



1 Alex Schmelter: Okay. This interview is part of the Columbia College Chicago archives and
2 Honors Oral History project, Capturing Quarantine. My name is Alex Schmelter I'm recording
3 from my home in Lake Villa, Illinois. Could you state your name, the date and the location,
4 you're recording from?

5
6 Paige A. Barnes: Yes. Hi. My name is Paige Barnes, I am recording this in Chicago, Illinois in
7 the downtown area and today is Monday, May 4 at 1:54pm Central Time.

8
9 Alex Schmelter: Um, could you say your date of birth, please just the month and the year.

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11 Paige A. Barnes: Yeah, my birthday is June of 2000

12
13 Alex Schmelter: Uh, could you state your, your, your major and your expected year of
14 graduation?

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16 Paige A. Barnes: I am currently a junior journalism major with a concentration in broadcast and I
17 have a minor in public relations and I am intended to graduate in 2021, in the Spring of 2021.

18
19 Alex Schmelter: Where were you born?

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21 Paige A. Barnes: I was born in Gwangju, China.

22
23 Alex Schmelter: Uh, where were you raised?

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25 Paige A. Barnes: In Cincinnati, Ohio.

26
27 Alex Schmelter: Uh, when was your mother, born and where was she born?

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29 Paige A. Barnes: My mother was born in 1959 and she was born in Wilson, North Carolina.

30
31 Alex Schmelter: Uh, when was your father, born and where was he born?

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33 Paige A. Barnes: My father was born in 1961 and he was born in Mount Vernon, Ohio.

34
35 Alex Schmelter: What was your earliest memory?

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37 Paige A. Barnes: I think I was three years old and I was living in the first house that my family
38 had moved in in Cincinnati, Ohio, and I was a big yellow house wouldn't house with a sweeping
39 porch and I just remember going upstairs when my dad was mowing the lawn. I can't remember
40 where my mom was, but I was going upstairs into the attic or trying to at least end, there's a

41 really short staircase to go up there, kind of like a like a ladder not actual like carpeted staircase
42 and I just remember seeing it being pitch black. And I got all creeped out. And I saw a spider and
43 I screamed and I just ran back downstairs and sick and maybe, maybe I shouldn't do that but
44 that's that's early on I can really remember.

45
46 Alex Schmelter: Where did you grow up?

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48 Paige A. Barnes: Majority of my life was in Cincinnati, Ohio, in a small suburb called Wyoming.

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50 Alex Schmelter: Um, when were you told about your adoption and what were you told?

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52 Paige A. Barnes: I always knew that I was adopted, and I believe that the main reason why my
53 parents really started filling me in with the details. I mean, they always told me I was adopted,
54 like I said, though as I got older, they told me more about like the technical processes that they
55 had to go through to adopt me so like, you know, they had a social workers go to their house or
56 go to the House that they plan on living because right at the moment they lived in Saginaw
57 Michigan and actually I was supposed to be adopted a year earlier. So in 2000 right after I was
58 born. And then after the paperwork were supposed to go through. They were get me but then 911
59 happened and all flights halted and like the whole country change. So I wasn't able to be adopted
60 and picked up China's soon as they'd like me to. But growing up as a kid. I remember the
61 community that I grew up in was very much of a black and white community very typical you
62 know everyone had a mom and a dad and everyone was born biologically, and so the fact that I
63 was an Asian child with two Caucasian parents was just earth-shattering right and it was really
64 difficult because in elementary school when we learned about like this is mom. This is dad and
65 like tell about your siblings right and I'm, um, I grew up as an only child. I have a half brother
66 for who we share the same dad but different moms and I just remember some of the really crude
67 comments that kids will make about being adopted, like, you know, "How much did you cost?"
68 or "Did your real parents", I hate that term "real parents", "not love you enough so they just gave
69 you up in China?". And I know that you know whenever somebody would make such a harsh
70 comment like that. And sometimes I didn't think that it was intentional is just more of like, not
71 knowing, or at least that's what I'd like to believe, but my mom would say that just because I
72 didn't grow in her belly. I always grew in her heart, which is really sweet.

73
74 Alex Schmelter: Um, what kind of rules did your parents have around the house?

75
76 Paige A. Barnes: My dad was more into, as a kid, he would do more of the physical punishment.
77 So you know spankings nothing more than that and then my mom, she was in her early really
78 cunning and knew exactly what I liked. So if I did something, say bad, you know, first, it would
79 be a warning like, "Paige, don't do this", and then afterwards, it would be, you know you're
80 grounded from your DS or you're grounded from using this toy for a week or something. And

81 that's how I remember being punished, but it was a lot of the time, you know, don't burp. I wasn't
82 allowed to say "fart". I also couldn't say, "shut up". And I remember that. I can't, I still can't, to
83 this day, put my elbows on the kitchen table or wherever we're dining. So that's something that
84 always sticks with me here in the back of my mind, my mom saying "get your elbows off the
85 table!"

86
87 Alex Schmelter: Who were some of your mentors growing up?

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89 Paige A. Barnes: Definitely my mom, Trish. She was a big mom-, she is a big mentor and I
90 admire her because she's so her own person. I like that. She is really individualistic and I really
91 admire, um, a family friend of ours, her name's Hillary. She's got kids of her own already, but I
92 just love also how, how young at heart she is so definitely a mentor growing up and the teachers
93 here at Columbia, a few of them you know they're not. I met them, you know, during my time at
94 college, but pretty much every journalism teacher I had it's been wonderful. Not to say that my
95 core class teachers haven't, but especially my journalism teachers.

