level when someone you personally know and care about is verbally attacked solely because of their race.
- b. March 25th: I was able to get my first dose of my vaccine which was really exciting. I don't know how, but I knew so many people who were able to get their doses by finding unclaimed appointments, because of that I started searching like a crazy person, and then one day, on a website that showed different places with appointments available, I was able to find one!

14. April 2021

- a. April 2nd: I went to my first larger gathering since the pandemic started. It was for my friend's birthday and it was a group of 30ish of us, majority of whom had gotten either one or both of their doses! It was definitely good to see everyone after so long and I think it was a nice entry event to get back into it!
- b. April 9th: I actually forgot about this until now. This was one of the last times that I worked on a little pandemic project of mine (because I've gotten so busy with summer school). For some reason, at the very beginning of the pandemic, I was inspired to make a full family tree of all the descendants of Queen Victoria. It is absolutely crazy and serves no purpose, but I actually was having a lot of fun reading the biographies of all these random royals.

- c. April 20th: Watching the trial verdict of Derek Chauvin was a big moment, it felt like so much had built up to that moment and there was so much uncertainty, that when the verdict was finally read, it was a good moment for justice.
- d. April 22nd: Got my second dose of the vaccine. About 2-3 hours after my shot, I headed out with my friends on a 4.5 hour road trip to our former college town. I was really nervous because I knew multiple people who felt pretty sick afterwards, so I planned ahead and brought different remedies for myself. Surprisingly I felt fairly normal and was able to have a great weekend with my friends. I definitely got super lucky with my reaction, or lack thereof.

15. May 2021

- a. May 12th: Sadly had to miss Eid celebrations because I had two final presentations that day. I think it might have been the first Eid that I've ever had to fully miss the entire day, but that's the reality of not having your religious holidays recognized by the government. Hopefully this won't happen next year!
- b. May 16th: Attended a Free Palestine rally in Chicago to protest the rise in violence against them.

16. June 2021

- a. June 5th: The start of many wedding events of the summer. I had my friend's bridal shower and was able to reunite with some girls who I have known since I was really young, but have lost touch with over the years. This was a wedding that got rescheduled from Summer 2020, so I was quite literally looking forward to this for over a year!
- b. June 12th: Taking 4 summer classes really made sure that I had absolutely zero time in the week to do or experience anything, so the big moments of my June consisted of wedding events. This was the second event called the Dholki and it was basically a celebratory event put on by the bride's mother's friends (my mom included) and consisted of really good food and dancing. After a year of having nowhere to go, it was really nice to dress up for all these events.
- c. June 19th: Wedding event #3 was the Manja, which is a more traditional ceremony hosted at the bride's house. This one was really fun to attend because in the days before, the other girls and I went to their house to help decorate the basement. We spent hours making it perfect so it was really cool to see our hard work pay off.

17. July 2021

- a. July 2nd-4th: All the events led up to this weekend. Not only did we have my friend's wedding that we had been attending all the events for, but we also had another wedding for my mom's other good friend's son. It was an absolutely crazy weekend filled with a lot of love and a lot of fun. It was so nice to see so many people I haven't seen in years and it was really nice to be able to get together with so many people after a year like last year.
- b. July 10th: For the first time since February, my high school friend group and I were able to all get together to celebrate some birthdays that have happened in the past couple months!

- c. July 15-17: Wedding #3 of the summer, feeling completely back to normal with how busy it has been. It was one of my best friend's older sister's wedding and this one was pretty special because not only did it get delayed from last year, but as a family, they have lost multiple people to COVID, so to be able to get together and celebrate, safely with an 100% vaccinated wedding, was really special.
- d. July 22: Health issues making the end of the semester difficult, % classes finishing now, with one more to go.