





## Transcription

## Interview with Jayce Lewis

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4 Ryan Pollock: We are here for the project titled Capturing Quarantine Interview. My name is  
5 Ryan Pollock. I'll be the interviewer today and I am joined by my interviewee. Could you please  
6 state your name?

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8 Jayce Lewis: Jayce Lewis.

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10 RP: The date is Saturday, May 2nd. It is 11:00 a. m., and I am broadcasting from my downtown  
11 Chicago apartment. Jayce, where are you joining me this morning?

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13 RP: I am also in my downtown Chicago apartment.

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15 RP: Jayce, what was the date of your birth?

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17 JL: It's 1999, September 28th.

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19 RP: And what is your job title?

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21 JL: Student.

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23 RP: What years have you been involved?

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25 JL: 2017 to present.

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27 RP: And what are your primary locations as a student?

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29 JL: I was in New York and then I came to Chicago.

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31 RP: What is your current year in school?

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33 JL: I'm a junior.

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35 RP: What's your mother's place of birth?

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JL: Seattle, Washington.

RP: And what's her date of birth?

JL: July—I want to say 18th. I feel bad for not living this specific day, but she was born in 1964.

RP: And same for your father. Where was he born? And when was he born?

JL: In Independence, Missouri, in 1962.

RP: Perfect. All right let's get started with just a little opening question. What was the earliest memory that you have as a child?

JL: Probably just from elementary school, like recess. My friends and I were really imaginative, so we would play games and run around and have fun. So, I just remember, like, my elementary school had this gigantic like playground yard area behind it. And there was this garden where we were all allowed to like grow stuff like food and flowers and stuff. So, me and my friends would hang out over there during recess.

RP: What grade was that in?

JL: It was when I first got to Texas. So, it was around like—I want to third or fourth grade.

RP: That's your earliest memory?

JL: Yeah, I don't remember too much from my childhood.

RP: Yeah. (laughs) So when you when you moved up and you went into high school, what was that experience like overall in high school?

JL: Well, it was interesting because I went to a performing arts based high school. So, I majored in musical theater for all four years of high school. And it was interesting because my class had around like when we started it had maybe like 20 kids. And then as the years went on, people would drop out of the program. And so, we graduated with like 12 or 15 students in my senior

71 class. So, it was interesting because it was this ensemble that we created, and we were just  
72 always around the same people. But it was good. I really enjoyed high school. So—

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74 RP: How did you choose to go to a performing arts high school as opposed to a regular old  
75 traditional high school?

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77 JL: Well, I've always been interested in theater since I was really little. I started acting when I  
78 was like nine years old. So, I always knew theater was something I wanted to do. And I was very  
79 fortunate to live about an hour, an hour and a half away from a performing arts high school  
80 program. So, when I heard that they were doing auditions, my friends and I in middle school, we  
81 all got stuff prepared and and went and audition.

82  
83 RP: So, would you say your overall experience in high school was positive or negative? Looking  
84 back on it?

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86 JL: Yes. I wasn't, you know, like cheerleader or anything. I wouldn't say I was like the coolest  
87 kid in school, but I had my group of friends and I really enjoyed it. I feel like it was a great time  
88 of my life. I learned a lot about theater, and I learned a lot about myself. So yeah.

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90 RP: What was your expectation of post college or post high school life?

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92 JL: I was nervous about it because I we do these things in theater called the unified auditions.  
93 When you're in your senior year, the February of your senior year, you can either go to Chicago,  
94 New York, or L.A. and you audition for like giant groups of colleges at once. And I had applied  
95 to 42 colleges because I was very worried that I wasn't going to get into a school. And so, it was  
96 it was weird because I applied—In high school I pursued computer science very heavily in  
97 addition to theater. And so, I applied to half computer science schools and half theater schools.  
98 So, I didn't really know what I was going to do. And my one, like, I don't want to say a rule, but I  
99 guess my one expectation was if I got into my dream college for theater, then I would just  
100 completely drop the computer science thing. And then I did. I got into NYU and so I was like,  
101 I'm pursuing theater. So that was kind of—But I didn't know what it was going to be like because  
102 New York is very different from San Antonio.

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104 RP: Yeah. How did you trace over from—You got accepted to NYU, and then how did you end  
105 up here at Columbia? And why did you choose Columbia?

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107 JL: NYU did not really work for me. I went for a year. I was 17 years old and I was majoring in  
108 acting. And it—I don't think I was old enough. I don't think I was like, ready for New York. If  
109 that makes sense. And I—I was put into this program at—at Tisch called Playwrights Horizons,  
110 and it was the biggest studio, so there was like a giant amount of kids in this program. And we  
111 were all young and we were all like—like too many chefs, you know, in the kitchen. It was just  
112 not--We—we weren't able to find a balance and it really just took a toll on me in terms of like  
113 mental health and stuff. So, I was like, I—I'm dropping out of this when I can't do it.

114

115 RP: How long did you go to NYU for?

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117 JL: I went to NYU for a year. So, 2017 to 2018.

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119 RP: You said you applied to 42 different schools in high school?

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121 JL: Yes. (laughs)

122

123 RP: Wow. What did—did—was Columbia on that original list? And if so, what did you like  
124 about it at that time that made you not choose it?

125

126 JL: I liked Columbia. I came to Chicago for unifiers. I chose Chicago as like my city to go to.  
127 And so I toured Columbia in like 2017. And I really, I really liked it, but I felt like I would get  
128 better opportunities from a school more closely associated with Ivy League.

129

130 RP: And when you came to Columbia, what were the first—what were the first sort of things that  
131 you started to compare with NYU and when you got here, like, what made you think of it as a  
132 a positive place?