96
97 Alex Schmelter: Um, where did you go to high school?

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99 Paige A. Barnes: Wyoming High School in Wyoming, Ohio.

100
101 Alex Schmelter: What were some of the big memorable moments while you were in high
102 school?

103
104 Paige A. Barnes: I would say because the school was really small. There's about 150 per grade.
105 So about 650 in the entire school. Everybody knew everyone and was an everyone single like
106 business and, you know, part of it was good because everyone was really close knit, um, but also
107 kind of bad, because remember should spread like wildfire and something that I thought was
108 unique to my school because we're pretty I was an even now, it's a pretty affluent area of
109 Cincinnati, um, we would always have these really big homecomings and leading up to it, each
110 grade would get about \$500 each to build this float off of a trailer and then we would put chicken
111 wire around it and put whatever like newspaper inside of it, and then use tissue paper of different
112 colors to pump the giant figurine of the choice and each year had a theme. So on years like cereal
113 boxes and other with superheroes and just to see this \$500 thing go down the road was one of the
114 best things and I was also part of the homecoming court and that was great because I got to walk
115 during halftime through the field and I was also a cheerleader. So a lot of my friends through
116 high school were cheerleaders. Um, yeah.

117
118 Alex Schmelter: Um. How important has dance and ballet been in your life?

120 Paige A. Barnes: Oh, I'm sorry. I totally forgot about that, alongside being a cheerleader. I have
121 been dancing since I was two years old. I don't dance in college and that has played such a big
122 role in my life because the way that it started. My mom has said that I was watching a movie
123 with her and there's this girl who was dancing and I had said, "What is that? I want to do it" and
124 my mom said that was ballet and a week later I was signed up for a dance class and I started out
125 with ballet and then I moved to tap and I did jazz and as I got older, I did jazz competition, not
126 on the level of *Dance Moms*, but something on that spectrum, um, and I remember getting my
127 first pointe shoes too. So that was you know how there's different ages for a rite of passage is,
128 you know, you turn sixteen you get your license, right? When I turned, I think I was twelve and a
129 half going on thirteen my feet were strong enough where I could get to wear pointe shoes. And
130 that was a really big, big moment because it feels like I was becoming a woman. I was just able
131 to dance in more in those bigger dance numbers like *Sleeping Beauty* or *Snow White, Le*
132 *Corsaire*.

133
134 Alex Schmelter: Were there any world events in high school that you could or before that you
135 could draw parallels with the virus now?

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137 Paige A. Barnes: I was eight, when SARS first broke out, and I don't really remember it, because
138 I don't think it broke out too bad. In the US, I do you remember swine flu, I believe I was twelve,
139 eleven to twelve when that happened, and that was something because everyone was freaking
140 out, I remember reading that news or feeling that, and I also know that everyone in my high
141 school and my middle school, just everyone in the community had to get a vaccine have either a
142 nasal spray or a needle vaccine and oh gosh, I hate needles. That's why I remember it so
143 distinctly. And I think I got the needle vaccine, despite my own wishes because it was less likely
144 for me to shoot that out. So that was very similar but I don't think there's anything else that I
145 really remember that would draw close parallel besides the swine flu.

146
147 Alex Schmelter: Um, what were some of your expectations when you graduated high school?

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149 Paige A. Barnes: I had hoped to go to college immediately no judgment against people who
150 didn't I just felt like I didn't have any plans to do a gap year and I also hoped that I would find
151 myself more as who I wanted to be and get closer to my career. There was really grappling
152 between being, um, a professional dancer, or going into journalism, which I can tell you a little
153 bit later as ended up how I went into Columbia double majoring. Um, I'd also hoped to stay in
154 touch with my friends majority of them went to big state schools in Ohio, Indiana, Michigan and
155 joined sororities which Columbia doesn't have any sororities so I was just a little bit concerned
156 about that, going to a whole new city and not knowing a soul, but I really knew that it was a
157 good move for me because I could become closer to who I want to be.

158
159 Alex Schmelter: That ties into the next one. Why did you decide to attend Columbia?

160

161 Paige A. Barnes: I looked at about ten schools, and I, I mean when I say, look, I mean, I went
162 there physically did the whole college tour with my family. I was deciding between Columbia
163 Savannah College of Art and Design in Savannah, Georgia. I also looked at the Atlanta campus.
164 I looked at Ball State University of South Carolina Ohio University and Miami and Oxford,
165 Ohio. So plenty of them that had really great reputations, had really nice journalism programs,
166 but ultimately (laugh) I chose Columbia because of one, where it was in the city and two,
167 because I could double major in dance and journalism, which a lot of colleges only allowed me
168 to major in in ballet and minor in journalism or something because they're both really rigorous
169 and demanding majors.

170

171 Alex Schmelter: Why did you choose your major?

172

173 Paige A. Barnes: I ended up deciding on journalism over dance because the dance program here
174 at Columbia wasn't, it's more holistic with all different types of dance, meaning it offers tap,
175 ballet, and West African and I have never done West African but I think it's great to learn,
176 though it doesn't focus on classical ballet as much as I'd hoped and so I thought, you know,
177 dance is beautiful and wonderful. But the odds are of becoming a prima ballerina, it just is slim
178 to none and journalism's pretty demanding as well. But I was just concerned about how the
179 longevity of being a dancer would work. So that's why I ultimately chose journalism and then I
180 added public relations as a minor because I think they work really well together.

