

Transcription
Interview with Alessia Antoine

1 Bridget Ekis: Hi, my name is Bridget Eks. And today I'm interviewing Kelso. I'm located in Chicago,
2 Illinois in Lincoln Square. Today is Saturday, November 21, 2020. And Kelso, where are you joining us
3 from?

4

5 Alessia Antoine: I'm also in Chicago in the South Loop in my apartment.

6

7 BE: Great. How do you self identify?

8

9 KA: As a black woman

10

11 BE: And what are your preferred pronouns?

12

13 KA: She her hers.

14

15 BE: What is your year at Columbia?

16

17 KA: I'm a sophomore currently.

18

19 BE: And what is your major?

20

21 KA: I am a film major

22

23 BE: Can you let me know where you were born?

24

25 KA: I was born in Miami, Florida.

26

27 BE: And where your mother was born and what year?

28

29 KA: My mom was born in Haiti, not exactly sure what city and she was born in 1969, I believe.

30

31 BE: And your father?

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33 KA: He was also born in Haiti, I think 1965 or four? Not really, entirely. I don't remember which one.

34

35 BE: All right.

36

37 BE: To start off, as an opener, I was wondering, like what the story of your name was and how you got it?

38

39 KA: Yeah, well, Kelso is actually a nickname. So people call me that. But my first name is actually
40 Alessia. And my mom got it from, I think a character in the Bible or something. Some Italian woman in
41 the Bible, who people in some village adored, and she liked the name and so.

42

43 BE: Are your parents pretty religious?

44

45 KA: Very, yeah. Yeah, they're Catholic. So you know.

46

47 BE: All right, what was your free time filled with when you were a kid?

48

49 KA: It's kind of hard to remember childhood. I don't know, I, I mostly played with my cousins. I had a lot
50 of cousins. And we literally all lived like in the same house when we were kids. And we would just like,
51 come up with games to play with each other. Obviously, as a kid, you go to school, so I went to school a
52 lot. And I would go to church also, like, because I had to do what my parents told me to do. So I'd go to
53 church, uhm play with my cousins, I'd draw a lot. And that was most of my time as a kid I think.

54

55 BE: Did you have any important lessons you learned from childhood?

56

57 KA: I mean, I guess looking back, if I had to think about it, maybe processing things that happened, I've
58 learned a lesson. But coming out of I don't know if anything in childhood specifically taught me a lesson
59 that I could remember. Probably just, I don't know, kids are fearless. So just the mindset that a lot of
60 children have, like, they aren't really concerned about what people think of them, and they're comfortable
61 being themselves. So I guess that could be a lesson.

62

63 BE: What was one of the like, your most favorite activities to do with your cousins?

64

65 KA: We had this game that we played called Chronicles that we came up with. And it was basically just
66 like, we were able to be whatever we wanted. And we had superpowers, but like we were like these
67 creatures, so like vampires, werewolves, witches, and we like assigned powers to each person. And like,
68 we just have imaginary friends in the backyard. And like we'd swordfight and we played that literally
69 every single day after school. And it was so fun. But then we obviously grew up and we're like, this is not
70 real. So we grew up.

71

72 BE: Are you still close with them now?

73

74 KA: Oh, yeah. I mean, we live next to each other our entire lives. And when I go back to Miami, we still
75 do and we went to the same high schools. So yeah, they're like, my siblings more than my cousins really.

76

77 BE: How much did you travel as a child?

78

79 KA: I didn't travel a lot. Um, mainly because I was in school and I don't think like, we were just paying
80 for a lot of other things at the time, so we didn't really have a lot of money to travel but definitely as I got
81 older, I started traveling a lot more

82

83 BE: Can you explain a little bit what you meant by like you're paying for other like your family is paying
84 for other things?

85

86 KA: Well, my family, my entire family came to the United States from Haiti. So when we first came here,
87 all of us lived at my grandma's house was just one big house. That's why me and my cousins grew up
88 together. And so it was me, my mom, my cousins, my aunt, my grandma, like literally our entire family
89 living there. And so we didn't, we could barely afford a house on our own. So we're not going to have
90 money to like go on summer vacations to Mexico, or whatever the case may be. I visited Haiti though,
91 when I was a kid, but that was pretty much the only place I really traveled.

