



Alexandra Resendez: So this is the Chicago— Columbia College Chicago Oral History Project: Capturing Quarantine. Today is May 5th, 2020. My name is Alexandra Resendez. I'm in Brownsville, Texas. What's your name and location?

Samuele Bevilacqua: My name is Samuele Bevilacqua. I'm currently in West Lafayette, Indiana.

AR: What's your year of birth?

SB: 2000

I: What year at Columbia are you, and what's your major/minor?

N: I'm at Columbia studying filmmaking with a major in directing.

I: What year?

N: What year for graduation? Uh, okay wait. I think it's 2023 if I'm not mistaken. Yeah.

I: What was your housing situation on campus?

N: I was residing at the UC.

I: Okay. So for background information, where were you born?

N: I was born in Moncalieri, Italy.

I: Where were you raised?

N: I was raised Giovanna, Italy from my birth until I was around 13 years of age.

I: What year was your mother born and where was she born?

N: She was born in Turin, Italy, which is near where I was born, in 1971.

I: What was your father's year of birth and place of birth?

N: He was also born in Turin and he was born in 1969.

I: So I'm gonna start with the opener question. How did you get your name?

41 N: How did I get my name? Uhh, my parents were expecting a girl and the name for the girl was
42 Sarah, so Samule was the closest thing to Sarah that they could think of when they found out I
43 was a boy.

44

45 I: What is your first memory?

46

47 N: My first memory, the first memory as far as back as I can remember, is uh probably
48 accidentally throwing like a cup of hot soup all over me when I was like four I think. And I
49 needed to go to the hospital.

50

51 I: So you were born in Italy. How would you describe your childhood in Italy?

52

53 N: I'd say my childhood was fairly uh, fairly lonely from what I can remember. I didn't have
54 many friends. I tended to stay home a lot, that's mostly because where I went to school was a
55 different city from where I lived. We lived about half an hour from the school, so around me I
56 didn't have many people of my age because I just didn't know them, they lived far away and
57 thus I couldn't really — like I could've made friends at school but then I wouldn't have really
58 much time for me to hang out with them after that. I tried a couple sports, none of them really
59 worked out the way my parents would have hoped to. I never really connected with many people,
60 so I just stayed with a very small group of friends, which generally changed after I went to
61 middle school. I had a couple more friends and was able to get invited to a couple more people's
62 houses, maybe like over the weekend to, like I don't know maybe like play, like, Forza Horizon
63 2 or something, I don't remember. So it was something like that but what that allowed me is that
64 I had a lot of time on my hands during my childhood, and again I did a lot of very eclectic stuff. I
65 read a lot. I tried drawing with abysmal results. I took up piano and then dropped it. I tried
66 playing tennis and I dropped it. Then I started liking cinema, after going to a nearby cinema all
67 the time and from that point on I just really started enjoying cinema. I started like going there,
68 having fun, met a couple people that also enjoyed cinema, and from that point on I just created a
69 small group of people that enjoyed things we enjoy, but it was never very large in that sense. We
70 were like, I think like 3 or 4 at most, like those were the highest amount of people I could think
71 of that I had as friends.

72

73 I: So you were 13 when you moved from Italy. What was your biggest challenge in moving
74 countries and how did you overcome it?

75

76 N: I definitely think that there had been two biggest challenges. So the first one was simply like
77 trying to adapt to a slightly different way of life, like again language, about living in a country
78 everybody speaks a certain language you kind of get used to speaking that language in about five
79 to six months I would say, just natural. You just go out — anybody, take an America and drop
80 them in China, five to six months he's able to speak fairly fluent Chinese in my opinion. So, that

was definitely a challenge but the biggest challenge for me was being able to overcome the shyness that I developed while being in Italy, while being separated. Because suddenly I was presented with a situation in which I wasn't far away from the people that I used to go to school with. I live in the same town as those people, so I ended up seeing them a lot even outside of school hours. So that kind of forced me to come out of my shell more and try to talk and understand and be able to relate to people a lot more in that case because there wasn't any more of a separation at that point between me and my peers. We were all grouped up in the same point in that town, so that was probably the hardest part for me which is getting used to that change of social life, I would say.

I: Where did you go to high school?

N: I went to high school in West Lafayette. West Lafayette Junior and Senior High School I went. It was pretty good, it was really really fine I'd say.

I: So did you enjoy your high school experience?

N: Overall, yes I'd say. I would have enjoyed it more than I probably would have enjoyed it in Italy.

I: Why's that?

N: It's just very different. To cut it short, like high school Italy is basically like a mini version of college. So you — there's like the technical institute, or an art institute, or like a philosophical like institute. So like you would choose what kind of Institute to go to so you would start specializing in something pretty much at an early age, which always struck me as kind of not good because how can you expect somebody, who at that point will be around 14-15, to make those kind of decisions? So that in my opinion would've just been difficult. Furthermore, like, again my town didn't have any of those that I was interested, so I would have still had to change and go to a different city to go to that high school. So the situation for me would have been fairly similar to the situation I had been through throughout elementary and middle school.

I: So going — after high school, what expectations did you have going into college?

N: My expectation was that it would have been would uh, it would have been a slightly harder and more intense version of high school, basically. I just basically kind of expected to go there, do my work. Basically, pretty much, try to work as hard as I can on things that I actually enjoyed, and not having to worry about other things that maybe I enjoyed slightly less. And for most of it, that came to pass, again like not talking about like the situation that we're in right now, but pretty much I expected to be able to like be able to explore and understand things that I

121 liked about the type of job I was interested into a lot more and be able to start connecting with
122 people in the industry a lot more than I would have when I was in high school. So, overall, that
123 has been fairly good. I wish I could have met more people. I wish I could have started like
124 working in a more serious job than I used to, maybe like working more regular hours. But other
125 than that, everything else worked pretty much as well as I wanted to.

126
127 I: Before the pandemic, what were some of your favorite things to do?

128
129 N: Before the pandemic. And by that you mean just like when I started college, right? Or just in
130 general?

131
132 I: Yeah. Or it could be either. Just something that you enjoyed doing before coronavirus that you
133 maybe can't do anymore.