181

182 Alex Schmelter: What jobs have you had in college?

183

184 Paige A. Barnes: Which I was having I had, right? I work as a student ambassador. That was the
185 first job I had on campus and I believe I started last year so in 2019 and that was in, yeah (pause)
186 May of 2019 and then I was a resident assistant this past year. And that was really fun, um, yeah,
187 well, I'm not working there right now and I'm also working for the Chronicle and I started that
188 earlier this semester of September of 2019 and that's been working well. I went from a staff
189 reporter to the news editor. I don't have any off campus jobs, I couldn't couldn't do them. But
190 really the reason why I'm working, so much so that I can pay for college myself.

191

192 Alex Schmelter: Can you tell me what it's like being an editor for The Chronicle?

193

194 Paige A. Barnes: I'd say this is like for most journalism jobs they tell you you're going to your
195 hours or what from nine-to-five or you know you work a twenty hour work week because we're
196 part time and students but the reality of it is you're ending up working thirty to forty hours a
197 week, and that's because an article has to get published. And that's why I believe you know, one
198 has to be really, really passionate about journalism, because it goes above and beyond the call of
199 what is expected, um, there's always ethical dilemmas, moral dilemmas, um, you know, you're

200 always on deadline, you have to be better than the next person who wrote it and it's so fast paced
201 to because you'll see if you google an event, you know, CNN covered NBC, ABC, CBS. It's a
202 really competitive market. I'm doing print now, but I really hope to do broadcast. I love it.

203

204 Alex Schmelter: What has coverage of the coronavirus been like at the, at the Chronicle?

205

206 Paige A. Barnes: Because we are not able to be in the newsroom, that means that we are not able
207 to lay out a print edition for every Monday and we usually lay out the thing on Adobe InDesign
208 on Fridays, and then Mondays, it would come out and stands and now that everything is online.
209 That means that our issues are only online. It's been really odd, um, we use Slack, we still use
210 Google Drive right now to upload all of our recording checks our fact checks. We still edit still
211 online, we've always edited online (crash). I will say it's really hard to stay motivated and when
212 the news first broke out right from Columbia and the campus closure it was just shocking, right,
213 and I think we really wanted to scoop the story before, I mean, not that there's another news
214 outlet on, on campus, um, but we really wanted to try to get in contact with Dr. Kim first and the
215 press office because it's not easy being a student journalists, we don't have access to higher ups
216 as much as we would like to. But I've tried to cover a lot of positive things because I know
217 people are just so depressed hearing things about, you know, tuition. We're not getting a refund
218 and "by the way, you know, you don't apply for the cares act because you're an international
219 student", um, being displaced from the residence halls like all of it has been really depressing.

220

221 Alex Schmelter: Um, when or, where, uh, when and where were you when you first heard about
222 the virus?

223

224 Paige A. Barnes: I had known about the virus, it's been around, at least in China for about a year
225 now, it became on my radar, I follow the news pretty religiously, I would say, with (pause)
226 probably in January of this year, so January of 2020 I had read about it and I was kind of
227 concerned, like, you know, this is in China, it sounds isolated there I didn't realize the gravity of
228 the matter until it started spreading you know, more around Asia countries Europe and then once
229 it hit Europe, I knew like America is going to get it just because of how much of a globalized
230 society, we were so I was probably in my dorm room when I first even heard the term
231 coronavirus and reading it in an email newsletter from CNN, I think.

232

233 Alex Schmelter: What details, did you first hear about the virus?

234

235 Paige A. Barnes: People, people, as a news reporters mainly reported that it was very similar to
236 SARS and MERS and like I had said I was eight or nine and I don't, I didn't know that
237 comparison. So I immediately googled what that meant and basically, they're just a fancy term
238 for adult respiratory virus. I didn't know any cures for it, um, I knew that the US had it, but not
239 nearly as bad as the coronavirus at least because I wasn't aware of stay in place order like there is

240 now.Uh, but that's what I mainly googled and I also wanted to know like how it came about
241 because my journalism classes when it started spreading a lot not to the stage just yet. We had
242 talked about it and like the updates is like where it started, how does one get it?, what are the
243 symptoms?, how do you prevent it?
244

245 Alex Schmelter: What was your reaction? Did you do anything to prepare?
246

247 Paige A. Barnes: Not as not as early as I should have, I believe personally. When the first case
248 came to the States that really set me into action. Um, I was thinking about it, but I couldn't really
249 do much about it because I lived in college, housing and so I could of course I could stay there
250 and not go to classes, but because it wasn't a universal issue at the college just yet I think I would
251 have looked at have been looked at a little bit strangely like "It's only in California, why are you
252 quarantining yourself in your dorm room when we're in Chicago?" So I went around life, as
253 usual, I did wash my hands more and I covered my mouth when I coughed like I always do, but
254 nothing like I'm doing right now.
255

256 Alex Schmelter: Where have you been getting your news about the virus?
257

258 Paige A. Barnes: I get daily newsletters from Poyn, P-O-Y-N-T-R, and then I get it from CNN. I
259 also follow The Hill, The Atlantic's really good, Vox is really good. Oh, The Daily Water Cooler
260 as well. These are all newsletters, just because if I go on a news website I will just be clicking
261 and just go down this deep hole of news and also Block Club Chicago, which is a local news
262 source in Chicago is wonderful, too, because then I can see what's really happening individually,
263 um, within the neighborhoods.
264

265 Alex Schmelter: Um, how did the virus affect your work as resident's assistant?
266

267 Paige A. Barnes: When the college sent out the email from, signed by Dr. Kim, that the campus
268 was closing, you know, I took a sigh of relief. And I was thinking, *Okay, everything's gonna be*
269 *okay*. And then we got another email, probably the week later, and that was about, excuse me
270 about how the residence halls were closing and so all of us RA's were concerned about where we
271 were going to go because many of us took the job, not only because we really care about like the
272 college and residents, but more so because financially, we have to work for housing and when
273 we when we saw that we emailed Residence Life and residence life. To be honest, I didn't know
274 about it because it sounded like they were just as surprised when Dr. Kim sent that email as we
275 were so they were scrambling trying to figure out what was going to happen, you know, there are
276 some rumors swirling within the RA group that we were able to stay in the residence halls and
277 then it was confirmed that we would be able to so I was like, "Okay, I'll just help my residents
278 move out and do anything I can do to assist them". But then when we found out as an RA, we
279 had to go I suddenly went into action mode, trying to figure out what I was going to do and

280 where I was going to move. I'm still getting my stipend and I will say it is a little bit weird being
281 paid as an RA, but not working as an RA.