92

93 BE: Yeah, what was it like going to Haiti?

94

95 KA: I remember being really fun. And I mean, I was young, I think I was like six or seven years old. But
96 like, I feel like I remember that trip very vividly. Because that was one of the first times that I met all of
97 my family outside of like, my immediate family that I was living with in Miami. And I actually met one
98 of my cousin's there for the first time, he was the same age as me literally, like, a month older. And then
99 he ended up moving back to the United States with us. And like, he started school there and everything.
100 But it was really fun. It was very, I felt very outdoorsy, because all you had to do was go play outside.
101 Whereas like in Miami, it was a lot of like, oh, I want to play with my DSI or my Wii or something. And,
102 yeah, it was just really fun. It was a lot of physical activity. And I enjoyed that a lot as a kid.

103

104 BE: How long did you stay living in the house with all of your family?

105

106 KA: In Miami?

107

108 BE: Yeah. So you said when you first when your family first came, it was all of you and a giant house.

109

110 KA: I think we stay there up and I was I think I was oh, we moved when I was in kindergarten. We went
111 to Port St. Lucie. We got a house there. Our house burnt down. And then we moved back to Miami. And
112 we stayed there for a little while longer again. And so I did first grade. And I think second grade we got
113 another house. So up until I was like eight years old, I think seven or eight years old. And then we moved
114 into our own place.

115

116 BE: How did it feel having your house burned down? What was that like?

117

118 KA: I really I don't remember I. I mean, I was a kid. So I didn't really understand everything that was
119 going on. We stayed with my mom's friend for a little bit important Lucy. So I could finish me and my
120 brother could finish our school year there since we had already started. And then we moved back to
121 Miami, I just remember being like annoyed and sad that all my stuff is gone now. But the school that I
122 was actually at had like a fundraiser and they like, gave us a bunch of clothes and a bunch of stuff. So that
123 was nice. And then we ended up moving back to Miami. So I was happy to be around my cousins again,
124 because I was in a place where I didn't know anybody. And I think I was more like, not relieved. But I
125 was excited to like be moving back with my family in Miami.

126

127 BE: Transitioning into maybe outside of elementary school. How would you describe your experience
128 with puberty?

129

130 KA: Um, dang, that's an interesting question. I think lonely, probably because all of my cousins are guys.
131 And so being the only like, there's not much that I can talk about that they'd understand our bodies are
132 going through two completely different things. And my parents I don't know if it's like a religious thing or
133 a Haitian culture thing, but they don't really sit down and like have talks with you about puberty or what's
134 happening to your body or like feelings that you're having. I feel like there's just this like disconnected
135 this discomfort probably. That's in the culture. And so I really just had to figure everything out on my
136 own or with the help of my friends, like we just do research and talk to each other about it. And that was
137 pretty much it.

138

139 BE: Yeah, I feel like I can relate. It's definitely an isolating time.

140

141 KA: Yeah.

142

143 BE: What was one of your best memories from high school?

144

145 KA: There are a couple. I don't know if I can pinpoint just one. I think my overall high school experience
146 was pretty good. I know a lot of people hated high school. I didn't love it, but like, I didn't hate it either. It
147 was like, you know, I was learning a lot about myself. We had a flash mob, our senior year, well, not our
148 senior year, a flash mob to celebrate being seniors at the end, that me and my friend just thought of in
149 like, the middle of the year, and we're like, let's bring this idea of a flash mob to like, a teacher and
150 administrator something and get people to dance. And then we got a bunch of people to come to a
151 meeting. And we choreographed dances together. That was really fun. And then we had like a class spirit
152 week, and we did a surprise flash mob during lunch. And that was really fun. That was a funny time.

153

154 BE: What did, the, can you explain what the dance looked like? And what like song was to?

155

156 KA: It was to some Portuguese like Brazilian song that it was just a really like fun, catchy dance song. I
157 don't remember the name, but I couldn't. I don't know how to describe what the dance looked like. It was
158 like, I guess it's leaning more towards hip hop dance moves. But it was just like you had a partner. And
159 you guys like dance together. And there were different numbers. There were different songs. I think there
160 was like a Missy Elliott song. And there was like a Haitian song as well. And it was just like a number
161 after a number kind of like a play, but not a play just a bunch of kids dancing during lunch.