134
135 N: Generally, I think, I generally like to walk a lot. I just like get around and just take a walk
136 outside and like sometimes I will just walk or like, I would just walk out of the UC and just take
137 a hike around Chicago for I think like up to four to six hours sometimes. I would just walk a lot,
138 just because it really helped clear my head sometimes, like when I was stressed, when I was
139 feeling overwhelmed by things that were happening. I would just take a walk and try to take
140 things slowly and try to like, come up with plans on how to deal with things. When I found
141 myself overwhelmed with homework and work and other things, I'd just go outside, take a long
142 walk, just clear my head and try to figure out a plan to move forward, and understand, and then
143 work things out as best as I could. And that's probably the main thing that I would have done
144 then that I can't do now because most of the other things I enjoy doing like writing, editing a
145 couple things for people, especially my friends, they send me things to edit on programs. Or just
146 watching movies and analyzing them. Or even more simply just like painting mini sculptures or
147 things like that and miniatures or like taking care of minerals. Like those are things that pretty
148 much haven't changed too much since the pandemic started, so the only big thing that really
149 impacted me was my ability to just walk outside and relax.

150
151 I: So you said you lived at the UC. Can you describe the process of you having to relocate back
152 home?

153
154 N: Well that was a, it was kind of messy, to be honest. So, the incidents and problems proper
155 started around, I'd say like March like 12 or 13, okay. If I'm not remembering — like I think
156 March 12, was when like the Columbia sent the information, like we were going to take like a
157 three week, like, stop to everything and then see where things were going. And at that point, I
158 wasn't sure, like the UC wasn't saying anything at that point about either like moving people out
159 or like just staying there. But I just didn't want — my biggest fear at that point, in the days
160 following that announcement, pretty much like in all the afternoon of the 12th and the early

161 hours of the 13th, was simply worrying that if there was going to be quarantine, I would have
162 found myself shut inside of Chicago. So I thought that the best course of action would have just
163 been to move out to my parents as soon as they could. So, I took a bus ticket on the 13th
164 morning, I packed everything that I could pack and just left in the evening. Right, just moved and
165 packed pretty much the day they announced the closures. And for the next couple weeks I just
166 stayed there and tried to understand what's happening. So it was somewhat messy but I think it
167 was less problematic than the people that actually got pushed out later, from what I can hear.

168

169 I: Did you have any plans or events that you were looking forward to that had to be canceled
170 because of the virus?

171

172 N: Overall, I think I was planning with a couple friends to, for St Patrick's Day, we were
173 planning to do something. Like, my family was gonna come up from Chicago, we're gonna
174 spend the day together. A couple of friends that I know from before college that moved to
175 Chicago and I want to meet them, you know, to catch up to see what would happen. So that was
176 the big thing that we were planning. Otherwise, I tend not to plan things too much in advance.
177 Like, if I am planning something, it will either be for like the end of the month, or like two
178 months from today. Like I really rarely plan things out like six months in advance, unless they're
179 like very important things, like the rent or any big, important things that are life changing, then I
180 would plan much more thoroughly. But usually I don't tend to plan too far out, as far as social
181 life is concerned specifically, so there wasn't really anything that really got messed up for me
182 personally.

183

184 I: So, during this period of quarantine, what has been your biggest struggle?

185

186 N: My biggest struggle? Uh, I think the biggest struggle was just finding a reason not to
187 completely shut down. Because, again, like I have had like bouts of anxiety and depression, just
188 throughout my life. And the situation just, like at first I thought like, Hey, that's kind of sweet.
189 That's gonna give me a couple of weeks to just like recharge. Because I expected this thing to be
190 like, Alright, so it's gonna be a couple of weeks. Virus gonna come, we're gonna be quarantined
191 for like a couple of weeks, we're gonna close this thing down. They're pretty much gonna shut
192 down everything, but I'm gonna know what homeworks I have for, you know, three weeks from
193 today. And that was during March, so I was like, You know, I'm just gonna take these three
194 weeks just to plan out the rest of the semester, so when we come back, I'm just gonna like go into
195 it much more relaxed than I came in in January, okay. I'm just gonna take the second half very,
196 very, very much more relaxed. I'm gonna like be able to achieve more things, and I'm even
197 gonna then try to look for a summer job at that point. And that really didn't happen. So when I
198 found out that things were changing and we're going to do things online and pretty much a lot of
199 stuff started to come in all suddenly I just felt very, very defeated and empty and like I just felt
200 like, there wasn't really anything to do so I kind of like fell into a bit of a depression and couldn't

201 really get out. And to add to that the fact that a lot of my, sorry. A lot of my friends and family
202 that are left in Italy just like, I couldn't quite reach them in the same way because they live there
203 and their situation is, has been much worse for longer. So, hearing what they had to say and
204 everything was just excruciatingly hard, and I just didn't, I just felt like I wasn't able to help them
205 in any way. So then I started just not being able to even like get out of, get out of bed in the
206 morning. So then would just like spend the entire day sleeping and just not being productive in
207 any way not doing anything and then all of a sudden you would see like all the homeworks you
208 missed being like piled up, and you get people that are all like, No it's okay we understand, we
209 understand. And you want to say like, yes but it's not the pandemic, really it's just me that just
210 feels like shutting down, and you don't want to do things but you don't want to say that to them
211 so you feel like you're lying. And all the teachers are being really nice at this point and just like
212 allowing me to do this but like you just feel very defeated and just unable to do anything. So,
213 after that I just had like this pile of things that I had to do for school that I just set up doing and
214 just put aside and just had to do it and that somehow got me back a bit like actually starting to
215 work on things and trying to find something to work on, you know, just keep my mind out of
216 everything but is definitely been hard. So, I would say that as being my biggest challenge. Sorry
217 for like, spending like five minutes talking about this.

218
219 I: No, no no that's fine. That's what this is for. Um, but you mentioned your family in Italy,
220 which is actually going to be my next question. Could you describe the impact of coronavirus in
221 Italy and compare that to here in America?