282

283 Alex Schmelter: What precautions did your state you reside in now take during the pandemic?

284

285 Paige A. Barnes: I am in Chicago and right now, the stay-in-place order issued by Governor J.B.
286 Pritzker has been extended to the end of May. So May 30 I feel like it could go into mid June as
287 well. Starting this past Friday, we had to, us Chicagoans had to wear masks wherever we were
288 going out in public, but that excluded exercising running biking, that sort of thing and washing
289 your hands, of course, I've seen signs in those essential grocery stores like Target right down the
290 street said you have to wear a mask in order to enter some of the restaurants that I've gone into to
291 pick up food they also have rubber gloves on. They asked, they give out pairs of rubber gloves to
292 pick up our foods in some places I've even taken my temperature as well. I don't think that's
293 required just yet, but I definitely understand why better safe than sorry.

294

295 Alex Schmelter: How did your family and friends treat the pandemic protocol?

296

297 Paige A. Barnes: The friends back at home, they were very, they were very worried friends
298 because I'm talking about my adult friends. I have a lot of adult friends. I usually get along with
299 adults more and they were all concerned, because, you know, most of them are sixty and above
300 or even if the friends that I have that are my age, you know, nineteen or twenty they have
301 autoimmune diseases. And so immediately went inside, asked friends to help stock up groceries
302 for them, have been staying away from other people. And my college friends from other states
303 went back home to Cincinnati and I ended up moving in with my significant other. Then my
304 parents are also taking a lot of precautions regarding their health because they're at the higher
305 risk if they contract the coronavirus.

306

307 Alex Schmelter: Um, how seriously did you take the news of the virus initially? Were you
308 skeptical about the danger?

309

310 Paige A. Barnes: Hmm, I took it pretty, pretty seriously as I had learned about how quickly it
311 would kill someone, and how easily it what especially as there is no pure just yet. And I don't
312 know, I can't really i mean i would really say when it hit the United States, you know, I knew
313 that it was mysterious in the sense that people didn't know how to even treat it because there's a
314 respiratory or who was even like was there, yeah, I just have a vaccine and just how fast it could
315 spread that was really kind of concerning to me. It made me feel almost paranoid. Knowing and
316 reading the facts that if you know you cough in the air it can stay in the air for three hours. So
317 you might not even know who was in the area right and you're just walking by and you breathe
318 in those germs and you get it. Same with touching anything. I mean, you have to touch things

and what about your phone right your phone truly grows, it goes everywhere with you. Most or with most people and so just thinking, okay, you can wear gloves but if you're wearing gloves and touching your phone and then you talk to your phone to your ear if you answer a call, just the the cross contamination is just above and beyond what I can recollect about how quick this disease spreads.

Alex Schmelter: What was your biggest concern during your time in quarantine?

Paige A. Barnes: Biggest I mean there's there's been a lot, but my biggest one was about where I was going to go and how I was going to continue to afford college, because I realized it was a trickle down effect you know if campus was closed how would I work my school jobs and how would I pay for college to even attend, you know, my classes and thankfully I found out that student employees are able to be paid, even if they're unable to go and physically for their assigned hours and the downside of that is starting May 15 into school student workers have to actually work their shifts and you know if the two or center. Is that open for me to give tours. Then I'm not going to be paid for the entire month of summer. But I don't know everything's so up in the air.

Alex Schmelter: Have you known, have you known anyone who's had the virus or has been affected by it.

Paige A. Barnes: I have, I know, and I say "know" very loosely, I know of students in classes and mainly in my core required classes that I'm not as close to talk about having a family member with the coronavirus. Actually, I say that as well, my significant other, one of his family members had the or has the coronavirus. Thankfully, her, you know, husband and our child doesn't, um, but, you know, going back to how easily spread this is it's just shows like a domino effect, kind of like, you know, one goes down, and then you know somebody else who does. It's just crazy.

Alex Schmelter: To what extent were you afraid of getting the virus?

Paige A. Barnes: Personally, I, I am concerned about getting virus, but not nearly as concerned about transmitting it, that's the other thing is, you know, when report started coming out that people could have the virus and be symptomless or, you know, have it lay dormant in their system for two weeks or so and then pass it on to a family member who is older and then that's how they died, I mean, the last thing I'd want is to be the cause of somebody's passing, you know, whether it be my significant other, even my parents who are at higher risk. And so that is more my fear is me being a carrier and not knowing it, because I think my immune system is pretty strong I'm young, I eat pretty healthfully. You know, I don't really have any vices.