162

163 BE: How did everyone in the lunch room react?

164

165 KA: They fucking loved it. Oh, I don't know if I can curse. Sorry. But they loved it. Like it was really
166 like, everyone was really surprised. Like, you could feel that they knew something was going to happen.
167 And so people just started like gathering around as we started getting into our positions. And I think I
168 loved it just because like it was something that was really out of my comfort zone because I'm not a
169 dancer. But I managed to choreograph a fucking flashmob. So I was like, I don't know. It just felt really
170 cool made me feel like I can do things outside of what I normally thought I could do. And it was just
171 really fun.

172

173 BE: Would you say you are more risk taking in high school?

174

175 KA: No, I think I'm more risk taking now high school, I was really insecure. I mean, I think a lot of us
176 were really insecure in high school. So I was very concerned with my image and what people thought of
177 me. So I think that prevented me from taking a lot of risk. But doing that, I think senior year I was
178 definitely leaning more into myself. And so doing that flashmob I think was a part of that, like just doing
179 something out of my comfort zone taking a risk.

180

181 BE: What did you spend most of your time doing in high school?

182

183 KA: Uh, I was in French club, and I took French all four years of high school because I really wanted to
184 learn how to speak French because I just think language is beautiful. I also did Robotics Club, my junior
185 year to my senior year. And that was really fun. And also something else that was outside of my comfort
186 zone because I never thought I could be part of a robotics club and build a robot. And then I also did
187 fashion club for a little while sophomore year, but that club ended and I drew a lot as well. And then just
188 taking AP courses and like, classes, regular high school stuff.

189

190 BE: What were your ambitions when you graduated from high school?

191

192 KA: Yeah, I wanted to get out of the city. I just wanted to leave Miami, be around different people. I'm
193 definitely didn't feel like Miami was the environment for me to like, do what I wanted to do. And so I
194 knew I wanted to be in a city, either New York or LA or Chicago. But I think Chicago was the best option
195 just because it's not too far from home and money wise it was much more affordable than my other two
196 alternatives.

197

198 BE: Affordable in terms of school or in terms of living?

199

200 KA: In terms of school. Yeah, I mean, and in terms of living and living in New York and LA is so
201 expensive like to find an affordable apartment there would be so difficult. But school here was also
202 cheaper way cheaper than school in New York and LA

203

204 BE: Why Columbia College Chicago?

205

206 KA: Because it was affordable. Yeah, I also got into the Art Institute, but I couldn't afford that, because
207 it's so much money. And by that time, I knew I wasn't going to be able to go to New York because I
208 couldn't afford that either. And I thought I still wanted to be in Chicago, and I got accepted into
209 Columbia. And I knew they had like a really big film program here. And that's what I wanted to do, so.

210

211 BE: How has Columbia met your expectations so far?

212

213 KA: I think in meeting other artists, and just being able to collaborate with people, like that was mainly
214 why I wanted to come to film school is like, build those connections with people and be around people
215 who, I don't want to say think like me, like, I only want to be around people who think like me, but be
216 around like, like minded individuals like people, because Columbia is a very liberal school. And I didn't
217 have that same experience in Miami at all, and sort of be around people who shared a lot of the same
218 viewpoints as me, despite not experiencing what, you know, I experienced is, I think, really cool. So I
219 think they exceeded my expectations in, in that sense.

220

221 BE: How— can you elaborate on people who have like, had similar experiences to you like what you
222 meant by that?

223

224 KA: I just like other black people, or other women, or other black women, or other minorities, or people
225 of color, because I feel like, especially in Miami, it was only those people who could understand what I
226 was talking about when I came to them with some microaggression that happened or something that
227 someone said, or someone did. And now they'll be like, yeah, of course, I get it, because I experienced the
228 same things. But coming to Columbia, it's, you know, of course, there are people who have experienced
229 similar things. But there are people who haven't experienced any of that and who still are able to
230 empathize and like, connect and relate to you, even though they haven't personally experienced what you
231 have.

232

233 BE: Yeah, so you're saying back home, it was harder to find people who, you know, weren't people of
234 color that were, you know, empathetic towards your situation?

235

236 KA: Yeah. Yeah.

237

238 BE: What aspects of Miami do you miss when you're in Chicago?

239

240 KA: The beach. I miss the beach so much. I know that's a corny answer. But I used to think I hated the
241 beach because of the sand. But once I couldn't be there anymore, I realized how often I like how much I
242 spent time at the beach, me and my friends hung out at the beach literally every night. Like when it's the
243 weekend, we're like, let's go to the beach tonight. And we just hang out because no one was there. And it
244 was dark. And we can play music. And coming here, like there. I mean, I know there's a beach but it's not
245 really a beach. Like it's a different feeling. And so it's yeah, I missed that a lot.

