



TRANSCRIPTION
Honors Oral History – Capturing Quarantine: Student Life in a Pandemic
April 2020
INTERVIEW with RYAN POLLOCK
By: Chan Woo Kim

Chan Woo Kim: Hello. The title of this project will be Capturing Quarantine. My name is Kim Chan Woo and I will be the interview for this project. And I will be conducting an interview with —Please state your full name and location.

Ryan Pollock: Ryan Pollock. South loop of Chicago, Illinois.

CWK: I am at the South loop of Chicago too. And today is April 2020. This interview is for the Honors Oral History in Columbia College Chicago. This interview is part of the Columbia College Chicago Archive and Honors Oral History 2020. Please state your job title.

RP: Producer at WGN Radio.

CWK: What year did you get involved?

RP: At WGN, it was just last year in 2019.

CWK: What's the primary location of employment held at?

RP: Chicago, Illinois, in the loop.

CWK: Thank you so much for being here and agreeing to do an interview with me. Why did you agree to do an interview for this project?

RP: Because I think it'll be important to document life in quarantine in 2020 for the Coronavirus, and we think it'll be something that's valuable for people to look back on one day.

CWK: For sure, for sure. Um, where did you—where were you born and raised?

RP: I was born and raised in Jefferson City, Missouri.

CWK: And when were you born?

RP: 1998.

CWK: Alright, so describe the community you grew up in.

RP: Uh, the community I grew up in was—I grew up outside of Jefferson City, Missouri. So it was a small town of New Bloomfield, and—kind of like a farm town, kind of small town population 600. But, my parents are from Chicago. So, it was kind of this mixed feeling of growing up in a small town community, but having parents that raised you—telling you the stories of the big city

and growing up in a big city like Chicago. Um, the community I grew up in was really close. Everybody knew each other even in Jefferson City, population 45,000 and still relatively pretty small. So, everybody knew the big last names of the city. You know, there were last names that everybody kind of knew. So, having the last name like Pollock, we really weren't an insider to Missouri, but close community, everybody looked out for everybody and, and knew the local news.

CWK: So what is your mother and father's name? What year were they born and the place of their birth?

RP: My mother's name is Deeann Pollock. She was born in Chicago here. And she was born in 1971. And then my father's name is William Pollock, and he was born in 1971 in Chicago as well.

CWK: Which high school did you attend? And what year did you attend high school?

RP: I attended Helias Catholic High School from 2012 to 2016.

CWK: Describe your high school experiences.

RP: Uh, it was fun. I enjoyed high school. I wasn't—popular kid but I was well liked. I never caused trouble or did anything like that in school. I enjoyed high school. I tried to be as outgoing as possible. I played tennis for four years. I was in band. I was in show choir. And I was in the band for that, the pit band. Yeah, I just tried to do as much as possible. Overall I got average grades and, you know, just skip it through didn't, didn't do anything to cause too much cluster.

CWK: So, what was your interest or passion when you're in high school?

RP: My interest was music, but—at the beginning of high school, I didn't know what -- how sustainable that would be as a career down the down the road. So, I didn't know exactly what I wanted to do for the beginning of my time in high school. Uh, growing up in a small town, certainly, people don't look at music as a sustainable career choice. So, my parents were always supportive of me. But yeah, music was, was primarily my, my interest.

CWK: So, why did you decide to become a music composer?

RP: Uh, It's good question. Um, I think because I didn't know what else I was going to do. I mean, I just that was my passion. And I couldn't see myself going to school for anything else. I certainly didn't want to go for anything, not creative or in a creative field. So, I think, just, couldn't think of anything else I wanted to do. And really, that was a big passion.

CWK: So, which college did you attend before Columbia.

RP: I attended McNally Smith College of Music in St. Paul, Minnesota, for—two years before it closed down in December of 2017.

CWK: So, what was your expectation when you graduate from high school?

93 RP: My expectation was—go to school, start a band, try to, you know, play as many shows as
94 possible with that band, record as many songs with that band. Um, that's kind of what I expected
95 to go into college and really learn, really learn music too. I didn't expect to go in and, you know,
96 just go to basically rock camp. I knew that there'd be a lot of work in college or that I'd have to do
97 and that was kind of my expectation. The other thing too, that I told myself before I went to school
98 was, all right you going into music this is something that when you tell people in mid Missouri,
99 I'm going to school for me music that kind of weary of that. So, my expectation of myself was I
100 was going to push myself to the extreme and go all out.

101
102 CWK: So, what made you transfer and study at Columbia? There's a bunch of other colleges too.

103
104 RP: Yeah, well—I guess, you know, being forced out of a school that was really my dream school
105 and I really made a lot of friends and good connections in St. Paul, I took a semester off and I
106 didn't know where I wanted to go. I looked at a lot of different things. I looked at Germany as an
107 option and studying overseas in Europe. But, my dad went to Columbia, back in the early early
108 90s for radio and, so I knew of the school. I toured the school in high school and was a backup
109 choice to me. I liked my other school in St. Paul. I liked the school that is a little bit smaller. And
110 so I knew of Columbia. I knew of Chicago. I have family here. So, I think that that was ultimately
111 the deciding factors.

112
113 CWK: Describe your life experience days before the Coronavirus pandemic happened.

114
115 RP: Here at Columbia?

116
117 CWK: Yep.

118
119 RP: Um, It was busy. School, like, you know got to go to class. I never miss any of those. So, go
120 to class every day, but I also work at the radio station as director of content here on campus. And,
121 so I'll go in every day for that, but that's really nice because—

122
123 Closed Captioner: Wait. Stop. Sorry.

124
125 RP: That's okay.

126
127 CC: I'm sorry to make you repeat that, but can you repeat that again?

128
129 RP: Yeah. Just my answer?

130
131 CC: Yes.