359 Alex Schmelter: How did protocol change throughout your time in lockdown?
360

361 Paige A. Barnes: Ya know, there besides the the mask being required I was wearing one already
362 before the governor had issued a mandatory order. And same with the stay in place order that
363 also I did as much as possible, even before it was enacted, I mean, granted there are some things
364 that I had to had to leave for, you know, like grocery shopping that was essential, moving out too
365 I didn't really like moving out of my dormitory to move into where I am right now. But I had to
366 because they were going to close the residence hall and my stuff was going to be left there. So
367 that's what I've been doing washing my hands. Of course, yeah.
368

369 Alex Schmelter: How did you feel about the amount of testing that was being done in the US, I
370

371 Paige A. Barnes: Think it's a very societal issue about, you know, accessibility to testing. I really
372 wish that there is more access, I do not think that there is enough. It is just insane to think about
373 how many people might have it and not know it, and that is why it's super important, I believe,
374 that everyone within the states really respect the fact that people could be carriers and stay inside
375 and don't go anywhere if they don't have to. And then again, that's another issue right, you know,
376 not everybody has the luxury to stay in place, you know, maybe they don't have a safe household
377 or maybe they--(pause) maybe they don't have a place to go home right and that's just it really
378 shows and this () is unraveling the inequities that there are in in society when it comes
379 to you know one not testing people, access to face masks, staying in place, that kind of thing and
380 food to write when people stocked up on stuff that was really unfortunate for those who can't
381 afford to buy toilet paper on the black market, I mean come on the black market!
382

383 Alex Schmelter: Um, what are your thoughts been in regard to how other countries handled the
384 pandemic compared to the US?
385

386 Paige A. Barnes: One country in particular that I have admired with their all this would be South
387 Korea and that is because of how proactive the country was about, you know, ordering people to
388 stay-in-place, you know, requiring people to wear facial masks if they did go, not facial masks,
389 face masks if they're going out and also just being prepared with with testing right and so the
390 thing that really is the issue, I think in the US is I believe us has money and ability and access to
391 resources to get so many tested but at this point with so many people still walking around and not
392 respecting the state in place order, it's, it's just hard to to get everyone just to sit down and be
393 like, here let me test you. So I wish that would that would be it. And also what the US considers
394 essential and not essential, and I realize it's state by state, but I don't understand how you know
395 hair salon right is not not essential. I get that, but WWE fighting is considered essential, I mean,
396 that's just a slap in the face for all healthcare workers who have to deal with people who get the
397 virus afterwards. And there's so many people that are business owners customers they want these
398 businesses open, don't get me wrong, but they also realize that opening up is not the best way

399 because we're going to have a lapse. Again, if the country opens up it's, you know, shops and
400 relaxes the stay-in-place order so it's going to be gradual, but I can't say I have a solution for it.

401

402 Alex Schmelter: When did you hear about the college's closure and what were your thoughts
403 initially?

404

405 Paige A. Barnes: I have, I remember getting it, I read it like immediately as the email was sent
406 out because I have my Chronicle email sent up to all of the staff and faculty emails and then
407 same with my personal email and then like an emergency email. So I got three email blasts of the
408 same thing and just came in at different times. And I remember reading through and I was like,
409 "okay, get to the point" and then it said, you know, "we have a two week hiatus, and then spring
410 break and we'll tell you later if we're going to E-learning or we're going to go back in person".
411 And I thought, *oh, there's no way, there's no way we're going back online. They're using that two*
412 *weeks to plan to put everything online.* I mean, it just didn't make sense, why wait two weeks to
413 deep clean or something. That was, I read it right away and I was shocked but not entirely
414 shocked because it was like a trickle effect, you know, the other colleges within the Chicago area
415 had already said they were transferring to online classes or at least very, very close to it.

416

417 Alex Schmelter: How do you feel about the idea you were still paying all that tuition while you
418 weren't getting access to the campus?

419

420 Paige A. Barnes: Personally, I did not rely on a lot of resources. Yes, work, and if you consider
421 work resource, sure, but the library I usually went there to get my textbooks. A lot of my
422 professors have been very gracious about saying "we're not going to use a textbook or here, let
423 me scan the pages for you because I realize it's not fair for those who can't afford the textbook".
424 What else I, I don't think there's anything else really because most of journalism classes can be
425 online and that was fine. And I realized, you know, there are professors that still need to get paid,
426 you know, there's other I shouldn't say instructors need to get paid, janitors need to get paid,
427 security guards still need to get paid. I'm sure Columbia has other bills that they're not telling us
428 about and also the added expenses that we didn't think about so Zoom Pro for all of us, students
429 that was an added expense that I don't think the college had expected. And so, yes, I would love
430 that money back, but I also realized that at the end of the day, like these professors don't need to
431 be paid.

432

433 Alex Schmelter: What were your study habits like before the virus?

434

435 Paige A. Barnes: Very studious, I still waited and did things like the day of at 11:50 when they
436 were due at 11:59 but they were a lot easier to to get through work for sure because, you know, if
437 I wanted to, I could go to the student center and get out of my room, if I wanted to. I also had an
438 actual desk, right now I'm sitting at my kitchen in a makeshift desk and I think the the my

439 motivation to get work done was a little bit more, you know, I'm not sure if it was because the
440 Fall, or just because Spring is always, you know, people get stir crazy trying to graduate get done
441 with school for the school year.

442

443 Alex Schmelter: Um, in what other ways of your habits changed since the virus?

444

445 Paige A. Barnes: My sleep schedule is very, very weird. It almost feels like Groundhog Day
446 every single day. You know I'm lucky if I change out of my pajamas. Today I did, but most the
447 time I hang out my pajamas. I really do try to make sure I like eat in my kitchen, work in the
448 kitchen, and then you know play on my phone, watch movie in the bedroom. But, you know, if
449 you living. Where was I didn't realize how my apartment, or at least where I am not my
450 apartment, but the apartment. I'm at right now is so versatile., I mean, I also work out here, I do
451 laundry here. You know I video chat here, it's just one place for everything.