246

247 BE: What did you and your friends do before the pandemic? What do you like to do with your friends
248 before the pandemic?

249

250 KA: Go to the beach, um, we just hang out a lot at each other's houses, go out to eat at restaurants, which
251 now obviously, we can't really do. But I think we honestly did a lot of stuff that we're doing now, just
252 because most of the stuff that we did was just hanging out at one of our friend's houses or something like
253 that. Yeah, we tried to learn how to skate as well skating. I mean, we can still do that now. But skate
254 parks and stuff like that you're around a lot of other people. Yeah, but mainly go to the beach. That was
255 pretty much what we did.

256

257 BE: How did you make friends when you got to Columbia?

258

259 KA: Through my classes, mainly, I lived at the UC so it was very easy to run into a lot of people who
260 went to Columbia in the cafeteria. And also going to Columbia events, I think really helped to like go into
261 cinema slapped down that I met a lot of people like going through Colombia events because I feel like it
262 was a lot of other freshmen looking to make friends as well because everyone's pretty much in the same
263 boat as you so it wasn't too difficult to make friends living there.

264

265 BE: How do you keep up with your friends now?

266

267 KA: Social media and texting and it's really difficult because I, I don't want to use social media but like
268 quarantine is sort of forced me to now, I've been trying to get off it more after watching these
269 documentaries about how terrible it is. But I feel like I don't have any other option because that's the only
270 way for me to really keep in contact and, you know, see what's going on in my friends lives. And so I
271 think social media has been a big help in that way. And also just like FaceTime calls, texting them
272 checking in every now and then see how they're doing.

273

274 BE: What is an activity that you used to hate, but now you missed because of the pandemic?

275

276 KA: Mm

277

278 KA: Hmm.

279

280 KA: I guess, maybe like going for a walk. I didn't appreciate that as much. But now I love it a lot. I try to
281 go on walks a lot more often, just because it's a way to go outside and like, you know, get outside of your
282 house. And before I didn't want to do that, I thought, you know, it was boring, or it was too good. But
283 now it's very entertaining.

284

285 BE: How would you describe your mental health before the pandemic happened?

286

287 KA: I mean, not great, but not bad. I think I was where most of us were like, we're kind of, you know, not
288 all there. But like, we still we push through, we survived, like, we're not happy. But it could be worse.
289 Definitely, after the pandemic, well, during the pandemic, now, I think it's improved a lot more just
290 because I've had a lot more time to self reflect, because I've been spending a lot more time with myself.
291 And learning to appreciate my own company instead of, you know, seeking entertainment from others, or
292 being with other people, basically. So I think Courtney has definitely given me a lot of time to like self
293 reflect and think about things that I want in my life and things that I don't.

294

295 BE: Before the pandemic did you spend the majority of your time not alone?

296

297 KA: Yeah, I spent a lot of my time with people. I always wanted to hang out with people. Like I was
298 always like, let's hang out. Let's do this. Let's do that. But now I'm okay just hanging out by myself.
299 Because it's just as fun as hanging out with other people. It's fun to sit with your thoughts and just do
300 things that you want to do that you know, you couldn't do with other people were there with you.

301

302 BE: Could you give an example of something that you like to do alone?

303

304 KA: Listening to music that is that it's so fun to do alone, it's so fun to discover new music alone. I feel
305 like when you're with other people, you cater a lot to their taste and what they want to hear obviously,
306 because you think that's the polite thing to do. But listening to music by yourself is fun, because you can
307 listen to whatever you want. You can listen to songs that you know are probably bad, but like you just so
308 happened to like it. You can listen to things that other people don't want to listen to.

309

310 BE: When did you first become aware of the Coronavirus?

311

312 KA: Well, we got out of school— I think it was in March, I believe they was at our spring break in March?
313 I think it was I think I learned about it maybe late February, early March. Like I started hearing about it
314 more. I wasn't too concerned about it. I felt like it was sort of like one of the other viruses that we hear
315 about but it doesn't really affect us. And so I don't really think about it. But then our school closed. I think
316 it was in March or April or one of those months. And then I was like 'Oh, well. This is affecting me now.
317 because now I have to go back home and like I can't finish the semester here.' And then I think definitely
318 by April, I was very aware of a lot of the stuff that was going on.