222
223 N: Well, it is definitely different. From what I could, again I'm not there so I can only like see
224 what they either tell me, or what they were able to extrapolate or find out about it. And what I
225 was able to see just really scared me. Just because like, pretty much instantly you saw spikes
226 everywhere and people are just completely shutting down. Like every job is shut down in Italy.
227 Like just so that you understand they have stay at home orders, for example, there are mandatory
228 in the entire country that are pretty much like martial law, so. You can only leave at certain hours
229 in the day, and you cannot leave your own town. So if you have like parents who live like in a
230 different town, maybe they need assistance, you have to basically call the Ministry of Health, and
231 like basically have an interview with them, like, like this on Zoom and get a special card
232 permission signed by a local like representative, in order to be able to move from one town to
233 another, and just visit like either like parents or anything that might be in need of assistance at
234 that point. So it's definitely much harder and much more closed and personal has been here. Like
235 here has been bad but I don't think has gotten like quite to those levels, mostly because a lot of
236 those things are voluntary and there's a difference between like you, yourself sitting at home and
237 trying to do things and like basically being closed into your home. So, and you can see that when
238 you talk to either my aunt or my grandmother or my other grandparents, that you can clearly see
239 that this thing as an effect on them like you can see like they're sunken in and you can see that

240 they're tired you can tell they're far more just empty at this point and they've been prior to the
241 epidemic. So seeing that was just hard.

242

243 I: Yeah.

244

245 N: Yeah hard is probably the best word I have to describe it. It's just very difficult. So, I guess
246 it's understandable like it's, I understand why it happened. It's just sometimes you look at it and
247 you feel like just you can't do anything about it and just don't know what to do. So yeah, it has
248 been hard, even though technically like as far as like infections like Italy is like way lower than
249 the United States, but again it's also considered, a considerably smaller country so different
250 percentages and all that.

251

252 I: So what ways have you tried to stay in contact with your family in Italy?

253

254 N: Mostly we try to meet with each of them at least once a week. Either through Skype or just
255 WhatsApp calls or anything else to be able to just check in on them and see how they're doing.
256 And mostly it has been working pretty well for them. You can see that like, they kind of look
257 forward to being able to see us because again we're on the other side of the ocean so like they're
258 trying to see if here's anything better and we're like, No, it's kind of the same at this point. There
259 isn't really like a lot or anything else. But, and we keep telling them like, No don't worry, it's
260 gonna be fine. But you can tell that like, some of them are really worried about the future and it
261 kind of gets hard sometimes to talk because you want to worry them. At the same time we don't
262 want to tell them lies or anything else.

263

264 I: How long have they been, because I know they, the virus, hit them first. So how long have
265 they been in quarantine?

266

267 N: They've been in quarantine on a, well it hasn't been like in different situations. So like the first
268 part was like from, like the beginning of February to mid-February and there was only like
269 specific areas that were on lockdown. But pretty much at the end of February, there was like a
270 nationwide lockdown. So, considering that the nationwide lockdown here started like around like
271 the 25th, or something, of March. They've been on lockdown for about a month longer than
272 we've had.

273

274 I: And as someone who was living in America, and observing the situation in Italy, what feelings
275 did their situation evoke?

276

277 N: Maybe in a bit of a selfish way, like some degree of relief that things aren't as bad here
278 currently. So, maybe that. But at the same time just profound powerlessness is the best way to
279 describe it. Just the sensation that you can do anything. You're just stuck here, literally on the

280 other side of the globe at this point, and even though you want to help them, you can't. And you
281 know that even if you're there, you still wouldn't been able to help them because again you can
282 even leave your own town in Italy, so it just gives you this feeling of like, you feel useless at this
283 point. You feel like nothing you do really matters. Cause again, you just shut yourself down, and
284 you're unable to do things that even you're supposed to be doing, and, yeah it's difficult.

285
286 I: Yeah. Um, so, through all this chaos, has there been a positive change that you didn't expect?

287
288 N: I don't know like I think a positive change I guess is, I'm able to see my cousins a bit more
289 often, because we call ourselves like once every week.

290
291 I: Right.

292
293 N: But then again like it's not a very happy occasion, so half and half I guess. That has been a
294 positive but at the same time, you know, you see them and they're just very defeated. So, it's also
295 hard in that sense. But I don't know, I guess like a positive has been, is that I've had some time
296 here to like, try to help my family around the house a bit more. I tried like just generally helping
297 around with my mom and dad trying to see like if I can do anything to help them either taking
298 care of like my brother or other people just, you know, just trying to help as best as I can even in
299 this whole situation.

300
301 I: What have you learned about yourself during quarantine?

302
303 N: I guess I learned that I really don't take things well. And that, like, I'm very susceptible
304 unfortunately to this type of events, even if I'm not touched. And I am just very susceptible to
305 falling into like bouts of like just depressive states, even when very little is actually happening.
306 Like I always know that like I had this problem throughout my life where I just fall into this
307 problem, but like usually I've been able to like recoup fairly quickly, just because like I get
308 distracted by something and I forget why I was even sad in the first place. But here it's been a bit
309 harder because you're just able to see all the other problems, all the other issues and pretty much
310 everything that didn't really work out. And you just feel very, you feel weak at the end of the
311 day. You feel weak and that's, I think, is what hit me the hardest, the realization that if something
312 serious were really to happen, I don't feel confident that I'll be able to either help myself or help
313 others. I will probably be more of a hindrance to most people around me. That's probably the
314 thing I found out the most about myself, is that I really can't do much. And again, it just doesn't
315 feel great to find out that you're kind of useless.

316
317 I: What have you learned about other people during quarantine, for humanity at large, what have
318 you learned?

319

320 N: People are stupid. Like, I know like you see people protesting like wanting to like reopen to
321 watch... to one side like I get it. You kind of want to like put bad things behind you like as soon
322 as possible and like I know they feel like this is a way to get people to like start doing things and
323 not think about that. But, at the same time like we all know that that's just gonna do damage and
324 I don't know. That probably just made me like, lose faith in humanity a bit more and. But at the
325 same time like I found out that some people that I thought were pretty far away are actually
326 pretty cool. They're like, there was a guy I knew here from like my old high school, he's still in
327 high school, he's like a year younger than me. We've reconnected and we talk a lot, mostly like
328 over the phone, and try to think and talk. And we've become fairly good friends, which is like,
329 before like we barely even talk to each other, we're just like on the same swim team. Well not
330 really, he was like on the diving team and I was the swim team. So we kind of talked a couple of
331 times just because, you know, we're on the same team but like, other than that we never really
332 like interacted, and now I can just talk to him more. He's like become a pretty close friend. Even
333 if I have not much to say.