452

453 Alex Schmelter: Where were you when you learned that Columbia was transitioning to learning?

454

455 Paige A. Barnes: I was in my room in the residence hall probably, yeah, I think I read that email
456 there. And then I called everyone else at the Chronicle. And I said, "Did you guys get this email"
457 and a few of them said "yes", and some of them said "no", so I ended up forwarding it to all of
458 them. And we wrote a breaking news piece.

459

460 Alex Schmelter: How are you and your professors communicating through all this?

461

462 Paige A. Barnes: Some of my concerns going into online learning was that those professors that
463 couldn't work Canvas in the first place were gonna rely on canvas for everything else. But
464 surprisingly right the a lot of all of them, I'll say all of them have been wonderful with setting up
465 zoom meetings, putting things on canvas in organized places into modules, so that we know like
466 this was this week's work next week has this due date. So I'm really impressed, I can realize like
467 this has got to be a big learning curve on the side of the professors, I'm not gonna say I'm an
468 expert of zoom either some of the professors also gave us their cell phone numbers, so we can
469 just call them up when we need them. And we've always had their emails, but they said, there'll
470 be extra vigilant. So I really appreciate the sacrifices that these professors have or at least my
471 professors, don't want to say for everyone, my professors have done.

472

473 Alex Schmelter: Um--

474

475 Paige A. Barnes: Or taken.

476

477 Alex Schmelter: What has moving in with your significant other been like compared to living in
478 a dorm?

479

480 Paige A. Barnes: It has been really nice. I know that my parents and his parents were concerned
481 about us moving in too soon, and you know, I understand their concern but you know my other
482 thing was I personally can't afford living on my own somewhere else in the city. There is no way
483 I'd be able to move back in with my parents just because of their health situation, I wanted to
484 make sure that they're okay. Also, I have lived So low for two semesters or not semesters, two
485 years and the summer, I visit my family, but I just know that for my mental sanity and there's
486 been so much change that living here with my significant other would be best. We mesh
487 schedules really well I end up staying a lot up, end up staying up a lot later than he does. And he
488 gets up earlier than I do but that doesn't bother me. When we're on phone calls like this will say,
489 "Hey, I'm on a phone call. Do you mind being quiet" and it seems like we're coordinating
490 schedules pretty well. Yeah.

491

492 Alex Schmelter: What have you been spending your days doing?

493

494 Paige A. Barnes: Typical day looks like me waking up I fix breakfast for us, or sometimes he fix
495 fixes breakfast for us. I have gotten very creative with my culinary skills because I can and I
496 have the time to now I think most of the time of it comes from, you know, that commute, right,
497 you know, I being up at 9am versus, you know, having to be somewhere at 9am is completely
498 different. And now that I can just wake up open my laptop and say, "Alright, I'm here at class
499 saves me so much time". So yeah, I make breakfast, I usually do some homework I have class in
500 the morning some days, he does as well. And then we make lunch, do some more homework
501 write some stories for the Chronicle and then there's dinner, which is my favorite meal because
502 we definitely have time. Make that together. Do some dishes and if we're lucky, we'll go for a
503 walk, and maybe watch a movie, but that's it. That's my typical day and it's like that every single
504 day. In the same apartment and the same place. And it's just really weird. Occasionally, we'll see
505 stuff out the window. That's like, "Oh, that's unique, but it's been the same.

506

507 Alex Schmelter: So you're going from living by yourself living with someone else. What were
508 some of the things you've had to get used to with that change? And especially not being able to
509 go out at all.

510

511 Paige A. Barnes: Mm hmm. Yeah, I'm laughing because I am a very particular person about
512 where everything goes and so trying to merge my stuff with his stuff, some of it is doubles,
513 right? And we've put it in storage because we don't need you know four sets of plates or a whisk
514 or a double whisk and so you know I love organizing things that's been nice. I have a lot more
515 clothes than he does, so that's been really difficult merging what closet space is mine and what
516 closet space is his. We've divided the bathroom, pretty, pretty well. You know, grocery
517 shopping, right? We usually split the same things because I don't eat meat and he does, but most
518 of the stuff we make can either be, you know, half vegetarian half with meat. But it's been a

519 really smooth transition, I will admit though I have way too much stuff and I need to pare down
520 but at the moment, you know, I want to be prepared for if and when I move in somewhere that I
521 have to be solo because I didn't want to just get rid of all my plates and then next semester I live
522 on my own and I need to have plates of my own.

523

524 Alex Schmelter: How's the pandemic changed your relationship with your parents?

525

526 Paige A. Barnes: I'll be honest, I wish that I talked to them more, often times I think it can be a
527 little bit they're going through their own things right and I am as well. And I think it can be a
528 little bit toxic sometimes because you can't really say something like "What are you doing"
529 because or "How is your day going?", because it's the same thing every day is not really exciting
530 to talk about, well, I am "I'm sitting here and I made breakfast, like I did yesterday and the day
531 before, and I haven't moved anywhere" (laughs). So that's been a little bit been put a strain on
532 they're also a time difference apart, so making sure that I'm not calling when they're eating
533 dinner is a little bit difficult. So I think the best thing I can do right now is just send them letters
534 like old fashion-wise in the in the mail and also sending them text messages to make sure that
535 they know that I'm thinking about them, but I would say I'm a pretty self sufficient person and I
536 work really, really hard. So I really appreciate their efforts, but I also want to make sure that they
537 take their energy and care for themselves while I take care of myself.