319

320 BE: Can you talk about what happened? You mentioned you had to go home? Can you talk about what
321 that experience was like?

322

323 KA: It was frustrating. Because I think Columbia I was waiting to hear what was going to happen and I
324 was just I didn't know what was going to happen. I was hearing a lot of different things from a lot of
325 different people and I just didn't feel like I was getting accurate enough information to relay back to my
326 parents. And they were also worried about like me staying and they wanted me to come back home,
327 obviously. And so yeah, I think it was just frustrating. And then all of a sudden, we were being kicked out
328 of our dorms with definitely not enough notice to like be able to pack up our things and come up with a
329 plan for what we're going to do. A lot of people had to stay with their friends because they got kicked out
330 and they didn't have anywhere to go. So I think yeah, I was I was very disappointed in the way Columbia
331 handled it and frustrated.

332

333 BE: Did you have to get rid of get rid of things? Or like move in with friends? Or did you just go straight
334 to Miami?

335

336 KA: I went straight to Miami. Yeah. Um, it wasn't that hard for me just because it's easier for me to like,
337 take flights to places. So as soon as my parents heard about, heard that my school was shutting down,
338 they just wanted me to come to Miami right away.

339

340 BE: Did you go back home before Columbia, like, announced that you needed to leave the dorms?

341

342 KA: I think they announced that we'd be gone for three weeks first is what they said. And then I booked
343 my flight to go to Miami. And then after that, they said we just be there. Like it just be closing down for
344 the semester. And so I had to come back and pick up all my stuff and then fly back to Miami to stay there.

345

346 BE: Can you describe your transition to remote learning?

347

348 KA: In terms of how I felt about it?

349

350 BE: How you felt about it, or you know what it looked like for you for your classes.

351

352 KA: I think my teachers were overall very accommodating.

353

354 KA: I mean, it wasn't I don't think I had as bad of an experience with it, as most people did. I felt like I
355 was kind of relieved, because I was feeling worn out in school already. And I needed a break. And so that,
356 that spring break, allowed for me to like rest, and then I went back to school. And I felt better because I
357 didn't have to put as much energy into my classes as I had before where I had to go in person and like,
358 you know, physically be there. So I think mainly because I was worn out it was better. Um, but then
359 coming into this semester, it's definitely been harder, because I definitely want to physically be there
360 more now. Because I'm taking a lot of classes that I'm interested in. And I would much rather be
361 interacting with my professors and other students in person.

362

363 BE: Totally. I hate to ask you this, but you did get kind of dark. And I think it's because the sun is setting.

364

365 KA: Yeah,

366

367 BE: Could you turn a light on?

368

369 KA: I did I didn't know if you want it to pause. But

370

371 KELSO TURNS LIGHT ON

372

373 BE: Yeah, much better.

374

375 KA: Cool, great okay.

376

377 BE: So, in the spring, remote learning, was a relief to you. But now you like definitely missed the in
378 person classes?

379

380 KA: Burden, simply a burden.

381

382 BE: Are there any classes that you feel like you're not getting the full experience in?

383

384 KA: Screenwriting I think he's done a great job. I love that class. It's my favorite class. But I wish I could
385 be there in person. Like I feel like the discussions would be a lot more interactive in person because we're
386 all face to face and being on camera, like people turn off their cameras and they don't have to speak the
387 rest of the class unless they're called on. So I definitely feel like it's less interactive than it would have
388 been if we were in person.

389

390 BE: Do you think your level of like effort in classes have changed since being online?

391

392 KA: Yeah.

393

394 KA: Yeah, I procrastinate. Literally every single assignment now. Because I don't have to physically be
395 there. I could just turn it in whenever the online date. I could turn it in one minute before class and be
396 fine. So I mean grades are still good. But my effort has gone way down just because I'm in my home
397 environment. I feel very relaxed. I don't want to put in a lot of effort when I'm at home. I feel like home is
398 a place of relaxation and rest. And so when I'm here that's sort of the mood that I'm in. It's very hard to get
399 myself in the working mindset.