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134 JL: Well, I applied to Columbia, to be completely honest, because of rolling admissions. I was  
135 kind of a little late on the college train and I didn't want—in terms of like transferring I was a  
136 little late and Columbia is rolling admissions. And so, I—I made this pro/con list of like,  
137 whether—when I was making the decision to leave NYU, I made this pro con list. And I feel like  
138 Columbia has a lot to offer in terms of—for theater majors. In terms of being able to make things  
139 for yourself, which NYU didn't really allow us to have for your entire—almost your entire  
140 undergraduate at NYU you you weren't allowed to audition for, like, separate projects and you

141 couldn't be in a show at all your freshman year. Like you weren't allowed to act in any of the  
142 Tisch performances. Where Columbia like as soon as I got here, I was putting on cabarets with  
143 my friends and I was in the musicals. And I—you know, I feel that I was—I'm a lot more  
144 appreciated and useful at Columbia than I was at NYU.

145  
146 RP: So, with all of that in mind, describe your daily life at Columbia before the pandemic and  
147 before the quarantine. Describe that for us.

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149 JL: Yeah. So usually if I'm in a show, or like working a show, my day's like completely busy. I  
150 wake up at six a.m. every day because my cat makes me wake up at 6:00 a.m. every day. And I  
151 get ready and I normally have nine a.m. classes so by like 8:30, I'm out of the apartment. I go to  
152 Dolloped coffee every day. I get a vanilla latte and then I go to class all day, and if I have an  
153 hour or an hour and a half break in between classes, I go to the theater building and I'll sit in the  
154 basement of the building and get my work done. Or I'll go to like the stage management, like  
155 offices and and get work done with them. I do a lot of stage work at Columbia. And I'll use you  
156 out until 3:00, sometimes 6:00, depending on my schedule, and then I'll come home—if I do get  
157 out at 3:00, I'll come home, and I'll hang out for like an hour and then I'll go to rehearsal. And  
158 rehearsal last normally until like 10:00, 10:30 p.m. And so then when rehearsal is over, I come  
159 back to my apartment, and then I do my homework. And then I go to bed and I do it all over  
160 again forever.

161  
162 RP: Sounds like a packed day. (both laugh) At least you got coffee at the beginning of the day to  
163 start you off. What's your favorite—What's your favorite course this semester? Give us a little  
164 bit—like an overview of some of the courses that you're in too.

165  
166 JL: This semester, I'm taking a stage management course that's for the people who are production  
167 stage managing, which is kind of like the head stage manager, which I really enjoy. I am taking  
168 my theater classes, so I'm taking like dance and I'm taking theater history with Brian Shaw, who  
169 is so amazing and talented and smart. I'm a review in the arts course, which is really interesting  
170 because I—I do love writing and writing about theater is something that interests me because I  
171 love theater. So, it's really cool to learn about how to write about art and like think critically  
172 about art while also being able to provide your own like—like surface level funny opinions. I  
173 would say that my favorite class this semester is probably my stage management class. I got to  
174 direct, or not direct, I got to stage manage—a tap showcase halfway through J-term into this

spring semester because of that class. And I love the teacher and I think all the stage management majors at Columbia are really cool. So, yeah, that's been my favorite class.

RP: What's your best experience that you've had at Columbia?

JL: Oh, that's interesting. My best experience—probably my first show here, I was cast in *Allegro*, which is a really old musical that totally flopped, and Columbia did a staged reading of it. And it was my first time really meeting any of the musical theater majors. I found it really difficult when I first came to Columbia to make friends that were in my grade because when I came here, they didn't accept any of my—well not—they didn't accept a majority of my credits from NYU. So I had to take all these freshman level courses my sophomore year. And while I loved the freshmen and I'm friends—or I guess they're sophomores now, but while I love those kids and I'm—I'm still really good friends with them now, I—(unintelligible) connect the people that were my age. And so when I was in *Allegro*, there was a bunch of people in my grade in there, and so I was able to hang out with them outside of rehearsals, and I got to show my stuff because I had a solo, which is really cute. And I got to work with Justin Brill and Endre, who both teach at Columbia, and they're amazing people, very talented. So I'm just very grateful for that experience.

RP: How do you think the 2020 Jayce at Columbia College is different, looking back, from the Jayce in high school? How do you think you're different than that person?

JL: I'm like really chill now. It doesn't really seem like it because I'm so busy and very high strung still. But when I was in high school, I was like—I just had no chill at all. I was very stressed out, like all the time about things and very intense about things. And I didn't know just how to like, look at a situation that was maybe going wrong or not the way that I didn't—a—a situation that wasn't going the way I wanted it to. And now I'm able to step back and be like, it's fine. You know, we just got to work with—with the issues, roll with the punches and keep going. —So, yeah, I guess I'm just a lot less stressed out.

RP: I guess that that will kind of foreshadow what we're going to talk about here a little bit with the pandemic. I'd like to see how that plays in with that. But you said you also majored, or you were thinking about majoring in science. How do you think that that has tied into musical theater?

JL: Well, it was computer science. So, it wasn't really like—it's like programming, you know, and stuff like that. So, it doesn't really apply into theater that much at all. I guess problem solving. It ties into my stage management work a little bit. I used to go to competitions. I was on the competitive computer science team in high school and they would just give us these word problems and we would have to create a computer program to solve the real-life issue that they had given us on paper. And we had to be really quick on our feet because it was timed and it was like the faster you answer the questions and solve the problems, the more points you get. So, I—I think that the competitive aspect computer programming really taught me to think on my feet. It also taught me to—to be able to go back and recheck my work a million times. Because when you're programming if you have like one thing that's off in the entire program, a lot of it won't work. And so, you got to like go through each line and like make sure every single thing is right, which has really helped me create paperwork for stage management and like, go through and really get detailed about things.

RP: Yeah. Where were you at when this all went down at Columbia, when Columbia decided to shift over to online courses because of the pandemic?