132
133 RP: So—I went to class every day, I don't, I don't miss any of my classes. So, typical day would
134 be going to class and then I also work as the director of content here on our campus radio station
135 WCRX, so I'll go in for a few hours of that every day before Coronavirus, and I'd have a show on
136 Wednesday nights, so it was you know, pretty mixed day as to what I was doing. My schedule is
137 never set every day.

138

139 CWK: So, when and where you did hear first heard about Coronavirus?
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141 RP: I think I first heard about Coronavirus at WGN where I worked as where I work as a producer.
142 And—yeah, I think I heard about it but it was so far out of my mind that didn't really pay attention
143 too much. You know, when you hear about this breakout of like 700 people in China you don't—
144 you don't think much about it. And yeah, yeah, WGN radio.
145
146 CWK: So, what were your news sources?
147
148 RP: Ah, my news sources, initially when it came out I think was just at work because it wasn't a
149 big story that I didn't really look into it too much. So, I go to work and hear about it, talk about it.
150 But, as it began to grow, my news sources really became everything. Twitter's a great place to find
151 new sources because it's so skewed on there. So then, you know, you go and back up that's
152 whatever you read on Twitter, you got to go back up and make sure you find factual—so go to
153 places like Chicago Tribune is a great one—and the, yeah, pretty much pretty much anywhere
154 really is a news source because you can't avoid the news of Coronavirus.
155
156 CWK: So, what did you know about Coronavirus at that time?
157
158 RP: Um, how early on?
159
160 CWK: Yeah, early on.
161
162 RP: Uh, I just knew that it was this disease that was taking over this one town in China in Wuhan,
163 and that was really it. I mean, they didn't really know a lot about it here or even in China very
164 much so probably knew just as much as the average Joe.
165
166 CWK: So, after Coronavirus the pandemic, how did that impact or change your life?
167
168 RP: After the breakout?
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170 CWK: Yep.
171
172 RP: Uh, well, I mean, you know, can't go to work, you can't go to school. Confined to the house
173 greatly changed the way that I think about, you know, how I have to complete my work. Um, yeah.
174
175 CWK: So, after hearing from Columbia now is closing the building, what was your reaction and
176 talks about it?
177
178 RP: Uh, I'm pretty you know what, I stayed positive on it because I thought I tried to look at the
179 bright side of things as much as I can, and there's not a lot of bright sides when it comes to a
180 pandemic. So, I tried to think about it like alright, now this is coming from somebody who went
181 to a school that shut down in the last week. Now, this is my last semester at Columbia. And, you
182 know, we're moving all on online. It's like, Is there something in the universe that's telling me I
183 shouldn't graduate from college? But, I tried to look at it like, alright, I'm gonna go home. I'll still
184 complete all the work that I did. I'll still maintain my normal schedule and as much normalcy as

possible with that. But, at first it was a little eerie. It was a little weird to to think about this, this school as shutting its doors.

CWK: What was—after hearing this announcement from college, how did it impact to your living situations?

RP: Uh, It didn't really change much. I live off campus, so I wasn't affected by any dorms closing down or anything like that. So it didn't change much for that I just I stayed more at my house. (laughs) I didn't go out much so certainly got tired of looking at the walls pretty fast. (laughs)

CWK: So, during that transition from remote, how are you able to handle it?

RP: Pretty good, I mean, I think Columbia gave us great time of like three weeks for all of the in-person classes to to switch over. So, the transfer was easy for me. Actually, I think what was probably the toughest was it was three weeks which is great time and you got to allow—Columbia enough time to transfer everything over on there and but probably the toughest part was getting going again. Um, when that three weeks was up. Because it was nice and I have two online classes. So, they all stayed, you know through those three weeks, but my other three in-person or four in-person classes. Uh, a nice break from that was it was tough to get the wheels turning again when that break was over.

CWK: Where were you at and when you learn Columbia was transitioning to remote learning?

RP: I was on the corner of Wabash and Balbo. I remember exactly where I was because our class had just ended; this music sales analysis class I was in, and it was kind of it was it's on a Thursday. And it was kind of up in the air like, well, will we see each other next week. We only met once a week. So this is you know, in the Coronavirus, things has (finger snap) change like that. So a week seemed like an eternity away and you know, our teacher said, we probably won't be together. I don't know. So, I just left this class and got right there. I was talking to my mom on the phone. Feel my phone buzzed. It looked down on my email. And sure enough, there it is, you know, we're gonna transfer to online classes.

CWK: What's your initial thoughts about right after hearing the Columbia announcing that all in-person has transitioned to online classes?

RP: Yeah, it kind of, it's kind of like a snow day where all of the other schools in your area are closing down, they're closing down, they're closing down. You're just waiting for, you know, your school's name to pop up there at the bottom of the screen. So, I was expecting it to come so I wasn't shocked when it happened. Um, but, you know, I read there's a lengthy email that they sent out and going through that thing, there's a mixed reactions about of, you know, what am I going to miss out on. How is this going to be different? But, like I said before, I tried to maintain a positive attitude towards the whole thing.

CWK: Describe your experience for Zoom classes against in-person classes.

230 RP: Yeah, well—I'm a music composition major. So music is very, very personal, especially when
231 you're learning this stuff. And it takes a lot of, how do I say, it takes a lot of emotion right and and
232 very like fine details that don't always get transferred over on a screen. So, this class I'm in of
233 music styles and analysis will perform a solo every week for the class. And now we just prerecord
234 our solos and upload them to online, so everybody can view them. So there's not as much of an
235 emotional connection when you do that. I just press record, I play to myself and my screen, press
236 stop and I upload it. Um, so that's a big change for a musician. But, also in the positive side of that
237 or the positive way to look at it is it's given me more time to really sync into the classes that I'm
238 in. I feel like with online and trying to maintain a steady or a consistent schedule, I've been able to
239 really dive into the work that my teachers have given me, instead of just having the class for, you
240 know, three hours and then leaving, I can kind of—they've been uploading more information. So
241 that gives me more time to kind of digest it at my own pace.