400

401 KA: Where would you do your homework before the pandemic?

402

403 KA: In my room, I guess, because I was in a dorm. So me and my roommate, I mean, we shared a room,
404 I'd do it in my room. And now I still do it in my room. But like, I had a desk and at the UC, and here, I
405 don't have a desk. So I do everything on my bed, I rarely go to the kitchen table just because I want to be
406 comfortable. And so you can imagine, like when you're in your bed, you know doing work, you really
407 want to be resting and relaxing, you don't actually want to be doing your work. So.

408

409 BE: What was lock down for you like in Miami?

410

411 KA: It was—kind of chaotic. I just have a really big family. And even though now my parents have their
412 own house, our family literally lives a block away. And so we're always at each other's houses, and
413 everyone is there all the time. And so it's really loud a lot of the time. And all my cousins are there if I'm
414 there, and I have dogs also that lived there. But it was nice being back home and getting to see my old
415 friends. I think that was the best part. But actually being home was very, very chaotic.

416

417 BE: How did your plans for the summer of 2020 change?

418

419 KA: I was supposed to travel this summer. Me and my friends have planned a trip to go to each other,
420 we've been saving for it. And once the pandemic happened, we couldn't do that this year was sort of the
421 last year that I had to travel as well because I have flight benefits. Because my brother works for
422 American Airlines. And so I, it, the flight benefits end at the end of this year. And so I was going to travel
423 during the summer as much as I could, but I wasn't able to do that, obviously so I won't get to travel as
424 much anymore.

425

426 BE: Where were you and your friends going to go?

427

428 KA: We were going to go to Cancun, Mexico for a bit. We also wanted to go on a road trip to National
429 Park. We didn't pick which one yet but we were planning it. So

430

431 BE: What are your media slash news sources?

432

433 KA: Um, I read the New York Times a lot, The Guardian. I mean, CNN, I watch CNN. I'm sorry, I I want
434 to try different news sources. But I'm not going to watch Fox News. Like I'm I just I can't bring myself to
435 do that. So I stick to I just stick to like, the information given not the opinions even so I try to make it as
436 objective as possible, even though I know they're biased. But you know.

437

438 BE: What is your favorite way to consume news?

439

440 KA: I just like I just like knowing quick bits of information. Like I don't need a full think piece on like
441 their opinion of what's happened. Like, even going on the Twitter news pages. If you click on the news,
442 they have quick tidbits of like sources like CNN or the New York Times, and they're giving you you
443 know, quick bits of information that you can use to draw your own conclusions about things. So I try my
444 best to like just get the information as quickly as I can.

445

446 BE: How did you learn about the George Floyd murder?

447

448 KA: On social media I think it was on Instagram or on Twitter. Someone posted a video of it, I think and,
449 not of the entire thing, but just like a snippet of the video and I was reading the comments and I saw
450 everything that happened. And I went on Twitter after that because I knew they'd have more information
451 on it in terms of news, and I read an article about it. I forgot on which website but I read an article and
452 then I got then I found out what happened but since then I haven't watched the video just because I feel
453 like it'd be a lot to take in watching that entire video.

454

455 BE: Did you watch it when it first happened though?

456

457 KA: No, I still haven't seen it. Yeah, I still haven't seen any of it.

458

459 BE: I haven't either.

460

461 KA: I don't need to see the video to like, know that what happened wasn't right. Like, it doesn't, I don't
462 need to see the actual graphic, you know, visual of a man being murdered.

463

464 BE: What was your response to learning about it?

465

466 KA: I was really upset. And I think mainly because that was the beginning of a lot of the Black Lives
467 Matter like that, that sort of started push the progression of all of that, and with the rioting, and I was just
468 learning a lot about what the people around me thought about the situation as well. And so it was one of
469 the first times that I was actually hearing people's political opinions on social issues. And so it just made
470 me very upset to know that like, a lot of the people that I thought were really close to me, actually, our
471 values were just completely different.

472

473 BE: What were some things you were learning about them?

474

475 KA: Just in their just their denial of how systemic racism works in America, they think that, you know,
476 we all are given the same opportunities. And you know, it's not this person, this happened to them,
477 because they're a thief or they're this not because of their race, and it's just, just things like that, like them
478 not being able to acknowledge the fact that it's not a fair system. And, you know, not everyone has the
479 same opportunities. And in order for us to change that, we need to acknowledge that it's happening first.