JL: I was in a rehearsal for a show that I was in that never—we never got to do. And I was in the theater building with all my friends. And we all got in this like circle (laughs), it was very, it was very theater major of us. We all got very sad (laughs) because we weren't gonna be able to do the show. They hadn't told us that yet, but we all just kind of assumed that since no one was able to meet up, we weren't going to be able to do it. And we all just kind of like cried (laughs) and sat in a circle and like hugged each other for a really long time. And we didn't really do anything at rehearsal. And then we all went home. —So that was really kind of depressing. I wish I—I kind of wish I was able to process it by myself and then come into rehearsal because after that day we still had like a week or so of classes left. So, I still had to go to rehearsal every day after that, even though the show wasn't going to go on anymore. So it was just weird that I was processing it this whole time, like with a group of like six people.—But, you know, it was what it was, it was nice to have a group, though, in the same aspect it was nice to be around a bunch of people.

RP: How is the shift to online courses affect your learning, affected your learning experience at Columbia?

JL: I'm not good at it. I'm not good at this whole online thing. I get distracted way too easily. And so, something will be happening and then I'll be like, oh, my cat's over here doing



something funny. I'm not going to listen to the teacher for 20 minutes or, I'll—I'll get distracted by anything. And I think that, they've piled on so much work now that we're online, at least my teachers have, that I—I'm finding it difficult to separate work and home. Like where before corona I was able to be out all day and get my work done in a space that wasn't where I lived. Now, like everything is happening in my apartment, which, and this is kind of going off on a tangent a little bit, but it I don't enjoy having school in my apartment at all. I'm non binary, right, so I use they/them pronouns, and that's not something that a lot of people really respect at all, at Columbia especially, which is really interesting because it you know—they preach this whole thing of—of diversity and inclusion but now that we're in these online classes like teachers or my peers will like misgender me or something. And it's like, I'm in my apartment and I can't really like separate those spaces anymore. It's kind of the same deal where like, academically I can't separate my spaces between learning and relaxing. So, it just makes my apartment into this like weird energy, if that makes sense.

RP: Do you think you've been misgendered more online or in-person at Columbia?

JL: I—online. Online, for sure because I—in person I—I speak up about it. I'm not afraid to say anything about anything in class. So, if a teacher does misgender me in class, I can—I can say something about it, we can have a conversation, or we can move on. And then they'll remember, at least for the rest of that day, that—that it—you know, it is what it is. And that if they mess up next week, I'll correct them again, but at least it's only the one time. But when you're on, Zoom, it's—it's difficult, especially in these lectures, to—to be able to turn on my microphone or—or turn on my video really fast and be like, 'Hey, excuse me, misgendered me. 'Because people will just keep talking cause they're not thinking about what they're saying. Like no one is doing it on purpose. You know what I mean? So, it's difficult for me to interrupt them or to say something because they keep talking, and then I turn on my microphone and you can't really have a bunch of people talking at once on Zoom. So, they either don't hear me or it gets lost somewhere over, you know, the computer. And so, it just keeps happening. And, you know, no—no students ever speak up about anything related to transgender rights on campus unless they're also trans students. So—and I'm—I'm usually only one of—of two maybe trans kids in any of my classes. So, it's just been more difficult online, I feel. And I don't know why it doesn't say it right now on my little name [referring to the name that is visible in the lower left corner of the Zoom call], but normally it says "Jayce Lewis, they/them" in parentheses like I put my pronouns on my Zoom name so that maybe someone would read it. And that does not seem to be helping at all. So, I don't really know (laughs) what to do about it right now.

280

281 RP: Right now, at the bottom of my screen I see said "sadflowersociety".

282

283 JL: Yeah that's like—before I deleted all my social media that was like my social media handle  
284 and I changed it for Zoom, and for some reason it's not letting me actually change it for real.

285

286 RP: (laughs) Maybe I regret? (laughs)

287

288 JL: Yeah. Yeah, a little bit. (laughs)

289

290 RP: How do you feel your major has been affected in ways that other majors haven't?

291

292 JL: I mean, I feel like a lot of the arts majors have been impacted in the same way, but I do feel  
293 like my major is a little more impossible to—I don't know to live in now because we can't do a  
294 show over Zoom, or at least I don't particularly want to do a show over Zoom. Especially not a  
295 musical. But that just doesn't really make sense to me, and I don't think it's a very good idea. So,  
296 the actual like production of the craft of the thing I'm majoring in kind of seems a little  
297 impossible. They've closed down all the theaters in Chicago anyways because you can't gather.  
298 So, it's just kind of like on hold. But in terms of classes that pertain to my major, they're still  
299 trying. I still take voice and I still take dance and we just do it over video. But I don't feel very  
300 productive doing those things. I feel a little silly and like I'm not getting as good of an education  
301 as I would have gotten if I could be in person with the teachers.

302

303 RP: How have the teachers adjusted for you to learn at home?

304

305 JL: In terms of my major classes, it's—it's just kind of doing the exact same thing, but over  
306 Zoom. Like for dance, my teacher will just set it up in her living room and she'll—she'll like  
307 mirror us, which makes it kind of difficult because I'm always confused about if I'm on the  
308 wrong arm or not cause sometimes she'll like face the other way. And then I'm like, 'Whoa,  
309 what's happening?' But yeah, it's just kind be exact same thing, but—but over video.

310

311 RP: Do you feel like you've been able to maybe pay attention more or do you feel like it's  
312 tougher to—do you think like you're focusing harder on the movements that you're doing? I don't  
313 know what the correct terminology is or the choreograph that you're doing? Or do you think it's

314 tougher because it is on screen? Do you think that you'll come out of this maybe paying attention  
315 closer to it or will it be tougher?