242

243 CWK: So, how are you and your professor communicating?

244

245 RP: Email, Canvas typical ways that we would have.

246

247 CWK: Do you believe remote online class are qualitatively equal to in person Class? If not and
248 why?

249

250 RP: No, I mean, they're not going to be completely equal because there's always going to be some
251 degree of you know, something that's left out. Uh, in person classes, you certainly get more of a
252 personal connection with the teacher. They're right in front of you. The screen is tougher. You go
253 to some classes, people always have their screen muted. You know, it's like are they even there?
254 Um, so it's it's different. There's certainly aspects of it that are lost. But, I think, given the
255 circumstances, I think Zoom and the way the classes have been running, is it's pretty remarkable
256 how smooth everything has been able to carry out.

257

258 CWK: So, how did Coronavirus pandemic affect your learning environment? Was it hard to focus
259 or do classwork in your house environment?

260

261 RP: Yeah, it is tough (laughs) to focus. Um, like I said that the trade off with kind of going at my
262 own pace and being able to sync in is that I also am surrounded by constant work, right. So like I
263 can work on other things when you're sitting in class there's not much to work on. You can't go on
264 your laptop during class. You can't go on your phone. Just sit there pay attention. So it forces you
265 to focus on that one thing, but when you're home, and you're trying to work on something, there's
266 a lot of distractions. You know, I can be texting with somebody, work emails pop up constantly so
267 it's kind of a weird dynamic. That's why I could never do online classes. If I had the choice of an
268 online or in person I would always choose in person.

269

270 CWK: So, how does it affect the creative work?

271

272 RP: Creatively—being in quarantine or classwork?

273

274 CWK: Like classwork.

275

276 RP: Um, I guess there's probably a little bit more room to be creative because I feel like some of
277 the responses that we've had in, especially in our, our in our oral history class, she'll put prompts
278 up and then you have more time to decide and so I have more attempts to reply and think of a more
279 creative response. Instead of in class these prompts pop up and you basically have a couple minutes
280 to decide what you're going to think and then throw it up there, but online classes have kind of
281 allowed me the more time to be more creative with my responses and to kind of dig into the class
282 a little bit more that way.

283
284 CWK: Interesting. So, did the Coronavirus pandemic lose your motivation on learning experiences
285 and doing assignments?

286
287 RP: Um, no, I don't think so. Not much. It didn't lose the motivation. Like I said, the only thing is
288 that it does pull me away. Other distractions will pull me away. So, I don't know. Maybe that's
289 actually more of a motivation because I know I constantly have these things distracting me and so
290 I have to really stay focused. So, maybe that's more motivating then. I'm not sure I still feel I get
291 all the work done. I still do everything on time needs to be turned in.

292
293 CWK: Interesting. What's your thoughts about Columbia announced that the student have the
294 option to choose pass or fail in their course?

295
296 RP: I thought that was those good given the circumstances of everything. Certainly, you know, I
297 could have easily have seen, I thought it was generous, it was generous. They didn't have to do
298 that. Um, I think that everybody kind of was given enough time to adjust to their new learning
299 environments. So, uh, they certainly could have been getting the grades that they should have been
300 getting. So, I thought that was generous of them.

301
302 CWK: What were the misconception about pass or fail grades?

303
304 RP: I think misconception about it might be that you're just trying to skate through doing the most
305 minimum amount of work possible, just to get through. So you're like, well, I'll just take this as a
306 pass or fail, then I don't have to let it affect my GPA and my—you can just kind of do the work
307 you need to do to pass and then that's it, and then it's not really reflected as a grade.

308
309 CWK: So, did you choose the pass or pass/fail in your courses and why?

310
311 RP: I didn't choose pass/fail on any of them. Because I still do the work that I have to do. And I
312 looked at it that, you know, if I was completing this work without a pandemic, I'd still be traveling.
313 I teach guitar lessons. That's my other source of income. And that takes up a lot of time on the
314 train. I don't have a car down here. So, that's a lot of time on the train, sometimes, you know, an
315 hour to two hours a day. Can't really do a lot of homework on the train, when you're traveling
316 around, so I kind of thought of it as you know, I shouldn't use that as a crutch. I should actually
317 have more time to get this stuff done. And—I want it to be—I think that I'll still get—the grades
318 that will reflect positively on my GPA and not have a negative impact on them.

319
320 CWK: So, do you think that Columbia is providing high quality education, whether the student is
321 remote or in person?

RP: Yeah, I think they are. I think they're providing the highest quality of education you can get, given the circumstances that they're not built for this. That they're not fundamentally built to be an online institution. I think that they, they jumped over fast and I really, yeah, I think that they deserve a lot of credit for the work that they've done.

CWK: Describe your thoughts about Columbia deciding not to refund half of tuition fees among to the students.

RP: Well, you're still getting the education that they that they initially said you would get. And I talked to one teacher who said early on, like, within the first couple days, we were supposed to be all online. And he said, actually, I take that back. It was the first week of the three weeks that we are going to be taking a break. And he told me, um, he's like, don't worry, all of your stuff will count. But just know we're doing a lot of work behind the scenes to make sure that we can get all of this stuff transferred over because the accreditation that they had to go to change all of these classes from in person to online was pretty extensive from what he had said. And so I think that we're still getting the same the same degrees, we're still getting the same credits. It's not Columbia's fault that we have a pandemic that had just switched to online. In fact, if we would be still in school, or if they worked up until the time where the governor ordered the stay at home, I think people would have been complaining saying let us go home. Let us go home. There's a pandemic I don't want to get sick. And that would kind of be the devil's advocate side to that, so I don't think you can blame them. I also, I think, you know, as high as tuition is that's another topic, but as high as tuition is—yeah. I'll leave it at that. We're getting the product we paid for.