480

481 BE: And how, how did the Black Lives Matter movement affect you?

482

483 KA: I think it definitely made me a lot more radical. I feel like a lot of people are going to say that, but it
484 really did, like it made me want to be a lot more informed about what was happening. Because I, I mean, I
485 wouldn't say I was involved in politics, but I knew enough to like know, where I leaned towards on the
486 spectrum. But after that, I just, I got into so many debates with people. And at the beginning, I wasn't able
487 to articulate really what I thought or what I believed, because I didn't have the words for it. Because I
488 didn't even understand what I believed what my beliefs were because they were never really taught to me.
489 And so I just did a lot of research about everything about economic systems, capitalism, communism,
490 socialism. And I wanted to make sure that I had enough information to back my beliefs and why I thought
491 what I thought.

492

493 BE: How have you responded to the Black Lives Matter movement?

494

495 KA: I've tried my best to raise awareness of, you know, a lot of the issues that these people deal with and
496 ways that other people can help on a day to day, you know, basis in terms of them interacting with people
497 in their personal lives. Also, donating. I've tried my best to do that. I've gone to a couple protest in Miami,
498 but um, they weren't too large. Because I think the height at the height of it, a lot of people were
499 protesting and then towards the middle, you know, the protest sort of died down more. So.

500

501 BE: How does it feel being a black woman during all this for you?

502

503 KA: Kind of really scary. Yeah, even my friends were talking about like, my friends were talking about,
504 you know, the fact that they wanted to buy a gun and learn how to use a gun to protect themselves
505 because so many people were just talking about a bunch of violent things that were going to happen like,
506 if this person gets elected, there's going to be a war like we're there's going to be a civil war. And so I feel
507 like we felt very unprotected, especially in the midst of like, a lot of black women dying in the middle of
508 all of this too. And it's just a lot of people's opinions were coming to light because they were getting other
509 people who believe the same thing to them to back them and so I feel like a lot of people were feeling
510 bolder in terms of violence and attacking people and that instilled fear and not just black women, but just
511 a lot of black people.

512

513 BE: Who you confide to about your feelings in regards to your experience?

514

515 KA: My friends. Um, yeah, definitely my friends. My roommates also are people who I can talk to and
516 who understand. Um my best friend and Miami. Really, my parents not as much just because they don't
517 understand politics, like, you know, like regular English speaking Americans who were born here, I guess
518 they understand, you know, the general politics, but not not everything. So I can't really talk to them
519 about a lot of social issues.

520

521 BE: How are you following the presidential race?

522

523 KA: I wouldn't say I followed it too too closely. Just because I, I don't use the word hate often. But I hate
524 Trump. So I don't need to know much to vote against him. I followed it mainly because my roommates
525 followed it a lot. And so did my friends. And so they just give me a lot of information. I also just read
526 articles, some articles about what was going on online, after the debates, and I'd watched some of the
527 debates along with my roommates as well.

528

529 BE: How did you cast your ballot?

530

531 KA: I had to fly back to Florida, actually, to vote in person. So I flew back with and I went with my dad,
532 and we went to like a little voting poll place by my house and just voted together in the morning.

533

534 BE: How did it feel to? Well, this, this is your first election, right?

535

536 KA: Yeah, yeah.

537

538 BE: Yeah. So how did that feel for you to be able to participate?

539

540 KA: It felt good. I mean, I felt like I felt a relief come off my shoulders just because I knew this was
541 something that I had to do. And I just wanted to make sure that I got it done. Especially since I had to fly
542 back for it. Um, yeah, I just felt like, now, you know, I was allowed to voice my opinion, because I
543 actually played a role in you know, making something happen.

544

545 BE: How did you feel about the outcome of the election?

546

547 KA: I mean, of course, I was happy. That day was amazing, like waking up, I heard my roommates
548 screaming and shouting and like, the neighbors across the street were like dancing and waving. And we
549 went outside. And there were so many people outside in the city, just walking around and going to like
550 bookstores and coffee shops. Yeah, I felt like I felt the good energy in the air. Definitely.

551

552 BE: How would you describe going to Columbia for the fall semester, during the pandemic?

553

554 KA: It was definitely less exciting than obviously coming here freshman year. But I knew what it was
555 going to be when I signed up to take, you know, my classes, so I wasn't too disappointed. I knew I'd have
556 Zoom classes. They told us that. I was hoping for hybrid classes, but I didn't get any. So I did get an
557 apartment. So it's been nice, like being able to live on my own instead of living in a dorm. That's pretty
558 much the only the only positive.