538

539 Alex Schmelter: In what ways did your social life change with the, uh, quarantine?

540

541 Paige A. Barnes: (Background clinking noises) I would say that it's been a lot harder trying to talk
542 to my really close immediate friends. Both here in Chicago that I've made because all of them
543 went to their respective states, either some of them are international students, I'd say a lot of
544 them are and trying to contact somebody who's in Russia, and it is 10:00 p.m. their time while it's
545 like 10:00 a.m. my time a little bit hard trying to figure out how long we can talk, even friends
546 back in Ohio, their stay-in-place order guidelines are a little bit less intense than what it sounds
547 like is happening here in Chicago. So they're saying, you know, "I went to the, I went to the
548 park", and I'm like, "Well, the parts here in Chicago are closed and the lakefront", right?, and so
549 it's just been really difficult and a little bit isolating that's the best way to put it, trying to catch up
550 with my friends because we're all in the same boat and there's nothing really exciting that's
551 happened. Everything is "this is canceled", you know, "you got to pay this", you know, "more
552 people are dying".

553

554 Alex Schmelter: How did you deal with that feeling of isolation? What were some of the coping
555 skills used to deal with it?

556

557 Paige A. Barnes: I thought of it, knowing that you know it'll pay off, right?, and I'm not isolating
558 for the heck of it, and I almost thought about in the grander scheme of how some days when we

559 knew life as we once knew it, right?, I would complain, “Oh, I want to be back home. I'm so
560 tired. I want to stay at my house”. You know, it's kind of like, “be careful what you wish for”,
561 and so I'm really taking this time to decompress, try to stay as positive as I can. I've been
562 catching up on movies, I've been catching up on some of the recipes that I've been trying to make
563 and been thinking, Oh, I'll save this for a rainy day. Well, today's the rainy day. I can do it. What
564 else? Getting into some new hobbies. I started knitting. It's not easy, but I can do that. And I tried
565 to dress up even if I'm not going anywhere. (Water running) So like putting on makeup and the
566 whole shebang. Just for myself (crash in background) to go for a regular schedule.

567

568 Alex Schmelter: Who do you talk to you about your concerns with the feelings of isolation?

569

570 Paige A. Barnes: I talked to my significant other, because a lot of the time he's feeling the same
571 way. And you know, I think we're, we're a team, right? And so if some of the concerns are about
572 him and how you know he did something that annoyed me or I must have done something that
573 annoyed him, we'll talk it through. And I think that's the best way to get through things because
574 you don't need to be at odds with somebody that you're isolating in and then I also call a family
575 friend, Hillary, who I mentioned earlier. And she has a weak immune system and is in the higher
576 age range that if she got the coronavirus would die. And so she's been helping me through telling
577 me some life stories like “Oh you know 50 years ago when I was in high school”. And it's been
578 really great to hear. You know, when times are simpler.

579

580 Alex Schmelter: So there's been an argument over whether or not people should be more or less
581 productive while they're in protocol. Some are saying you should have to learn a new skill or
582 pick up some sort of new hobby, while others are saying it's an okay time to be unproductive.
583 What are your thoughts on that sentiment?

584

585 Paige A. Barnes: (Coughing in background) I think it's a great opportunity to take up a new skill
586 or a new hobby. But then again, not everybody has this free time right now to pick up and, you
587 know like, buy, buy a new thing of yarn and just learn how to knit right because they're worried
588 about taking care of themselves. They probably have kids in from college or, you know, if they
589 had instead of having a daycare, they're taking care of them. So we have one end that I'm, I'm at,
590 I feel that I have more time. But then we have the other end where this coronavirus pandemic has
591 messed up their entire schedule because you know they can't go to work, you know, have to take
592 care of the kids, have to clean the house on top of it and it's going to be extra dirty because of all
593 the family members that are in the house now, or even running a business too if there's own a
594 grocery store or, what else considered essential?, or just a restaurant, right?, if they have to worry
595 about, you know, making an income working that restaurant or I should say social worker in
596 general. I can only imagine like that's just got to be an extra amount of stress. So, you know, for
597 those who, who think that this is going to end soon like that's not not right and if you know you
598 have the time great pick up a new hobby, if that's going to keep you positive, but I think so many

of us are just trying to figure out what a what our next move is because you can't predict what's happening. So.

Alex Schmelter: How prepared do you think the country was for this kind of pandemic?

Paige A. Barnes: I think people say we were. And I don't want to get too political in, in this so logistically, you know, despite who the who the president is I will say that the resources that we had that the U.S. has set aside that I'm aware of that at least it's been released to the public, I think it's a lot like we get a peace of mind saying "We have masks, we have ventilators, respirators, the whole nine yards". But in reality, I don't think we were prepared well enough at all. And, you know, some of the technologies that other countries have used kind of clash with American ideals. For example, I know there's some technology about people in other countries having phones that would ping off of people's Bluetooth. And so they could figure out, like if one of those people in that area got infected you could see who in that area at that time was in proximity to the infected person. But you know that comes up with the debate about, you know, is that abusing people's privacy. And I think a lot of the rights in America, people would say that is not okay and It is breaking privacy settings. And so that's why I don't think that America was prepared when there was technology out there, but it goes against American ideology.

Alex Schmelter: What should Columbia have done differently in reaction?