334
335 I: That's nice. So now we're going to move to the core questions. Um, so what were your
336 ambitions when you graduated high school?

337
338 N: Ambitions. Uh, I guess my biggest ambition was being able to just realize some type of
339 independence for myself. Trying to just separate myself from my parents, like not in a mean
340 way. Like for instance, just like being able to make it on my own and trying to figure out things
341 on my own and being able to like, set myself up by the end of the year in a way in which I would
342 need very little help from them. But it hasn't, but again, due to this pandemic I haven't really
343 been able to do that just because again I had to come back here and all that. So, there's definitely
344 been those issues currently, and I do believe that, overall, I generally think that my biggest idea
345 going into my freshman year was being able to just settle myself and understand how things
346 work, and pretty much set myself well for the next three years. And overall I think like that thing
347 has been going fairly well, in the first semester at least. Like I was able to just set a couple of
348 things up. Being able to make connections, talk to people. I found a couple friends that I really
349 enjoyed talking to. I was looking for a job. I had a couple of offers I was very interested in. I
350 wanted to try them out and wanted to see, like, wanted to set myself up in Chicago, in a way
351 where like I could be functional for the next like three years, but unfortunately, again pandemic
352 arrived so that kind of went into trash can. So, what I'm now trying to do is, still trying to set
353 myself in a way where I can succeed but what I'm trying to do now is trying to focus more on
354 myself and trying to just take some character flaws I always had like, again this depressive
355 attacks, this problems with anxiety and everything else that have always plagued me and just
356 trying to fix those. So it went from trying to like, establish myself more generally in the city of
357 Chicago and trying to set myself up in a more physical and concrete way, to just looking inward
358 at that point and trying to fix some things that I haven't really addressed in my life up until this

359 point. And that's really mostly because it's the only thing I can currently do or at least it's
360 anything that I feel I can do at this point.

361

362 I: Right. Um, why did you decide to go to Columbia specifically?

363

364 N: Mostly because of the connection. The fact that like, considering their connection to the
365 entertainment industry, to like general internships values and everything else. I felt fairly
366 confident and like, if I did my job correctly if I looked for those opportunities then like I could
367 set myself, they could set me up in a way which after I left the college and I graduated, then I
368 could already be pretty much on my way to realizing what I wanted to do. Like whatever it is set
369 me up to work on like small productions in TV even there in the city of Chicago, just very small
370 things but still setting myself up for future work.

371

372 I: So when, when did you first become aware of coronavirus? Again, I know you were probably
373 more aware before most Americans because you have family in Italy, but when, around what
374 time period, did you become aware of it?

375

376 N: Okay, let me just get one thing.

377

378 I: I'm gonna drink my water

379

380 N: Let me just get my water.

381

382 I: Yes, water break.

383

384 N: My throat is as dry as the Sahara Desert right now.

385

386 I: That's fine.

387

388 N: All right, so the first time I really heard about coronavirus was just a news report that was just
389 coming in from like I think the New York Times about the small epidemic in China. And I was
390 just, I was actually joking with my friends at that point, I was like, Hey look, remember World
391 War Z remember that movie? This is gonna be a zombies outbreak, you know. So we're just
392 joking around. But I think the first time that I heard that like something was serious was. And
393 again, at the time I didn't really like think much about it. Just because, end of December and
394 beginning of January I would just like hanging out at my parents house over winter break. We
395 had friends over, we're just having like a fairly good time. My brother went back to school
396 around the sixth and I just stayed there because our school started on the 27th, so I just like
397 stayed there for a couple more weeks just to annoy him. So I could just like stay home and just
398 chill while he had to go to school I just you know just, I could do that. I just decided to do that,

399 just because I'm that type of person, unfortunately. Yeah, and I had like a just a couple like
400 bureaucratic things to work out with the school. Just something about like immunization, I think
401 like some forms that I had to turn in so I just had to work those things out over those couple of
402 weeks so I didn't really worry about it. And first couple of weeks of school didn't really think
403 much. Just like when, again, my aunt started sending me a couple of tweets like, Hey, around
404 like beginning of February, which they were like, Hey Sam you heard about the coronavirus? It's
405 here in Italy, so like they're actually shutting down things around Milan and Lombardy, like
406 they're closing down things. I was like, Oh man that's some pretty serious stuff. But like I didn't
407 think much of it. And after that, things just started ramping up all around the world. So yeah that
408 was pretty much the first time I really heard about it.

409
410 I: Um, so where were you when you learned that Colombia was transitioning to remote learning?

411
412 N: Where was I? Where was I? I think it was, more specifically, I believe it was my... Okay, so
413 when we first heard the email the like we would be transferring and just closing down the school,
414 I think that was when, it was with the, what was it again, I think it was like, yeah world cinema,
415 was world cinema was March, 12. That day they announced like school closures and they said
416 like we're just gonna be like a couple weeks so that's what happened, but I think the like when
417 they announced that like thing was gonna be permanent for the entire semester and we're gonna
418 be transitioning fully to online classes, I think I was already here, with my family, when that
419 happened.

420
421 I: How did the announcement impact your living situation?

422
423 N: Like I said before, I just, after the closure I just quickly moved out and came back and my
424 family just took my PC. Like, I assumed that if anything was going to happen then we're going to
425 move to like some type of online learning or something like that. So I decided to take my
426 computer, take a couple like notes and pretty much all my schoolwork and just like, move it out
427 like I didn't really have anything that like needed to be moved because I just got very sparse
428 things from my room. So that's all I decided to do.

429
430 I: Could you describe your current living situation?

431
432 N: Currently I'm just living in my old house, at my parents house. Just regularly with my family
433 and my old room. Which I'm in right now. It's not very good. I have that awful painting that I got
434 when I was three in a city in Italy, that for some reason I haven't burned to the ground yet, but I
435 will do that soon, no worry.