559

560 BE: Why did you decide to continue your education admits the pandemic?

561

562 KA: Because I wanted to graduate as soon as possible. I still want to graduate as soon as possible. And I
563 didn't want to push that back further because of the pandemic. So if I had to take classes online, to make
564 that happen, I was going to do that.

565

566 BE: What was the most significant change in your life due to the virus?

567

568 KA: I think just moving back to Chicago and yeah, getting getting my own place. I have never lived on
569 my own before had an apartment. So this is my first one. And yeah, I think that's that's definitely the
570 biggest change.

571

572 BE: What do you think Columbia should have done differently to address the pandemic?

573

574 KA: I wish I could tell you I mean, I feel like they should have just told us ahead of time and made a
575 decision you know, ahead of time and told the students because we were just very confused as to what
576 was going on. Um, and a lot of students, you know, were asking for a full refund or asking for their
577 money back. I mean, I know they're not going to give us all of our money back, but just giving the
578 students an explanation as to, you know, what was happening and why they made the decisions that they
579 were making, and also just how we would be moving forward with our classes.

580

581 BE: Did you mean you wish they were more upfront in the spring, and more like communicating better in
582 the spring?

583

584 KA: Yeah, exactly. Like told us, you know, you are, we're gonna send you guys home in a week or
585 something like that, or in two weeks, but not two days before you kick us out of the dorms.

586

587 BE: How do you feel about the future?

588

589 KA: I want to say that I'm hopeful that things will get better. I think, definitely, if things are going to get
590 better, our generation is probably the one to do that, honestly. So I'm relying a lot on us. I'm very hopeful
591 in that aspect, thinking that our generation will, you know, create some sort of positive change just
592 because we've already seen it. Just the fact that, you know, this historical win for Biden is insane. Trump
593 is the first president not to be reelected in I don't know how many years but a long time. And so just
594 seeing, I think a lot of my friends and people who I know aren't political, or didn't care about voting
595 before actually go out to vote and get their friends to go out to vote, I think, has definitely helped me be
596 more optimistic and hopeful about the future.

597

598 BE: What are you proud of? From this time?

599

600 KA: In the pandemic?

601

602 BE: Yeah.

603

604 KA: Yeah, I think the voting thing, because seeing my cousins and my brother vote, I mean, my brother
605 has not voted in I don't know how long and he's, I, he's almost 30 years old, and he doesn't care about
606 politics, but even he voted. And my parents voted. And my grandma voted and like, my cousin, my little
607 cousin voted who's a year younger than me, and he got all his friends to go out and vote. So I think I'm
608 really proud of like, how many young people went out to vote this election.

609

610 BE: How are you feeling moving forward in terms of the virus?

611

612 KA: I just want it to end. I think we all just want it to end. I don't know when that will be. I'm hoping that
613 by next year, hopefully, fall semester things are starting to go back to normal a little bit. But yeah, that's
614 really, I just, I hope the vaccine comes out soon. And we can start, you know, interacting with people
615 again.

616

617 BE: Have you had any COVID scares?

618

619 KA: I'm scared I have COVID all the time. I, I want to get tested when I go to Miami before I come back
620 to Chicago again. But I mean, every time I cough, I feel like it's a scare. Every time someone tells me
621 they're not feeling well. They're like, they're coughing. I feel like that's a COVID scare. I feel like now
622 we're a lot more anxious about things that we didn't necessarily consider before like coughing or sneezing
623 or someone saying they don't feel well. So yeah, I feel like everything is sort of a scare now.

624

625 BE: How was the second wave that we're experiencing now felt the same or different for you?

626

627 KA: It still feels the same. I mean, I felt how I felt in the beginning I just I wanted to end that's that's
628 really it. It's just frustrating because I feel like people think things are back to normal now but they're not.
629 So I think I feel like people think they can go out and party and do whatever because it's been so long but
630 them doing that is just going to cause us to be the way we are for even longer so that that's just not
631 helping anything.

632

633 BE: Is there anything else you'd like to add?

634

635 KA: No. Nothing else.

636

637 BE: All right, well, thank you.

638

639 KA: Thank you for having me.

640