316

317 JL: I think that in some aspects I pay more attention to it. I—I don't want to do a half assed job.  
318 Am I allowed to—are we allowed to curse? I don't—

319

320 RP: (laughs) We'll find out! (both laugh)

321

322 JL: I don't want to do a bad job in my classes. So, I—you know—I still try and like I—like  
323 squeezing is a big thing and dancing, (speaking in a laughing voice) and this all sounds probably  
324 very silly. But, you know, I still, like, engage and like try my best. But I think it's a lot easier for  
325 me when I have the tools that are necessary to do the thing, you know? So, like for ballet, for  
326 example, we still do ballet every Monday in dance. And in ballet there's you know a ballet bar,  
327 you know, that everyone holds onto while they're kicking their legs or whatever. And I don't—I  
328 don't have that in my apartment. And so, I use this like TV stand thing, and I put my hand on it  
329 and it's way too low. And so, I, like, can't do the things that I need to do. So, I feel like I'm not  
330 doing them right or like focusing as well. Because after a certain point of doing it wrong because  
331 I don't have the necessary tools, and getting told, like, 'Jayce, you're doing it wrong.' I just kind  
332 of give up in some ways. —But for jazz on Wednesdays, I go hard. We do sit ups and we do like  
333 this whole like core workout. And I always do that because then—no one's going to catch me  
334 slipping during interview. I'm going to still work out and stuff.

335

336 RP: What—how are you communicating with your professors about these things?

337

338 JL: Well, I feel very comfortable just e-mailing my professors about things. I don't—I never  
339 really used office hours in the first place. Like when—before quarantine I didn't really use office  
340 hours. So, I—I still don't Zoom office. But if I—don't—if I need an extension or something  
341 over—over quarantine—is that the way to say it? If I need an extension now, I feel a lot more  
342 comfortable being like, 'Hey, I'm stressed out can I have two more days on this thing?' I feel like  
343 teachers are a lot more lenient with deadlines and—and showing up to class and stuff. Not that  
344 I'm going to abuse that, but I feel like teachers are a lot more lenient. So, I do feel a lot more  
345 comfortable communicating with my teachers now that we're in this situation.

346

347 RP: Talk to me about your thoughts on Columbia reissuing or refunding money for the time that  
348 students have lost in-person classes.

349

350 JL: That's a difficult one because I would really love it if we could get money back, because I  
 351 feel like I'm paying for things that I don't have access to and I'm paying for things that I'm not  
 352 allowed to use. Like, we have a music building with pianos and instruments that I use for voice  
 353 and for auditions, and I don't have access to that anymore, obviously. And I'm not asking for  
 354 access to what I want everyone to stay at home and stay healthy. But I don't have that I don't  
 355 have access to like a dance room. I don't have access to anything. All the shows I was gonna do,  
 356 I was working on about four productions before Columbia closed and they all shut down, and I  
 357 put in time and energy. And like gyms like I don't have—not that I live in a dorm, but for people  
 358 who do live in dorms like the access to the gyms, the access to a printing center, the access to a  
 359 place to live is like something that we don't have any more or they don't have anymore, I  
 360 thankfully live in my own apartment. But I feel like we should be getting some kind of money  
 361 back. But on the other hand, I don't expect Columbia to just magically have a bunch of money to  
 362 give all of us. Like, I understand that we do pay a lot of money and intuition. But, I think it's a  
 363 little silly or maybe a little bit naive of—of some of these people who are—are asking for like 50  
 364 percent of the entire tuition or a full refund of tuition.—I just feel like it's impossible for us to  
 365 pretend that colleges or any institution has money just growing on trees or saved in this big  
 366 secret bank like they're hiding it from us or something. I do think that schools should be  
 367 releasing their financial stuff, Like the information about what they're doing with our money. I  
 368 feel like that should be completely transparent during this time so that we can maybe work out  
 369 some time for the amount of money to get back or see that maybe it would be impossible to get  
 370 money back just so we can have something substantial other than a video from the school  
 371 president or something like that saying like, 'You know, we're doing what we can.' It's like,  
 372 'Okay Doctor Kim.'

373

374 RP: What do you think about Doctor Kim's videos and his messages to Columbia students?

375

376 JL: Well, I—I only watched them once because as soon as he started—okay I—I do respect Dr.  
 377 Kim. He's a very smart man. He does a lot for the school. I—I'm not trying to dis on this guy, but  
 378 I do feel like he is kind of like a meme on campus, you know? So, I just didn't—I don't really  
 379 take what he says very seriously. Also, in the sense that I don't really take authority seriously in  
 380 general in my life. So, I would just—it just kind of seems like—he's like the face of the school,  
 381 you know? So, he's going to say what they need him to say, and we're all just going to have to  
 382 either accept the rules that they're making us go by now or we have to open some kind of  
 383 dialogue. But in in my experience with Doctor Kim and, I have very limited experience with

him, he hasn't been the most open to hearing what students have to say. I know he has like office hours for himself, but I'm in the Trans Student Union and we've been petitioning to get the "M" and "W" symbols taken off of the bathrooms at Columbia, for like ever, because the gender neutral bathrooms still have an "M" in a "W" on it. So, it's like non-binary students or students who don't necessarily identify with male or female still have to use this restroom that is so obviously gendered in these very weird ways. And we just—and I feel like painting a door white is like the most basic thing to ask for and it—nothing's ever happened. So I don't really—trust—the system. I guess.

RP: How—yeah when you say—I wanted to piggyback on that and like authority and trusting the system. When you learned about coronavirus, did you—did you take what they were saying, or did you find it tough to—to find true or tell me about that reaction?

JL: I believe in science. I believe in sciences so when I saw—like, I get on my news stuff from The New York Times, right? And so—which I guess is a very—you—you should watch all kinds of news, but I just read The New York Times.—And so I was trusting the that things were—they were saying and I—I was like, 'I'm—am going to stay at home.' You know, I'm going to do the quarantine thing. Like, I totally—I totally respect that, and that makes sense. But what I don't respect, in terms of—and this is just me personally, in terms of the quarantine stuff, is like what Trump is doing. I feel like every time he opens his mouth to talk about coronavirus at these press conferences that are like 50 people shoved in a tiny room preaching about social distancing when they're not even doing it themselves, saying that—this is pre-Easter, right? But they were saying, like, 'We're going to reopen churches and have mass gatherings for Easter and for these like religious holidays.' And injecting Lysol or Clorox or whatever it is like the Trump said of—and I just don't respect that aspect of it. But I do respect like news sources. I just don't respect—the President (giggling) I suppose.