CWK: So, how the Coronavirus pandemic affects your lifestyle and your finance?

RP: Uh, It affects my lifestyle because I gotta go to the store once a week stock up instead of every day. I changed my lifestyle in that aspect. I sort of just go to the store when I need to go. Um, financially there hasn't been much. I've been thankful that I employed through the school. I still get to work that job and carry out my duties as director of content at the school's radio station. Even at WGN they're considered an essential business. All of my guitar lessons are moved online. Thankfully, all of my students, all 10 of them agreed to go over FaceTime or another means of communication only, so it hasn't affected me financially, but I certainly understand how it has for a lot of Americans and people around the world.

CWK: Describe your current work employment on campus and off campus.

RP: Yeah, on campus, like I said, Director of Content at WCRX. So, that means trying to create new shows put new content out there that is going to be enjoyable for people in in our school, but also just in Chicago and all around the world where we're streamable online. So, that's a lot of fun. I also do a show on Sundays called, Podcast Broadcasts, which features local Chicago musicians as well as my own show on Wednesday nights where I interview local artists and kind of have a roundtable discussion about their music. At WGN, I produce for Dean Richards. He's a local entertainment critic and reporter at WGN TV as well. Then, he has a show on Sunday mornings on radio side so I helped him plan. We plan the show throughout the week and get it all ready scheduled, the guests. Call the people up for the show you know now everything's over the phone.

There's no in-person interviews that we have in studio and I screen phone calls too, for people that want to call in and talk, play audio, that kind of stuff; produce the show.

CWK: So, how does Coronavirus pandemic affected your work employment in campus and off campus?

RP: Off campus or on campus, I run everything from my apartment so, um, I send all of the content that I want uploaded to the station to my boss, and he does that. That's not been affected too much, as far as that goes when it comes to my show and running that, I do interviews over Zoom and Skype and then send him those videos. We put those on our Facebook page, and then the audio we put on radio. At WGN, not much has been changed other than there's less people around the office because they've done a great job of cutting down on the number of people, foot traffic coming in and out of the building. Um, How it's been affected, there is it's just constantly Coronavirus talk. I mean, that's all it is. People want to people want to know. We have doctors on all the time, very smart doctors from Northwestern. And people call in and we'll have these doctors on for 30, 45 minutes and get a flood of calls. People asking, Can I do this? Can I do this? What do you think of this? And, so yeah, it's it's pretty intense. It has definitely changed the dynamic of what of what a radio station is. And you can really see how important our jobs are in radio, to be the ones to spread the news and to get the message out there.

CWK: Describe how you are able to go to WGN radio station during the pandemic situation.

RP: Why am I able to go there?

CWK: Uh-huh.

RP: For what I said before it's essentially people got hear the news and I think, no media outlet should be deemed non-essential because then you start to get into freedom of speech and shutting down the media outlets. But, yeah, for the new, this is the most, this is the time where this is why radio TV, those things exist, and that keeps people connected in a time when people can't keep physically connected.

CWK: Um, so, describe how you are able to deal with your work against with the Coronavirus pandemic? Focus on that.

RP: Yeah, schedules. So I can get up at the same time every day, even though I'm in a pandemic. I know that's a big misconception of college students. And I'm sure if you probably picked me off the street, you think that I was sleeping and stuff. That's a common thing with college students. But I try to, I try to keep a schedule of getting up at the same time every day, putting on clothes that I would put on if I was going into public, trying to do those things to keep myself motivated like that. And I think that's been a couple of the biggest things that have kept me on track is just trying to maintain some normalcy in the time of not so normal events.

CWK: So, how does working home affect your psychological health?

413 RP: Um, not much different. I still do everything that I have to do for the day. There's certainly
414 times where you like, boy, this is a time that I wish I had a yard or something I could go outside
415 and sit out there for an extended period of time. I don't have a balcony in my apartment, don't have
416 anything that I can just sit outside and enjoy it. So, that's the, I guess that's been kind of the thing
417 is sometimes you feel like I want to get out and I want to do something. You know, my girlfriend
418 and I we've been staying together during this whole thing. So we go for, you know, long walks
419 and stuff. But, that might be the biggest thing that I miss is just the human interaction. But from
420 a mental health standpoint, I've been staying, trying to stay as same as possible.

421
422 CWK: How do you facilitate highly complex or emotional charged conversations when people do
423 not face to face during the work?

424
425 RP: Can you repeat that again? You broke up—

426
427 CWK: For sure. How do you facilitate highly complex or emotionally charged conversation when
428 people do not face to face during work?

429
430 RP: Yeah, I don't know, I think I guess there's a certain part of the emotional aspect that's kind of
431 taken away. Um, you know, I think when you see somebody in around the office who's dressed
432 very nicely, and they, the way that they carry themselves, you tend to look up to them more, right?

433
434 CWK: Mm hmm.

435
436 RP: And those are kind of like emotional, subtle emotional things that you get around the office
437 and you don't really get around Zoom. And just the way people carry themselves and the way
438 people walk and the way that they gesture with their with their hands, look I'm talking with my
439 hands right now. I think that's the stuff that you miss out on, on Zoom.

440
441 CWK: During your work in WGN Radio Station, what was the most frequent news you ever heard?

442
443 RP: Most frequent news about Coronavirus?

444
445 CWK: Yes.

446
447 RP: Masks are big one. Should we wear masks? Should we not wear masks? What is a mask?
448 What isn't a mask? I never thought that there'd be so many topics about masks. That might be the
449 thing that everybody wanted to talk about at the beginning, but you know another thing too was
450 like washing your groceries when you come home from the store. And you know, should we be
451 washing our groceries? We've had people on it said you should absolutely be washing your
452 groceries and some people come in like, you don't need to wash groceries. So, that's another big
453 topic that's come about that I never thought that I'd be hearing on a radio station in 2020. But
454 masks, I think that is the biggest thing everybody was worried about.