Paige A. Barnes: I wish that they would have given people more time, but where would they have gotten that time?, and you know maybe if they had, and this is all like, right, hypothetical, if they had talked to, um, or had gone with what NorthWestern had did had done, sorry, or what U of Chicago had done and canceled classes and had made that really sharp decision of "we are not going to have classes resume in person until the next semester and everything's going to be online and you have instead of like three or four days you have weeks and to a week or two to move out" because I don't think it's fair to assume that every student here has a car or to assume that their parent can just pick up and drive across states to get their items. And the other thing, because I can only imagine what international students are going through at this moment, because some of them, friends of mine, have, were not able to leave the country and time. So they're trapped in the United States because their home countries borders are closed and I just don't think that Columbia prepared well enough to take into consideration international students. The other thing is that many international students Because they are not citizens, they do not apply for money through the Cares Act and if anything, I think they need it extra because they're paying almost double the amount of what A national student would be able to pay because you know you're flying across the country, so that could be \$30,000 and then the conversion rate between their home countries money to the US dollar is inflated. So it's just not not a good situation for for all anyone, I don't think

639 Alex Schmelter: How do you feel about the future?
640

641 Paige A. Barnes: It's uncertain and I have come to an understanding, it's like the stages of grief,
642 you know, first I was in disbelief like "can't believe this is hap-, but happening", you know, I
643 was a little bit, um, the angry stage was very, very little. And now I'm in like the acceptance
644 stage of, you know, "this is, this is how it is", and I realized about how many things that I have to
645 be grateful for at the moment, that for the the future I think it just takes for me as much planning
646 as I can with the information I have with the finances that I have, (paise) but I don't want to act
647 too, or I don't want to make decisions too, too rash, because if I say, "all right, I'm gonna buy
648 from a lease and apartment in Chicago, because things in the fall, are going to be all online",
649 well and then, you know, a month later, the school announces that we are able to go to in person
650 classes again, then I just made a rash decision to buy, or to lease an apartment for no reason. So I
651 just think it takes patience understanding, um, and a positive outlook for the future, right?, and I,
652 I think there's so many things that people get caught up in what's happening with their own
653 problems that we don't look at the greater scheme of things, of how people are affected, and like
654 the trickle down effect of it. So I think I'm, I'm still remaining hopeful and even in a time when
655 there's so much uncertainty.
656

657 Alex Schmelter: What are some things you took for granted before the virus?
658

659 Paige A. Barnes: I took for granted the ability to go outside without a mask. I never really liked
660 going outside, But now when you know my significant other suggests going for a walk. I love it.
661 I'm like, "Yes! Let's get out of this apartment!" I think I took for granted. I'm just walking to to
662 school and you know sometimes I'm like, "Oh, I wish I lived closer to my class building", but
663 now I just realized like those ten, fifteen-minute walk, that was great, you know, I would get to
664 observe things happening around the city. Sometimes I'd run into a friend, I really took for
665 granted just being able to embrace people physically and give them hugs, and that was nice
666 (laughs) and also, how much, finally, how much healthcare workers play a huge role in the
667 system because I can only imagine what it's like working, you know you as a nurse as a doctor,
668 healthcare worker, you are putting your life at risk and you sign up, you know, to go through
669 college and do all the steps necessary to get this degree, but nobody could have predicted this
670 and there's that moral dilemma of "Well, do I continue to do I put my life at risk for others?" or
671 you know, you fill in the blank and I just took for granted the kindness and the selflessness of so
672 many.
673

674 Alex Schmelter: What's been the most significant change in your life due to the virus?
675

676 Paige A. Barnes: I'd say that throughout all of this has just been being uprooted. You know, I
677 work okay online. I've taken a few online classes, not a huge fan, but I'll get through it. You
678 know, work wise, I think I'm really well prepared for the job market, hopefully, um, when there

679 is one after graduation, but for me home is so personal, and I, you know, wherever I move I put
680 my heart and soul into it you know decorating it really making my own, respecting it and you
681 know now not being somewhere that I can officially call my own, you know, not that I'm not
682 grateful to do that. It's just been really difficult not being able to say, like, this is my home and
683 you know when Friends of mine have gone back home to their families home, right?, they say
684 there's been all these new rules, their rules, their roof kind of thing and I understand that. And
685 you know, I have some rules here too as well that I want to follow because In the end, right?, I
686 can stay here, but I want to make sure I have a boyfriend throughout all of this and keep myself
687 safe keep him safe.

688

689 Alex Schmelter: Are there any final points, you'd like to touch upon?

690

691 Paige A. Barnes: There's been a lot of of anger, hostility, like I said, I think people haven't gotten
692 to that stage of acceptance and understanding just yet when it comes to wanting partial refund for
693 tuition even housing, you know, an instruction fee as well. And I don't think the college
694 predicted that all of this was going to happen, I mean, how could you? Right? And the main issue
695 I have with all of it is bickering and fighting and you know finger pointing, you take so much
696 time away from accepting "Okay, well, you're not able to stay in the residence hall" and I found
697 out that this person is unable to go back home to their homes, right? And so what then? Right?
698 That then they should spend that energy, instead of being angry to try to help other people at this
699 moment because we are all in this together. And I think that sounds really cliché, but it's so true
700 that there's so many things that are happening, so many good things that are happening that just
701 aren't becoming are coming to light as much as we have liked or as much as I had hoped,
702 because we're all so angry at, you know, we're entitled, and we like deserve this money back
703 because we're not getting it. And education is such a privilege that I'm just so grateful that I still
704 get to go to college. I mean, I'm glad that the college hasn't gone under yet. So trying to open my
705 heart and try and be a little bit nicer and grateful that you know there's a lot of people out there
706 that aren't alive right now, so, I know I'm in a better place than that.

707

708 Alex Schmelter: Okay, great. Thank you very much. Thank you for your time.