RP: Yeah, so on a higher level of authority. What—let's go back to the authority of Columbia. What do you think that they could have done better when they did announce the closing of the school?

JL: I feel like they could have talked to the students. I feel like a lot of decisions were made with the students in mind, but by adults who haven't been students for a very long time. Especially not in today's day and age, you know? So, I just feel like if—if it would have been a more open dialogue, maybe something easier could have been done, especially in terms of—of the dorm



situation. Like that was so quick. And I know so many people who left and then had to—had to come back and like risk all of that would like essential workers or immunocompromised people in their homes because Columbia was like, 'If you don't come get your stuff from the dorms, that's it.' You know? And I wasn't that affected by it because I didn't have to move out of the dorm, but aspects like that bother me.

RP: What would you have done if you were living in the dorm and they closed it down? What would have been your next step?

JL: I would have had to move back to Texas, moving back in with my parents. Which is—is fine. Like, I—you know, my parents would have been more than excited to have me move home, but I feel like I—it would have stressed me out beyond belief. I probably would have taken the pass-fail option if—if I had to move home. Because that's a really long trip, and that's a lot of—of new stuff that I had to deal with. There's like a lot of people in my home right now, and I don't think that I could be doing dance or doing voice or doing a lot of the—a lot of my courses, like showing up to lectures if I was home right now.

RP: How does the stay at home order in Texas differ from here in Chicago?

JL: I think they actually just changed it today in Texas to start opening things back up, which I—I have to say I don't really agree with—are—are I think our Governor Abbott, maybe he's the mayor. Don't quote me on it. But he—he was like, 'It's fine. We're fine now.' Which I just don't agree with, but I—I think it was at the same level in Chicago, like stay inside and ask if you have to go outside. But I think that Texas is—is loosening up on it right now, which bothers me.

RP: Yeah, and for some reference, it's May 2nd and our stay at home order here in Chicago just got extended through May to July 1st. When did you first hear about coronavirus and what did you think?

JL: I—I joked about it at first. I—because I was like, 'Oh, I'm young. It's not going to affect me at all.' And then like two seconds—well, that's an exaggeration. Maybe like a couple days off, you're like making jokes of being like, 'I don't care if I die from corona, but if I go, it's my time.' Like that kind of stuff, which is very insensitive, and I don't. That's not how I feel now, but after thinking about it a lot and seeing these, like, videos of the dead bodies that are in Central Park, like in the freezer trucks and stuff like that. And my grandfather, he has cancer, right? So, he's

immunocompromised. He's in hospital right now, completely isolated in Washington. So, I wouldn't have been able to see him anyways, but things like that kind of really made it more serious. But in the first few days, it didn't seem like it was that serious of a thing, and I feel like our government wasn't taking it that seriously either at first. And so, I feel like that kind of reflected in the entirety of America, especially in the youth of America, because they said you can't affect young people. Which was a bad decision, I think, to tell everyone that that young people would just be completely fine. Which is not good.

RP: Do you remember the date or the date range whenever you started to think of it as a threat?

JL: Oh, probably. When we had our last rehearsal for Mr. Burns, which is the show that I was in. We sat down and we had just done our last—like our final run of the show that we were ever going to do. And our director, who I—I loved them. Our director, Leo—Leo Battuta—Battus? Oh, I don't know their name, but their name was Leo. And they sat us down and they were like, 'Get out of Chicago.' Like they were very—they're a very serious person to begin with. But they were like, 'This is more serious than—than y'all think and you need to take it seriously. And you need to—you need to figure out a plan like you need to take care of yourselves.' And then I went home, and all of this news was coming out about Korona in the first few weeks. And I was just kind of like, 'Should I leave?' Like I was very heavily considering getting out of Chicago like a week after Columbia announced that they were going to move to online school. But then I decided that staying in Chicago was probably a better decision for me.

RP: So, you mentioned that if you read The New York Times but what are some other media outlets that you get your news from about coronavirus?

JL: That's kind of it. I feel like a lot of people do get their information from social media, which can be very harmful. But I don't have social media, so I—I'm not getting any of those like outside things. I get a daily update from New York Times every morning, and then I'll go on the Web site and I'll—I'll read articles about corona because they have this like update tracker about it. And then I listen to the New York Times podcast, The Daily, every morning also. So, I really rely heavily on The New York Times, which I know is not probably the best. But I—I feel personally like you should have a wide variety, but I'm going to pay for a subscription, especially not something like Fox News, like I'm sorry about it. I'm not about to—I'm not about to go to Republican news sources and listen to those, So mostly the New York Times.

489 RP: What do you think about The New York Times overall coverage of the coronavirus?

491 JL: I—I think it's good. I mean they have like a lot of different—they have this like coronavirus  
492 page on their website, which is really helpful. And you can see like there's a—a page for  
493 statistics on how many people are infected and how many people are dead. And there's statistics  
494 for new symptoms that are showing up. And then there's another page that's like more personal  
495 stories about how it's affecting like Asian Americans, like Chinese American people because of  
496 the racism that is happening, because of Trump calling it like the disease from China, like the  
497 China disease. You know? And that's—that's causing a lot of problematic just social justice  
498 issues in America. So, it—it I feel get really—encapsulates like the entirety of the issue in both  
499 terms of like cultural, societal and also scientific aspects of the disease.

501 RP: What's your current living situation? Describe that for us. I see you got a nice cow print in  
502 the background there. Tell me more about your—your situation, how many roommates you're  
503 having there, how many people coming in and out the apartment? Those kinds of things.