436
437 I: It's from an Italian artist.

438

439 N: Well, that doesn't mean it's good. I don't know why I keep it there. It's awful.

440
441 I: How do the safe distance restrictions in your new location, or your home, differ from the stay
442 at home order in Chicago and in Illinois?

443
444 N: Now I'm not 100% sure how the stay at home orders are in Chicago or in Illinois, but from
445 what I heard, they are fairly similar to situation in Italy, just pretty much complete quarantine.
446 You can only go out certain times of the day and like you can't really move long distances. Here
447 from what I have experienced here, like again, work is closed. Everybody is supposed to work
448 from home but generally they aren't rules on when you can leave the house, you're just supposed
449 to stay indoors if you don't have anything to do. Like for example, we go to buy groceries, but
450 we wear masks. Okay, like we would reduce. And we tend to buy groceries less commonly than
451 when we used to before, for example. Like we only go in there like once or twice a week instead
452 of like almost like every other day. And other than that it hasn't been like that restrictive. Like,
453 we only have two masks here so mostly it's my mother and father who use them just to go out
454 and buy things and everything and me and my brother are just currently staying here. My dad
455 also like goes around and has takes a couple bikes ride like on certain days so he does that, but
456 that's not really a big deal like he just goes. And you know, he's not stopped or anything so you
457 can work out for recreational reasons, even though you're not supposed to, but like again he just
458 wears a mask and that's fine apparently from what I heard. So I guess they're a bit more relaxed
459 here than they are in Chicago, but for most of it I've been experiencing mostly the same way like
460 I've just stayed home like I think I left like twice since I came here. And that's just because like I
461 just felt like I had to get out or I was just gonna, like, lose it. So other than that I've just been
462 staying here and not doing much. So this for me hasn't been too much different from the situation
463 in Chicago.

464
465 I: Um, you mentioned, dealing with bouts of depression. How do you deal with feelings of
466 depression?

467
468 N: I don't. Unfortunately. I mean it's not, I don't completely it's just that, again, I haven't really
469 been able to do that till recently. Cause usually when I had this I had like a couple of just very
470 good people I could talk to, which included like a therapist, which I can't reach right now
471 because they're busy. And even more importantly, just like a couple of friends that I had that
472 were just really close and just really helped me in that sense and helped me get through those
473 bouts of depression when I had them in high school. I had like people like Ian and Mary, like you
474 don't know them, but they were very close friends and they helped me a lot. They really, they
475 didn't really even do that much, like they didn't really offer much of that advice but just have
476 them being there and just listen to what I had to say. And being able to just tell me — hey, it's
477 okay. Like, how can I help? So that was probably the most important thing they did and now
478 they're both quarantined in their respective places, like I think is in Bloomington, if I'm not

479 mistaken. I think he's in Bloomington and he stayed there for the epidemic, although I'm not
480 entirely sure. And then Mary, uh, I don't know where she is. Like, I think she's in Indianapolis,
481 but like, I wouldn't put like, uh, I wouldn't put my hand on it, okay. Like I'm not entirely sure,
482 like I could be saying a whole lot of crap right now because I have no idea where she is,
483 completely zero — I don't.

484

485 I: That's fine.

486

487 N: Like I forgot to just say thanks for once, and just like — I think she changed her phone or
488 something because I cannot talk to her right now. So it's just impossible. I just don't know where
489 she is. I do not know where they are, and the people that I've been friends to, like since I started
490 like college, like again like they're good people. And I like hanging out with them. But like
491 there's a difference between knowing somebody for six months and knowing somebody for six
492 years. Well, seven at this point. But yeah there's difference between knowing somebody from
493 like seven years versus knowing somebody for six months. There's definitely a difference, like
494 those people are people that like I could tell like very deeply personal stuff that I'm not even
495 probably going to say here because they're way too personal. So not being able to talk to them
496 has been just devastating. And I've really struggled to find somebody else that could, in a way,
497 fill that role and be somebody that I can just talk to, just about, just random stuff, just to be able
498 to clear my head and tell me that everything is going to be okay. So, for the moment I've been
499 going in and out of those problems but the only thing that has really like helped me has been
500 trying to just push those thoughts out of my head. And the way I did that was either trying to
501 work when I'd been able to just not drag myself out of my goddamn bed and actually start
502 working on projects, that when I've been able to do that without completely collapsing and just
503 start just going in my corner and crying. Like when I've been able to do that and be able to
504 actually work, and like, concentrate on something long enough to just push through it, it has been
505 fairly okay. When, instead, I had to basically just like close myself off and just not do that, when
506 I haven't been working, when I haven't found the strength to work on projects, to work on things,
507 to work on anything, I just really been doing nothing. So, I haven't really been dealing with that.
508 I'm trying to, but again —

509

510 I: Yeah.

511

512 N: I've not been very good unfortunately. Sorry for that.

513

514 I: It's a process. Um, what are some coping skills that you maybe use to deal with anxiety from
515 the virus?

516

517 N: Again, like I think I already told some of them but, uh, other than what I already said I don't
518 really have much. Like, um, sometimes I play a bit of video games just relax. But even then, like

519 if I'm not in the correct, in the correct mood, then that just stresses me out even more. So, even I
520 have to be correct mood to do some of those things. But I think that the biggest thing that has
521 helped me has been trying to talk to people, even just over the phone. Just try to talk to people I
522 trust and try to like — even, even people that like maybe have more problems than me. Just like
523 listening to people and being of help to other people trying to get them out of like, maybe like a
524 bit of a bum, but sort of like a bit of a sad state. Even trying to help other people I found out has
525 been greatly successful. Just talking to other people and being there for those other people that
526 maybe aren't taking this as well as you have. Like doing that has really helped me because it
527 makes me feel like I'm doing something that actually matters. Because, you know, some people
528 you just hear and you're just like, Alright, I can help you. I can try to help you. And that has
529 probably been the best, at least for me, probably the best that has helped. The best thing I've done
530 that has really helped me deal with my own problems is me trying to help other people deal with
531 their problems, to just sum it up.