455
456 CWK: So, describe your thoughts about America is not aware of, or taken advantage of wearing a
457 mask compared to South Korea where the most people wear a mask.

458

459 RP: Yeah—I think it was mixed opinions was the biggest thing because at first it was, the first if I
460 remember correctly, it was you don't have to wear a mask. You don't have to wear a mask. Actually,
461 a mask will do you more harm because you're just breathing into it. So, there was this sort of
462 uncertain time about the masks and then they turned around and said you should be wearing masks,
463 you should be wearing masks. From what I've heard, the masks don't do much for you. It's so you
464 don't spread it to other people, which I think is very important. So, I think probably the sooner we
465 could have been jumping on the masks better.

466
467 CWK: Describe your thoughts about how South Korea has more tests available than the US.
468

469 RP: Yeah, I don't know—if the what the what the ratio is on that population size to test size and
470 obviously the US population is larger than South Korea, so I have to look that up. But, do you
471 know the numbers at all, I don't know? I don't even know what or how much South Korea is
472 testing?

473
474 CWK: I heard there was more South Korea tested than US like three or four times.
475

476 RP: So it is by—okay, I mean yeah it is testing is going to have to be the thing that we do to get
477 us out, but I know that they been doing a lot of testing for the sensitive groups or the groups that
478 might be more sensitive to the Coronavirus but they been doing those in a drive-through fashion
479 right? With cars and stuff out of the suburbs of Chicago. But that certainly going to be have to be
480 something that becomes more widespread and I so think, I think we will get better testing that will
481 be more equipped as this thing goes on. I think at first it was initially such a rush and the US wasn't
482 hit as bad at first as places like South Korea and places like Italy and Spain so course they might
483 be a little bit further ahead and that. Because you don't want to start stocking up on test kits when
484 you don't have as many cases. So, yeah, it's tough. It's—I don't have to make those decisions.
485 (laughs)

486
487 CWK: Describe your thoughts about how American discriminate or violence against the Asian
488 American community due to Coronavirus which is known as Chinese virus.
489

490 RP: Yeah, um, yeah, I think it's pretty—there's no defending that at all. I mean, the virus doesn't
491 see race the virus doesn't see. It doesn't care who you are. It still affects people just as much as
492 another person. So, I think it's pretty—I don't know what the word is, it's ignorant or, you know,
493 yeah, I think it's uncalled for.

494
495 CWK: Did you ever think that you would experience something that would impact on society on
496 a global scale, the way COVID-19 has?
497

498 RP: No, I don't think so. Not in the way it has, no, I been quarantined for a month or not being able
499 to go out or, you know, Mayor Lori Lightfoot closing down the lake front. All that stuff. I think
500 the biggest thing to me that—that will sound, I don't know, I think baseball that's the thing to me
501 that is the most impactful because you're looking at this multi—these teams that make millions
502 and millions of dollars. And when it's so bad that these franchises can't play, these games generate
503 that revenue. I think that that's when it's like, wow, this is a crazy time that we're living in. So

might be a weird thing to say is it's just why I find that so fascinating. But yeah, it's certainly—I never would have thought that we'd be living like this.

CWK: So, describe your current living situation.

RP: I currently live in a studio in downtown, Chicago, like I said with my girlfriend, she has her own place. But we've been staying together during this whole thing to have some human interaction. We, you know, we travel back and forth between our apartments, but we don't want to take the train. And we don't also want to be alone or separated during this whole thing. So, we haven't taken the train once. We've just been staying here since, what it was today, the 29th of April. We've been staying here since St. Patty's Day, 17th March so over a month now. Uh, yeah, like I mentioned before, grocery shopping once a week now. Lugging everything on our backs and shoulders. Coming home with a week's worth of food, and just cleaning everything and washing our hands so much. That's been, it's been interesting.

CWK: Describe your experience of going to grocery stores during Coronavirus pandemic.

RP: Yeah, a Trader Joe's is a spot that we go and you know you got to wait in line outside line wraps around the outside of the building, everybody staying on these tape dividers that are situated six feet apart, keep social distancing. I think the scariest thing for me during the whole thing was I think it was the day that Columbia announced we would be switching to all online stuff. And I went to the store because I think we just needed dinner for that night. I wasn't looking to stock up or anything and I went in there and I had to get chicken. And I went in, this was before the line started. And the place was so busy. And shelves were so empty. And freezers, you know that the freezers that you—the deep freezers that you dig into, were, were just, you could see right to the bottom of them. And I've never, you know, we're really fortunate here in America that we get a lot of things at our disposal (finger snap), you know, anything we want for food. And it looked like scenes out of old like communist Russia or something. I mean, it was, it was alarming. It's a shopping experience, thankfully has been much better than that. They did a great job. (finger snap) All the stores of jumping on that fast only allowing a certain amount of people in at a time for social distancing, but also allow the workers to keep up with the stocking of the shelves. So, our shopping experiences is pretty easy. It's not as fun to go to the grocery store as I used to like going and picking out what I was going to get, but it's not as fun anymore.

CWK: Describe the thoughts about people buying lots of toilet paper and Clorox and other stuff.