505 JL: Yeah, I live alone in a studio apartment in the South Loop. So, it's it's been kind of easy for  
506 me to self-isolate. I have a cat, so I live with my cat, but I live very close to Columbia's campus.  
507 So, there's a lot of well, I wouldn't say a lot, but there's a few people who go to Columbia who  
508 live in my building and we've all been self-isolating so sometimes I'll see those people. Like my  
509 friend Oliver, we have like—we hang out sometimes, especially when I need use the printer  
510 because they closed down the printer in my building. So, I'll hop over to his place when I need to  
511 print and then we can like hang out for a bit. Or like my friend Maddie lives upstairs so we like  
512 baked bread together. Cause baking bread is a huge thing now. So, yeah. So, I—I see people  
513 sometimes and—but there's not that many people coming in and out of my apartment.

515 RP: What's your favorite kind of bread to bake?

517 JL: Just like—like a no knead bread, just like a regular bread that you can have with like Italian  
518 like seasoning and the foil and the balsamic. We can make a it into sandwich. You know, that  
519 kind of bread. (laughs)

521 RP: What are some of the other things you've been doing other than becoming a bakery during  
522 the pandemic to kind of, I don't know, learn new things or just take your mind off the situation.

JL: I've been trying to learn French, which is very difficult because—in high school—in Texas, everyone in high school took like Spanish classes. And French is like very similar to Spanish in some aspects. But I took Japanese in high school, so my starting basis were like understanding languages as a whole isn't a very weird place. So, it's been a little difficult, but, you know, Duolingo is keeping me on track with those notifications. (laughs) They've been doing that. I've been painting a lot. Got—I've painted a lot of the walls in my house because I've been so bored, and I've been watching Cheers on Netflix. And they just put the entirety of that series, remastered VHS edition. So—

RP: I feel like with the—the French and the baking in the painting, you could open up a nice little French Bakery after this whole thing.

JL: I know. I'm ready to go to Paris. (laughs)

RP: Yeah. How often do you get outside of your house during the week?

JL: I try to go outside at least once a day just to like walk around a little bit. But I don't—I don't like go over to people's places unless they're like down the street from me, like walking distance. Because I don't want to get on a train right now. Like, I just do not feel comfortable getting on the orange line going anywhere. But I do—I do go outside a lot. I skateboard. So, I just go out and there's like a road right next to my apartment that's like usually empty. So, I just hang out over there.

RP: What about for groceries? Tell me about your grocery shopping experience.

JL: Yeah, I mean, it hasn't been—it hasn't been too bad. When the pandemic first started and—and everyone went wild and took everything out of the grocery stores, my mom had this like—she like had freaked out and she sent me a bunch of groceries in the mail. So, I was kind of stocked up for a while and I didn't have to go to the grocery store. But when I started having to, I would just throw on my mask and walk to the Target. The target's like a block away from my apartment. Like, so it hasn't been too difficult. I also have a family friend needs in Chicago who has a car, so, when all of like fruits and vegetables and stuff were like gone from the stores in the beginning. She took me out of town to this farmer's market and we were able to get food before they like really started cracking down on the stay at home policy.

559 RP: What precautions are you taking when you go to the grocery stores?

560

561 JL: I mean, I have my mask and that's about it. I don't have gloves, so I don't wear gloves. But I—  
 562 —I mean, I stay away from people. I stay six feet away from people if I can. And when I get  
 563 home, I like wipe down everything with like a wipe, like a Lysol wipe or something like any  
 564 boxes or anything. I mean, even with my mail, like when I get my mail, I wipe that stuff down to  
 565 before I like crack into it, you know?

566

567 RP: Yeah. What—have you felt like you're being more cautious or conscious of your use of  
 568 essential supplies and even maybe even just with food? But especially, you know, with toilet  
 569 paper and those kinds of things that you see shortages of?

570

571 JL: Yes and no. I—with flour and yeast, because everyone's baking bread now, but with like  
 572 those kinds of—sugar like essential like pantry items. I—I try to not use as often and—and toilet  
 573 paper and stuff, but I live right above the 7-Eleven. So, they kind of have it like they've never  
 574 been out of toilet paper at the 7-Eleven—since I've gone down there, that I've seen, there hasn't  
 575 been anything that they've been out of. So, I've been really lucky in that sense, I kind of  
 576 happiness resource below me.

577

578 RP: How do you deal with your mental health and your depression through all of this?

579

580 JL: I mean, I don't really—I don't—I don't know how to answer that question. I, —I keep myself  
 581 busy, I guess I wouldn't—I wouldn't say that I—am like dealing with depression because of the  
 582 virus. I do like—I have a bunch of books that I've been reading. I think it's I mean, just the  
 583 activities that I was talking about earlier. The more I keep myself busy, the less time I have to  
 584 just sit and be sad about it. I do try to like not to think about corona very often just because if I  
 585 think about it for too long, it kind of makes me sad. But I mean, I do think about it every day  
 586 because I—I keep I want to keep myself updated on it so I'm not avoiding it or anything. But I  
 587 don't know, in my classes, in my Reviewing the Arts class, he tried to change—my teacher tried  
 588 to change our final essay to an essay that was like about coronavirus. And I was like that that's  
 589 going to mess with me I think, having to like do all that research and write about—about it in  
 590 detail and like, analyze it. So, I—I did avoid that assignment. I sent him an email and I was like;  
 591 I'm not going to do that because I just feel like I would mess with me too much. But I just try not  
 592 to think about it, I guess. I wouldn't—I don't see someone about—like I don't talk to a therapist  
 593 about the virus specifically, you know?