532

533 I: Who do you talk to about your concerns?

534

535 N: Currently, not many people. Um, I sometimes talk with a friend come from college, but again
536 I can't tell them everything. Um, I tried to contact some of my old friends here from high school
537 who know me very well, but again it's been difficult. So I don't really have someone specifically
538 I can just go to and just rant on all my problems.

539

540 I: How has the pandemic changed your relationship with your parents? I know you're living with
541 them right now.

542

543 N: It hasn't really changed too much, from my perspective, they've always been very helpful,
544 very supportive, and they've remained that way. They've tried to help me the best way they can,
545 which I'm always grateful for. The only way it's really changed is that I personally try to help
546 them as much as I can, personally, just because I know how difficult it currently is for them to do
547 all of this. So what I really want to do is just find a way to just give back, at this point. Just try to
548 help them get over this in any way they can.

549

550 I: Um, so relating to your academic life. how are you and your professors communicating?

551

552 N: Again, just zoom and sometimes email, but that's about it. I know that I should probably like,
553 talk to them more, just to make them understand like the situation. Like, why have been missing
554 like a couple days. But like, again, sometimes it's just — sometimes you just can't do that
555 because you're afraid how maybe they might react or something, so that is something that I've
556 been trying to do. I haven't really done a good job and that's on me. (unintelligible) That's on me.
557 Those problems have been mine for a long time and I haven't done anything to fix them, so that

558 has been my problem. But other than that, yeah like zoom, emails, that's pretty much been the
559 way it is.

560

561 I: So do you find communicating more difficult now?

562

563 N: Uh, in a way, yeah. Because usually if I really wanted to tell them something, I'd usually just
564 try to like talk to them like right after class.

565

566 I: Yeah.

567

568 N: Just because if I really had a problem then like, pretty much once I was there, once I asked
569 them a question, then I overcame my first problem — which is, again, being very closed off. And
570 I could just be like, hey, here — here's the thing, here are the problems that have been happening
571 and here's why I'm not doing these type of things, here's the problems. Like I understand if you
572 are not gonna do anything about it, but I also just wanted to let you know. So, in a way it has
573 been more difficult to try to communicate because you have to send them emails, and
574 everybody's sending them emails, and they have to sift through everything and like just — I
575 understand how hard it's been on them. I can understand that, like they suddenly find themselves
576 in a situation in which they have to use a lot more systems to communicate with a lot more
577 people than they maybe expected to. And I understand if they do not talk, it's simply back
578 (unintelligible) so I try to be as patient as I can. And overall, I feel like most of them have done a
579 really good job. They've been very understanding to all our situations and I really can't see any
580 of them doing any better job given the situation. Like, I really wish that there was a way for them
581 to like just instantly answer to all of our emails, and instantly solve our concerns, and instantly
582 talk to them, and easily be in a zoom meeting with us at any time of day, but that's not possible.
583 And as far as I can see, they've done the best job they can.

584

585 I: Um, so, in a time of crisis, uh staying informed is important. What are your current news
586 sources?

587

588 N: Currently, in order to like understand how things have been going, I, I tend to simply — I
589 mean if I want information on the pandemic, I simply look at the W.H.O reports that come in
590 daily, just because I know those are like, just those are scientists, like they're just gonna give me
591 raw numbers and tell me things. But for other things I just generally at a variety of news and just
592 compare and contrast. Usually that's been my, my point of view usually, so if I just start here
593 listing either all the journals I subscribe to, or all the different station and news networks, that I
594 get my information from, we'd be there all day because maybe pretty much every news station in
595 existence. Because what I do is usually just like read all of them, see the differences, see
596 anything and then pretty much just kind of like finding the truth by like understanding where the
597 differences are.

598
599 I: Is there anyone right now — whether it's like a scientist, or a politician, any sort of uh leader
600 — that you consider reliable, or is acting as a, kind of like a voice of reason?
601
602 N: Ah, I don't know.
603
604 I: Do you think we have that right now?
605
606 N: I don't really think so. I can't think of a single one that has done a perfect job, but at the same
607 time I can't think of someone that has been doing a completely garbage job. I think everybody's
608 been doing the best they could under the circumstances. I can definitely think of a couple that
609 like, maybe could be doing like a bit more maybe, maybe being like a bit more, you know just,
610 uh maybe being a bit more present, it would be better. But other than that, like, it's an impossible
611 situation. It's a freaky situation, and I understand that like everybody's answer to this will be just
612 burying their heads in the sand and not do anything and hope it passes, that's what I'm doing. I'm
613 pretty much just like closing myself in a room and just like ignoring everything that happens
614 until like I can see clear skies up ahead. But if I have somebody that I have seen that has really
615 been uh, really in a way, an inspiration for me is probably my grandma.
616
617 I: Why's that?
618
619 N: She's — well that's because she is pretty much like alone in her house. Because just last year,
620 like, pretty much like a month last year, like around April of last year, my grandfather passed
621 away. So she's just been recently been left alone in this situation, and so she wasn't prepared to
622 do what she's been doing which is, you know like — sorry, I just
623
624 I: That's fine. Take your time. Drink some water if you need to.
625
626 N: I (unintelligible), it's okay. Like, again, just just being able to just like being sat there and like
627 understand what you have to do. And just like following every single guideline and just being
628 like, hey, those are the rules, I'm just gonna play by the rules, I'm just gonna get through it as
629 best as I can just, even though I'm alone. And if you guys can just talk to me, that'd be great. So,
630 when she was talking to us and talking about that I just, I just thought to myself, Wow, that's um,
631 that's a really good person. I'm, I'm proud that she's my grandma, you know.
632
633 I: And what do you think of the people that are kind of on the opposite of that spectrum, where
634 they are not following the rules and are fighting the rules?
635
636 N: Well, part of me just thinks that they're doing that at their own risk. So like, if I see somebody
637 throwing themselves off a building, like I can't really stop them. And, I mean, I can tell them that