RP: Yeah, I know. (laughs) I think at the beginning of this thing I said, if there was ever an apocalypse, I'm going to be screwed because toilet paper was not even like—I don't even know if that was my first five on my list of things that I would go to the store and rush. So apparently, I'm missing something that the rest of the population was on because I put toilet paper is out of my mind. But, I think it's just crazy. And I think it also just spreads like wildfire. If you see a picture, that just shows how connected we are on social media. You see one picture of a store where it's empty and all of a sudden creates this massive panic of, wow, there must be a toilet paper shortage, I better go get some. And even if people aren't even stocking up like the pictures you see of people with these carts, you know, piled, if everybody just starts getting a little bit more than they're used to that's still more than those companies are used to sending out shipping so it doesn't take much

550 to create that. Yeah, I think it's a little. I don't know. I think it's it's kind of crazy little uncalled for
551 to just be styling stockpiling on toilet paper like there's not going to be any more left.

552
553 CWK: What are the precautions that you're taking to protect yourself and others during the
554 Coronavirus pandemic?

555
556 RP: Washing hands constantly, trying not to touch things, trying to be—I I have never been so
557 aware of what I'm touching and what I'm not and I think I did a good job. I think knock on wood
558 and we'll see. I think I did a good job of jumping on that early and, and really being cautious about
559 what I was, what I was touching. Opening doors, I have never been so creative with how to open
560 a door or when I'm approaching the door and thinking like okay, how am I going to open this thing
561 without touching the handle of this. It's pretty funny going in revolving doors, you know, using
562 my feet or the shoulder to kind of push the thing around. When I go into work at WGN, I would
563 take up a plastic sandwich bag and cut it in half and I put my finger in it and use it for the elevator
564 to go up and then when I leave, I'd have the other half of it, use it to come down because who
565 knows how many people have been touching those elevators? So uh, yeah, I mean taking some
566 steps that are, are a little that if there wasn't a pandemic, you'd probably call me a germaphobe.
567 But, justified during a pandemic. (laughs)

568
569 CWK: Describe your thoughts and ideas on people who were germophobic compare from before
570 to today.

571
572 RP: Yeah, I'm interested to see how much we stay on this after the stay-at-home orders are lifted,
573 and people start moving on a little bit more. It's pretty hard to snap (finger snap) your mind from
574 being so cautious of taking things to just going back to what, what we were like before this whole
575 thing. And I gotta imagine, if you were a germaphobe before the pandemic, it's just that times 100.
576 I don't personally know of anybody who is a germaphobe, but I got to imagine that it would be
577 pretty crazy, pretty stressful. (laughs)

578
579 CWK: So, how would the Coronavirus pandemic affect your mental health stabilities?

580
581 RP: Um, it hasn't changed much. I still have been able to maintain a good mental health and have
582 the most of a positive outlook as possible.

583
584 CWK: So, How do you deal with feelings of depression? or What are some coping skills you use
585 to deal with the anxiety from the virus?

586
587 RP: Well, thankfully, I don't deal with—If I'm a person that's pretty tough to get down. I would
588 say, so I just try to stay as busy as possible. And always, I think I mentioned to you before, just
589 maintaining a schedule of when I eat, when I go to sleep, how I dress. Those kinds of things to
590 maintain some normalcy.

591
592 CWK: How has the pandemic changed your relationship to your parents?

593
594 RP: We talk more now. Before, I'd still—I call them every day, and I would call them every day
595 before the pandemic. Walk into class, walk into work, something like that. But now, it seems like

we talk longer on the phone, and we still talk every day. Talk to my mom, probably talk to her right after this, this interview. Talk to her on her lunch while she goes for a walk. Talk to my dad when he gets off of work. And we do family face times and stuff too. So that's been nice. Probably, probably grown closer, but we were already pretty close before this.

CWK: So, describe your house rules or family rules when it comes to Coronavirus.

RP: Yes. So, I just live with my girlfriend now. So, we've kind of established our own little, you know, rules of you come home, you wash your hands, you wash the groceries when we come home. And we leave our shoes near the door for a while, do those kinds of things. We've been we've been pretty good about that stuff. And kind of we're on the same page. So, the rules were pretty easy to kind of agree on what we were going to do.

CWK: Describe your dating experience during the pandemic.

RP: Ah, yeah, well, not much. Because, you know, I do have a girlfriend and so I guess that that's kind of been nice. I haven't had to worry about a dating experience during the pandemic. (laughs) I understand. It's probably pretty tough though for people looking to date.

CWK: How are your family surviving from Coronavirus?

RP: My family's good. My dad still goes into work. He is a -- he isn't considered essential. He's in sports news. And he does sports on the radio. So, he still goes into do that. There's not a lot of sports to talk about. But I've been surprised that the, the angles he's taken on stories and the things that I see him post online and stuff like that. It's pretty clever of the things that he's coming up with in the interviews that he's getting. Um, my mom, she works in legal work. She still goes into the office. They live in Jefferson City, Missouri where I grew up. So, the restrictions are a little different there. They're not as crazy as they are here in Chicago. And then, my sister lives in Kansas City and she goes to school there and she was working as a -- she's in early childhood development. So, she was working at a daycare as a teacher there and now she'll still babysit for people. She'll still go and babysit. But, that's pretty changed living in a bigger city. And then as far as, both my relatives are a little bit older and in that sensitive age group to Coronavirus. My aunt would take the train down from the northwest suburbs every day to work in the Willis Tower. She hasn't been doing that in over a month. She works for United so, she's been working from home. And then my uncle too, they're married. They have just been cautious about going out there. My grandmother who lives in Alabama, she's been really cautious about what she does, too.

CWK: So, I know we talked about how about affecting your financial life. So, can you describe more about how the COVID-19 impact from before and today?

RP: Um, yeah, I've been lucky to work essential jobs. So, it hasn't affected me as much as it has others. You know, I think it, knock on wood, it hasn't. I know that for people, it's a, it's a tough time for people and I and I, I hear the frustration of people who live in areas that aren't as affected by Coronavirus because Coronavirus isn't big in their community, right? It's not it's it's not the biggest thing but the biggest thing that they're feeling is the economic impact. And while I do believe that health is a priority, I also really do believe that the economy is a priority too because

you're leaving a lot of people and a lot of the middle class and lower classes who work these jobs are suffering. Trying to think of some examples; hairdressers, people working as hairdressers or barbers. Um, you know, I mean, they rely on that income and they haven't been able to do any of that or have that human interaction. So, I certainly understand how other groups in the world are being affected financially and it's a tough time for that, but personally, I've been I've been very lucky and I consider myself lucky to maintain the the job statuses that I have been able to.