594

595 RP: Do you talk to anybody about the virus in your family?

596

597 JL: Not in my family, no, but my friends. Yeah, yeah. My family, I FaceTime them fairly often.

598 I—I—like—probably like two times a week if we can face time or call my parents. But they've

599 got a lot going on down there. There's like—there's like eight or nine people living in my house

600 right now. So, I don't want to like stress them out by talking about how I'm afraid that

601 everybody's going to die. But my friends who are like in Chicago and in isolating with their

602 friends sometimes like, we'll—we'll reach a lull in the conversation and one of us will be like,

603 'Oh, man, I'm a little stressed out about it, uh?' And then we'll be like, 'Yeah', and then we'll

604 move on. You know?

605

606 RP: How has how your relationship with your parents changed?

607

608 JL: I don't think it has changed very much. I think it would have changed drastically if I was

609 living with them because my parents—my family, we all love each other very much, but we're

610 also very stubborn people and we're very, like rooted in our opinions. And all of our opinions are

611 very different on everything. And so, we kind of butt heads a lot. And my—my parents are very

612 invested in the lives of—of myself and my sister. And I think that I could, having lived alone for

613 so long, I don't think that I could go back to a home where I'm constantly being monitored and

614 not have some kind of—of—I don't say animosity. That's a very strong word, but some kind of

615 like annoyance, I guess, towards my family.

616

617 RP: How is the coronavirus and the stay at home order affected job security or your financial

618 stability?

619

620 JL: Well, I am fortunate enough, I didn't I didn't have a job before coronavirus because I was I'm

621 so busy with theater all the time, and I'm fortunate enough to not need to—to have a job. So, it

622 didn't really affect my employment status. But I am nervous that it will change the way that

623 theater is done for the next like two years at least. They've pushed off a lot of productions in

624 Chicago, and I'm not working on any professional productions in Chicago, but those productions

625 that we're going on, they push them off until about 2022 just because they don't know when

626 we're going to be able to gather in a theater again. Which makes me very nervous, because if I—

627 when I graduate, I don't know if there's going to be a job field for me to go into anymore. And I

628 do want to go to grad school so that makes it a little easier. But it also makes it a little more

stressful in that are we going to have to do graduate school auditions online? Like, am I going out to record myself doing a monologue for these schools I want to go to? And then I have to think about do I want to take a gap year to see if all of this will blow over so that I can have the opportunity to do an in-person audition, because I'm not—I'm not the biggest fan of recording myself, singing or dancing or doing any of that stuff. I just don't really enjoy having to go back and watch the video. I think I work a lot better when I'm forced to do the thing once and then not think about it again. And I think that if I did audition for grad school or professional theater companies and it was online, I would have much less of a chance in being successful. If that makes sense.

RP: Yeah. We talked before about how your fear of the virus increased at the beginning of it. Right? But what do you think about it now that it's been a month, month and a half of the stay at home order? Have your fears increased or decreased as the time has gone on?

JL: I would say they've plateaued. I don't think they've—they've gotten worse. Sometimes I forget, I mean, this is kind of bad to say, but sometimes I forget that there's even a virus until I'm like, 'Oh, I can't go outside', or like or until I see something in the news or on the TV when I go downstairs to get my mail. There's like a TV in lobby in the building that they play like the news stations reporting coronavirus on. And it'll be like, oh, oh, yeah, that's the thing that I'm stressed about. I—I wouldn't—I don't think that I'll feel less stressed about it until there's a vaccine, until there's like a cure for it. And then I'll kind of chill out about it. But because I'm distracting myself so much, it's just kind of like. It is what it is for right now, and I can't freak out about it because there's nothing I can do about it. You know?

RP: So as we wrap this up, when we look back on everything that we've talked about, has the pandemic and the quarantine brought out more of your strengths or more of your weaknesses?

JL: I'd say my weaknesses? I'm really sad about that, because I really wish I could be like, 'Oh, I'm thriving and I'm doing so good in my classes', but I procrastinate like nobody's business. And I'm having a lot of trouble getting assignments done. And I'm having—I mean, I get it done. I have a 4.0 want to make that very clear. I get my stuff done, but I just wait until the last minute and I stress myself out about it. And it's a lot easier to wait till the last minute when you don't have to show up for a class, you know? And I'm really messy too and so my apartment's gotten really messy. I feel like it's brought not a lot of my—my weaknesses. It's brought out a lot of those.

664

665 RP: What—what lessons have you learned from the—the whole situation that you're going to use  
666 for the rest of your life?

667

668 JL: I guess probably the biggest one—I guess it would be that I do—I—I don't have control over  
669 things, sometimes. And that that's something that I just have to be okay with. I really like to be in  
670 charge of—of academic things, of—like the things in my life that I can control, I enjoy  
671 controlling because it makes me feel like I am. I got my stuff together like I'm good to go. And  
672 something like this kind of throws a wrench in all of that. And now I just have to be able to be  
673 like, all right, we will see, you know, we'll see what happens.

674

675 RP: What aspects of life did you take for granted before the virus?

676

677 JL: I hate to say this, there's a lot of there's a lot that I feel like I took for granted before the virus,  
678 but I think the biggest one is the ability to go out and, like, get lit, like with my friends. Because  
679 I—I'm not the most social person in the world. A lot of the socializing I do is because of the  
680 stage management work or the theater work that I do because I'm always busy with that. And so,  
681 when people have parties are like go out to bars or whatever. I'm just like, 'Oh, I'm really tired  
682 tonight.' But I feel like after corona is over, I'm going to be like every night. let's go like I want to  
683 live. I feel like I—I can't be inside anymore. So, I feel like just the ability to go out and do things.  
684 I think I really took for granted.

685

686 RP: What was your most significant change in your life since the coronavirus started?

687

688 JL: I've been doing a lot more thinking. I guess that sounds kind of silly. I did think before, but I  
689 do a lot more reflect like reflection now. And like meditation almost. Because sometimes I'll run  
690 out of things to do and then I'll just be like chilling there with my thoughts. And so, I've learned  
691 how to like process feelings and emotions within myself. I've been reading a lot of Freud lately,  
692 so I've been analyzing my dreams a lot and like trying to like understand why I behave the way I  
693 do and how I can change that behavior to be a better person or like a more positive Influence or  
694 positive energy in people's lives. So, that's been something I've been focusing on.