638 they're idiots, but like, that's not going to deter them from just jumping. But I think that might be
639 not exactly an apt comparison, a more apt comparison would be somebody speeding in the
640 opposite direction on a crowded highway. So you're not only putting yourself at risk, but you're
641 putting other people at risk. So, I think that everybody should just, at this point, just like,
642 understand that this is something that we're only going to get out if everybody does right and
643 follows the rules. So, I don't know. I'm just very angry when I see that, just people who are out,
644 like— like almost no problem, like they're just working from home and some of them are just
645 bored because it doesn't have anything to do. Like if your business is threatened by all the
646 situation, like I can understand why there might be a lot of anger coming. But at the same times,
647 you also have to understand that this is a situation that is very complicated, and you're not the
648 only person in the universe. And again, if your livelihood depends on like a restaurant or
649 something, you are right to do so. And like, if you're like protesting like a safe way, like I don't
650 know, like closing yourself in your car and like painting your shield or something. That like, you
651 know, that's 100% correct. You're allowed to do that, and hell, you should do that, because it's
652 your livelihood you're supposed to be fine. It's okay. Do that. Go ahead. If you're just like
653 running around congregating and just like — like I think you can kind of see when somebody is
654 protesting for something that actually matters, like their livelihood, or their life, or like their job,
655 and they're doing that in a respectful, understanding way, given the situation, and people who are
656 just, pardon my language, just assholes at this point. You can kind of tell the difference, and
657 that's pretty much where my line stands. If you're doing something right, then you know you're
658 doing something right and anybody can see that you're doing something right. And if you're
659 doing something wrong at this point everybody should see that you're doing something wrong.
660 And you probably should be arrested, or maybe just given like house arrest, you don't want to
661 overcrowd the prisons.

662

663 I: Um, so moving onto the reflection part of the Core Questions, what do you think Columbia
664 should have done differently? And as you drink your water, I will drink mine.

665

666 N: Again, my situation is slightly different than most people. (unintelligible) I had a family to
667 come back to.

668

669 I: I'm sorry. The audio, the audio kind of went a little whack there. Could you repeat what you
670 just said?

671

672 N: Can you hear me now?

673

674 I: Yeah, it sounds better. It was only for that brief moment.

675

676 N: So, I think that I was in a slightly different situation than most people. Like, I know that a lot
677 of people had a family to come back to which is great. And in that sense, Columbia did a fairly

678 good job, like transitioning all the classes in a fairly reasonable amount of time to online. So I
679 did not complain about that. I think that moving to online was the best thing they could have
680 possibly done in order to not lose the year completely. I think that, if anything, communication
681 has been like a bit of a hit-and-miss. Like I definitely feel like they could have communicated
682 some things better. Like, I've heard, but take this with a grain of salt because I can neither
683 confirm nor deny anything, but like I heard that they gave like people from the dormitories I
684 think like two or three days, like leave them and pack it in. Which, like again, for people like me
685 who just have like a house, they can just quickly pack in the things they need to, like a PC, just
686 like clean like bathrooms, cleaning supplies, and just the clothes and everything, and just go back
687 home. And then, like, everything that's like left there, they can just come back later with their
688 family, and just like take all the rest of the stuff out by themselves. So, people like me, that's not
689 a problem. But people who like did not have a house to go back to, like let's say like,
690 international students, or people who just live way too far away and they just can't fly back, or
691 people who maybe come from, I don't know, unsupportive households, let's say, like people who
692 cannot go back home and didn't have like another house ready. I think those people like
693 definitely had the, the hardest part of this point. To try to like find a place to live in this very
694 difficult time, like I heard some people, like, had to just hang out with their friends for way
695 longer than they probably would have wanted to themselves, due to this problem. So, I
696 understand wanting to clear the dormitories as quickly as possible to avoid the spread, but I think
697 that if anything, there should have been, like, a bit more of a transition period. Like I think, like
698 you think giving them like — again, I don't know. I shouldn't be doing these decisions. Like, I'm
699 not like a board member or a politician or anything, but like, I think that if they'd given them like
700 more time to just find — or even just like the people who are unable to move, just like let them
701 stay in those places and just try to spread out the people who remain, in a way. So that there will
702 be as little interaction as possible, that maybe would have been the best possible option but,
703 again, I'm not a politician. I, uh, I don't know how this stuff work. Like, I think for— from my
704 part of the experience, they've done as best as they could. And, uh, other than a couple of
705 problems with communication, which has been definitely a problem — I wish they talk more. I
706 wish they — even, not only just send emails, but even just like called up people and like maybe
707 asked them how they're doing, or ask them if there's any problem, or maybe like ask — like call
708 them to just remind them of maybe things they have to do, or something. Like I think that would
709 have really helped get many people just moving once online teaching started. That's from my
710 perspective I, again, I had a f—[audio drops]

711

712 I: Okay, the audio and visuals are down right now. I don't know if you can hear me, but I'm
713 gonna wait for it to come back. Okay. Can you see—hear me?

714

715 N: Yeah, I can hear you.

716 I: Okay. We were out for just like a little bit. I didn't get that last portion. Um, after, uh, that's
717 my input — uh, you made a comment at the very end. I don't know if you want to repeat
718 yourself.

719
720 N: So what I said was basically like, considering that — considering how simple my situation
721 was, my transition has been fairly easy. And I think Columbia has done the best they could have
722 done, even though there is room for improvement, and my number one place for improvement,
723 communications.

724
725 I: Um, so what aspects of life did you take for granted before the virus?
726

727 N: I think just the ability to just, just, the ability to just like walk outside without like worrying
728 about whether you're breaking the rules or not, probably. I know it sounds silly, but again like,
729 being closed in your house a lot and just wondering whether it's good, good or not to even step
730 out your house — that is definitely like a weird feeling that I didn't expect to be feeling once this
731 whole situation started. Furthermore, I do believe that uh — another thing I really just felt weird,
732 at least to me, once this all started that I definitely took for granted before, were just, I don't
733 know, like going to a restaurant. Like, usually when I stayed here at my parents' house like we
734 go out to eat like at least once per week, like usually on Saturday, we just go out on a restaurant
735 and just like eat out just because we're Italians and (laughs) we kind of like the — we like going
736 out, okay. We kind of like just going out for a night, eating outside, and maybe talking a bit,
737 having some fun. So that was definitely something I did not expect to just miss, to just miss this
738 much after I went into quarantine, but that's pretty much it. Just the ability to just, really just
739 leave the house even and just going out to a restaurant. That was probably the strangest thing that
740 once quarantine started that I definitely took for granted before.