CWK: Describe your thoughts and when—before the Coronavirus pandemic happened like, did your boss tell you like you're gonna be unemployed for a moment?

RP: No, none of them ever—The only thing that you know happened was I got an email from Columbia, as student employee that said I would have to work from home, but I could still get my hours to log my hours. So, I never got contacted from from my bosses about specifically being you know, laid off or put on you know—as my own boss though in music, I did transfer all of my guitar lessons students to online interaction. I produce music so I created a remote production kind of thing with my production company. And I've been having people record on their cell phones, the song that they'd like produced. They send it to me. I produce all of the music around this audio track that's just on their phone. And then after this whole thing is over, we'll get together and we'll record the actual vocals of them and any live instruments that they'd like to play. So, that's been an area where I've kind of been able to boss myself around and kind of adapt to the time, but as far as my actual bosses, they haven't even said anything like that.

CWK: Describe the experience like I know that most people don't have the access to equipment, especially recording, so how are you able to manage that or adjust it?

RP: Um, yeah, I am trying to think as far as my job goes at the radio station, I don't have a soundproof room that I'm in. That's kind of been been tricky. I live really close to the train. You'll have to see after this interview, if you can hear the train going by, I hope you can't. So, there's been adjustments like that that I've had to deal with and sort of be creative. I'm thankful that the equipment that I that I did have previous to this was able to, I'm able to make do with that and kind of kind of adjust on the fly.

CWK: So, who's your mentor?

RP: My mentor. I've had a lot of mentors through the years. My mentor for now, though, currently, is I think my parents. My parents are, are my mentors. My dad especially. Him and I talk about a lot of sports and he's taught me a lot of great things to use in everyday life. Just street smarts things, how to interact with with people and how to carry yourself and present yourself. He's a he's a big mentor in my life.

CWK: How did your mentor help you or inspire you?

RP: My mentor, my dad, um, he, both of my parents, I should say. My mom has an amazing work ethic. So, I think I see the work that they put into their jobs. My mom always told me as a kid, she was like, when you sit down and you do your homework, and you put your name on it, you're putting your name on that piece of work. And she said, so you have to own whatever you are

688 writing on that paper, whatever you're doing on that, your name is on it, so you have to own it.
689 And I think that that's how that might be like one of the most inspirational things I've ever heard
690 is when you put your name on something, make sure it's 110% because it's going to—it's going to
691 carry your name.

692
693 CWK: So, during the hardship of Coronavirus pandemic, were you the first person to contact your
694 parents or did your parents contact you first?

695
696 RP: That's tough to say because we do talk so frequently, and it's kind of like the Coronavirus kind
697 of came like a slow moving—that we could see it coming so it wasn't like a (finger snap)
698 one-time event that just happened and then you call somebody about it. You know, I think events
699 that are like that, that you could remember where you were would be—me not personally, but from
700 what I've heard, you know, people always said they remembered where they were when JFK was
701 assassinated, when the Twin Towers when we were attacked for 9/11. So, it's a little bit different
702 than that. But, um, you know, we always do a good job of communicating with each other.

703
704 CWK: Well, what are the best advice did your mentor give you during Coronavirus pandemic?

705
706 RP: Ah, that's a good question. I think, um, just staying positive. I don't know if there's any one
707 particular piece of advice, but I think just having a positive outlook as you can.

708
709 CWK: So, what do you hope for the future after Coronavirus pandemic is over?

710
711 RP: I hope we get back to normalcy as soon as possible. I don't think that that's going to happen
712 and I don't think that that's realistic. But, uh, yeah, it'd be nice a personal, actually I think I speak
713 for a lot of people I says is I hope we get some baseball and I hope we get some sports in, I hope I
714 can go enjoy a couple nice games on at Wrigley this year. So, hopefully, we get back to some
715 normalcy soon.

716
717 CWK: For sure. So, we're going to do a reflection questions. So, the first question is, After
718 experiencing the Coronavirus pandemic, What have you learned from it?

719
720 RP: I've learned that you have to be adaptable to situations. I think that I've been lucky to kind of
721 to have already learned that, but I think that's solidified my understanding of that. Especially with
722 how schools been working and jobs, and being able to just you have to be adaptable in our world.
723 So things might not always go your way, but you have to find a way to complete the tasks you
724 were given. To follow up—to follow through on things. That's been something that's really
725 solidified in during that pandemic.

726
727 CWK: What was the biggest challenge you have to face during Coronavirus pandemic?

728
729 RP: Biggest challenge, it would have to be, now I think it hasn't happened yet, but I think that the
730 biggest challenge will be not seeing my my family at graduation and canceling those plans that I
731 made. And I don't feel that yet, but I think when that time comes and passes, I think that that will
732 be the toughest thing is to not see my family and do all of the things we've been planning to do.
733 And also just, um, yeah, just the day to day life and, ah, not going in to school and seeing faces

734 that you're always used to seeing or, you know, even living out the rest of the semester, or working
735 out the rest of the semester at the radio station and being able to kind of slowly let go of the radio
736 station on campus, you know, because in a couple weeks, I'm basically (finger snap) going to be
737 going to be gone from there. So that'll that'll be tough.

738
739 CWK: Describe your thoughts about when Columbia announced that they will postpone the
740 graduation instead of canceling graduation.