695

696 RP: What are you going to most remember about the pandemic in 50 years?

697

JL: Being inside. Just how—I mean, I'm going to remember how—the who people died. You know, how it was a gigantic loss for the entire world, not just the United States. Like how serious it was. But I think that in a more personal aspect, I'm going to think about how I was sitting here alone all of the time, and I really wanted to go outside how that really bugged me—just having to sit in this apartment all day.

RP: What's going to be the one image that your brain, or maybe not having to show to you but the world, kind of associates with coronavirus? So, 9/11, we have pictures of the Twin Towers getting hit by planes. World War Two, we have Iwo Jima, you know the—the soldiers raising the flag, but what do you think is the one image that will remain and be stuck with the coronavirus?

JL: I'm not too sure. I feel like I mean, what the virus looks like itself is something like a circle with all the things on it. It's an image I see all the time in the news and like on television. And if someone posts meme in the group chat, there's normally like that is like the image of it. But I feel like I haven't been on social media to see any sort of iconic quote unquote, I'm not the word to use, but images that have come out from it. I feel like more people should know about the whole freezer bodies like the mass graves that are in New York. I feel like that. has the potential to be something that is remembered for a very long time, but I don't really know if there have been any iconic images that have come out of corona, because I'm not in—I—I'm just not on the platforms that would show me those images.

RP: Coming back on a smaller scale, talking about Colombia, what do you think that they could have done? Maybe one thing they could have done during their whole process of this that would have made—I mean, what do you think they should have done differently? One—one thing.

JL: I think they should have talked to the students. I feel like a lot of decisions were made behind closed doors. And I feel like a lot of the decisions that were made were a capitalist view on what would be best for people that—that—to be completely honest, the administration at Columbia doesn't really know its students. And I feel like in excluding the students from the decision making, they made a very big mistake.

RP: What about President Kim, if you had to write an email to him, what would be in that email?

JL: I don't know. That's a big question. I—I feel like I sent so many emails to people, just friends and administration and through trans student union to Dr. Kim himself. And. Not to say that

it's useless for students to initiate the conversation. But in my experience, in initiating opening dialogues with faculty and administration here, it's never been received in the way that I would have liked for it to be received. It's always—it's always—no one's ever been negative about it. No one's ever even back being like 'No.' You know? I feel like I would want to open some kind of a dialogue with maybe not me, but with other students, and Dr. Kim, who are more affected by this. But I would love to—if I had the opportunity to facilitate something like that and use my privilege to facilitate that kind of thing, that would be cool. But every time I have tried to do that in much smaller scale situations at Columbia. Teachers are always like, 'Oh, well, I did what I can't. So that's what it is.' So, I don't know if I would write an e-mail to Dr. Kim. I've definitely haven't, because I don't know if—if people like him in these mass positions of power at Columbia would even care. At the end of the day, I feel like the caring would be a very face level, like surface level thing.

RP: How they feel about the future of the world, the future of just even your life?

JL: I'm interested to see what's going to happen, especially in entertainment industries like film and—and theater. I think that there's going to be a major shift in the way that we make art. Now that now that things are closed. So, for example, for like in film, I feel like releasing movies on Amazon and saying for the first three months that this movie has been released, we're going to charge fifteen dollars for 48-hour rental of this movie. And then after the three months, it'll be available for purchase at a cheaper rate. Things like that. And maybe I mean, theater has gotten into this universe of filming Broadway performances and live streaming those performances to an audience for like I don't always almost like 20 bucks. And then in the future, they save the recordings and you pay ten dollars to see the live version that happened two years ago. I feel like that might be a thing that happens now, but it also could be that they have a vaccine, and everything opens back up again and then everything's normal again. So, I'm just interested to see how the entertainment industry is going to shift now that—now that we don't know what's going on anymore.

RP: When you look back on your time in quarantine and the stay at home order in say five, 10, 20 years, what's going to be the one thing that you think to yourself? 'I wish I would have done this.'

JL: Probably I wish—I mean, I'm even thinking it kind of right now, I kind of wish that I had roommates. I wouldn't say that I'm like this lonely old hermit in my apartment, you know. But I—



I feel like it would have been easier to be less stressed about the stay at home policies if I was staying at home with a friend you know? But sometimes like I'm—I'm too nervous to get on the train to go visit my other friends who live like 30 miles away. You know? So, I feel very isolated sometimes and I wish that I would have had like roommates or a roommate to—to not feel so isolated. You know?

RP: What have you learned the most about yourself during all this?

JL: I think I like myself a lot more than I thought I did. That sounds kind of weird, but I think that since I was always like on the move trying to be useful trying to get things done, I feel like I was kind of fueled like pre-corona in my work life. I was fueled by this—this need to like I—procrastinate a lot and I—I'm kind of not the most street smart sometimes. So, I would get down on myself for that kind of stuff and that would kind of be a motivator for me in this weird way. But now that I'm here and I'm still stage managing shows and stuff like over zoom even though I think it's a little silly like I—to like act and then like if other people want to act in them I will stage manage for that you know. So now it's less of the—of a you have to do it so that you don't mess it up kind of thing and more of like, 'Oh I'm—I'm good at my job and I'm kind of a cool person and I can get things done and I'm okay to get things done.' If that makes sense.

RP: Yeah. So, you think you're more—do you think you'll learn more positives out of this about yourself or more negatives going forward.

JL: Definitely more positives because even though I feel like a lot of my weaknesses have come out during corona I feel like I'm also learning how to handle them now that they're under this magnifying glass.

RP: Yeah. All right well Jayce thank you for your time today. That concludes our Capturing Quarantine Interview and team interview. Is there anything else that you'd like to add that we missed on?

JL: No not really. Thank you so much.

RP: Thank you.