741
742 I: So, what has been the most significant change in your life due to the virus?
743

744 N: The thing that has changed the most for me?
745

746 I: Yeah.
747

748 N: Hard to say. Uh, I think that what changed the most, at least for me, was just my general
749 mental state. Like, usually during spring and summer I feel very uplifted generally, because you
750 know, just — again during the summer I usually go back to my family in Italy, and we just hang
751 out, have some fun and just do that. I meet a couple old friends in Italy and then just, like come
752 back and start a new year. So, so generally, once like March ends and we start going in— [audio
753 drops] ...big fan of staying closed inside

754

755 I: Hi, sorry, the audio went out. It stopped after generally, generally when March ends. So
756 whatever you said afterwards, I did not hear.

757
758 N: Alright, so generally, when March ends — uh again, usually I feel very uplifted because I'm a
759 very like outside person. Here in Indiana the winter is just pretty cool. There's like a lot of cold, a
760 lot of snow, lots of wind so you just stay close inside a lot. So, once the winter really ends I used
761 to spend a lot of time walking outside. A lot of time just like walking around the city and just
762 enjoying it. And just the ability to just like have the sun. Like I'm a very summer type person,
763 just because I really like the outdoors. So, being locked inside this long, despite seeing like really
764 good days outside — like sometimes, like I see a good day, like beautiful bright sun outside.
765 Like, like you are right now. Like, that place looks really nice. And I'm just like, Man, I wish I
766 could just like — I wish I could just like take a walk, you know. I wish I could just like go, like
767 maybe meet some people, walk down that house to where some of my friends used to stay, see if
768 they have come back for like maybe the holidays, hang out with them, have fun. But like now
769 I'm just locked inside, and it just really feels, uh confining. It really feels confining, and I have
770 never quite felt like this when I was younger — when anything like this ever happened. Again,
771 nothing like this has ever happened in my life. But like, I can't remember a time in which, like
772 — okay let me rephrase that. I have never experienced a time in which I wasn't allowed to go
773 outside due to something outside of my own stupidity, okay. Because if I'm an idiot and I
774 decided to just stay home for like 25 hours a day to watch Netflix, then that's on me, okay.

775
776 I: (Laughs) Right.

777
778 N: That's me being an idiot because I decided to just to like binge-watch Parks and Recreation
779 for like an entire week. That's my call. But like, wanting to go outside and not being able to,
780 there's definitely a sense that you're restricted. There's definitely like a small sense of almost
781 claustrophobia that started setting in at one point.

782
783 I: M'hm.

784
785 N: Which just really feels like there's nothing really you can do. And again, add that to what I've
786 recently been feeling with my...problems — let's just call them. With my general mental
787 problems that I've had, that are just being like exponentially worsened due to the crisis. And uh,
788 you just find yourself with someone that just doesn't really feel like doing much, unfortunately.
789 And I know that this is something that like a lot of people feel. And I just don't really know what
790 to do. Again, I would like to think that I'm unique, that I'm the only one feeling like this, but I
791 know that I'm not. And the hardest part for me is knowing that there are a lot of people who are
792 dealing with this a lot better than I am. A lot of people that like are working, are being
793 productive, while I'm sitting here and I'm not doing anything. And, again, you just start feeling

794 like there's something wrong with you. Again, there is something wrong with me, but, you
795 know, even more.
796
797 I: Um, how do you feel about the future?
798
799 N: I don't know. It just...it feels like — it feels like there isn't really much for a future,
800 unfortunately. Like, I really feel like uh — I really feel like the only thing that really keeps me
801 looking forward to the future at this point is just, homework, you know.
802
803 I: Yeah.
804
805 N: Just, like I see what I have to do and just, I look at them, and like — sometimes I'm just like,
806 Ahh, I don't wanna do them. You just can't get yourself out the bed, unfortunately, to do them
807 — just because, you just feel horrible and unable to do anything, and you start crying. But
808 sometimes, like you look at them and you're like, Alright, so I have everything. But then I start
809 asking myself, okay but what happens after the semester is over? Like, what am I going to do?
810 [audio glitches] an email, like signing up for like next Fall. And I'm like, [audio glitch] do I
811 really want to? Cause like, if the problem is over and like, we're just going to go back and
812 everything is gonna come back to normalcy next— [audio drops]
813
814 I: Sorry, the audio is out again.
815
816 N: When the—
817
818 I: Okay, it came back. Sorry, the audio— I'm glad it's like towards the end of the interview, now
819 that the internet is messing up. Um, but you were saying going back to...
820
821 N: Yeah, going back to—
822
823 I: (unintelligible)
824
825 N: School next year, I think like— again, I'm st— I've been getting like emails, sending emails
826 for a course, like that and uh, I don't know. I literally don't know. Like, if we're going to
827 actually go back and do work like we usually do, then I— yes. That's why I [audio glitches]
828 wanted to come to Columbia for, to be outside, to film things, to work, to like do the work and
829 do everything I can. If it's going like this again — it's not even just a no, it's just, I don't know
830 what to do.
831
832 N: Um, that reaches the end of the interview. Um, is there anything else you'd like to add?
833

834 I: Uh, just uh...I'm sorry if I got too personal and uh, I maybe started tearing up a bit in some
835 parts. So, I'm sorry for that [audio glitches] that happened.
836
837 I: Oop. The audio is out again.
838
839 N: Alexandra? Is everything alright?
840
841 I: Oh, hello? Can you see me?
842
843 N: You just—
844
845 I: Hello?
846
847 N: You just froze. Are you getting anything?
848
849 I: Okay. Yeah, yeah now I'm getting you. Okay, sorry. So anything uh— last thing you wanna
850 say before I end this?
851
852 N: That's probably uh, a good idea. I don't know how much you got about the last part.
853
854 I: Yeah, I got most of it, I think.
855
856 N: Alright, so just, probably that.
857
858 I: Okay, alright. I'm gonna end it now.