741
742 RP: Yeah, I think I was less upset about it as my mom, but I do think I will, like I said, I think I'll
743 feel that more as the time comes and then goes. Right now I just tried to—just trying to graduate.
744 So that's all that's on my mind. It's just get done. Complete the work. So I'm not really thinking as
745 much about that. But I think as an outsider looking in, they're like, oh, man, you know, wanted to,
746 wanted to see graduate and I'm like, I don't care as long as I graduate, but I think I say that now,
747 but I think I'll feel differently at the end of May.

748
749 CWK: So, what was your greatest accomplishment you had so far during Coronavirus pandemic?

750
751 RP: Greatest accomplishment would be staying busy. I think that that's been the thing. Initially I
752 was nervous that I was wasn't gonna be able to find things to do but I think my biggest
753 accomplishment is just staying on a normal schedule and getting up and doing the work that I have
754 to do.

755
756 CWK: So, what's the significant changes in your life during Coronavirus pandemic?

757
758 RP: Day to day interaction with people and I—even though I work a lot in radio, it's still a lot of
759 human inner interaction that you're doing with people in person. Like having interviews with
760 somebody on my show. It's very personal. And I, I like—I like trying to, to not crack somebody,
761 but try to like loosen them up to get them to talk with me in the normal conversation. And so, you
762 know, before my shows, when it was all in person, I'd have people show up a half hour early and
763 I would loosen them up and stuff and get to know them. Some of the people that I Interview we've
764 never met before. And so try to loosen them up. And I think that that sort of interaction in interview
765 is what I've missed the most.

766
767 CWK: So, what aspect of life did you take for granted before virus?

768
769 RP: Human Interaction (both laugh). Never. I mean, it just it's stuff that you would have never,
770 never thought, like, how would the world be any different? You know, you go you get up every
771 day and you leave your house and you go see people. And that's something to think we all take for
772 granted, especially now. Maybe even just going outside and having the freedom to walk to the
773 lakefront and to look out at this ocean sized body of water. I mean, those are like, freedoms that
774 that, you know, you just think that they're there and take those for granted. But, I think that
775 something as simple as just going outside now and that might be something that's big that we've
776 taken for granted.

777
778 CWK: So, what should Columbia have done differently?

779

RP: Yeah, I don't know. Um, people, I know that the immediate thing when they said graduation is canceled this year, people were like they should have, they should have released that initial email with a postponed date and time, so we know when it's going to be but, I mean, they, they know just as much as we do, and they don't know when this thing's gonna be over. So, what they should have done differently, maybe something would be to, when they shut down student housing, or when stuff went to online, maybe they should have announced that student housing would have been closed then, that way you give people more time and they say, "Hey, you know what, we're going to close student housing in three weeks." Instead of saying—I know initially when they said it was like "Student housing will still be open. You can still live here." And then I don't know if it was like a week or week and a half later, they said, "Okay, we got to close it." And I, and I don't know, this is all said in hindsight, but maybe they could have, they could have just said, you know what, "We're going to close student housing in two weeks, in three weeks, when we officially moved to online classes." Maybe that would have left people more time to get out. But, I think that they just did try to ride out as much as they as they could.

CWK: If you have a chance to have a conversation with President Kim, what will you talk about?

RP: Talk about the things that he had to struggle with as of the president of the school; closing down a school that highly relies on in person instruction: art classes, graphic design things, videos. I mean, shooting video, taking video of people. Music is certainly one of them. Dancing is a big one. Acting, all of these things. How, how—what were the things that you struggled with most when you're switching everything over to online and also, um, even though—did you feel any pressure to have to go online? If you didn't know any of the other, if you didn't know any of the other things that other schools did, if you block out the outside noise regardless of what DePaul was doing or UIC, what would you have done in that situation? Would you've waited longer to close a school because Columbia all the schools that closed really early. Or did you feel pressure to have to have to close down the school and go to online?

CWK: If you had one thing that you could go back and change it, what would be it and why?

RP: For myself or for the world?

CWK: For the world.

RP: For the world. Well, something to not let the virus happen I guess would be the big thing, but if that's out of my control probably, um, hmm, I don't know. Maybe if there was a way to tell people to create less of a mass panic and create, and try to calm people I guess would be something because I think there's a lot of, a lot of unnecessary panic at the beginning of this when it really if we just, maybe cooler heads would have prevailed if we just social distance so we get on this early and maybe something like that. But the virus, if I had (laughs) if I had the power, I would just wipe that thing out.

CWK: How do you feel about the future?

824 RP: I feel I feel good about it. I think that's tough to say in the middle of a pandemic, but I think
825 we'll, we'll overcome this and this will just make us that much more stronger. And we'll just be
826 that much more adaptable to things and, yeah, I feel feel good about the future.
827

828 CWK: How would you want someone hundred years from now to know about this pandemic?
829 What was your thoughts and advice might you have for them?
830

831 RP: Um, my advice to them would be to, hmm, stay busy and maintain as much normalcy as
832 possible and don't take anything for granted. Um, yeah, I think, yeah, and just and listen, listen to
833 the doctors.
834

835 CWK: So, is there anything you want to add to this interview?
836

837 RP: Uh, no, but I hope that this interview and other interviews will one day show people what life
838 was like during the pandemic and try to, to understand the details of our day to day life because I
839 think that that's something that we don't quite know as much about the last big pandemic and, you
840 know, early 1900s was, what did they do on a day to day life? And what what was it like? Were
841 there restrictions where they had to stay home the day? Did they—What do they do for food? What
842 did they do for these things? You know, I think that people should know the details of our day to
843 day lives as to like, what it was like to go outside and wearing masks and waiting in lines at stores.
844 And essential businesses and some of those those hardships that people will have to go through.
845

846 CWK: Sure. So, once again, thank you so much for your time. And that's concludes our interview
847 today.
848

849 RP: No, Thank you.
850

851 CWK: Thank you.
852

853 [End of Interview]