

## **Interview with Elliott Dynes**

### **Interviewed by Ben Tufts**

1 Elliott Dynes

2 Here we go.

3

4 Ben Tufts

5 So this is for Columbia College Chicago's capturing quarantine. I'm BT. I am currently in Crown

6 Point, Indiana. It is November 25. And I'm interviewing Elliot, Elliot one to introduce yourself.

7

8 ED

9 Hello, my name is Elliott Dynes. Right now I'm at 30 East Balbo in the south loop of Chicago.

10 And it is currently 2:09pm. And I'm excited to be here.

11

12 BT

13 All right. Let's just get right into it or do some background information first. When and where  
14 were you born?

15

16 ED

17 I was born in Irvine, California, on April 9 2001. I've lived there my entire life up until I moved to  
18 college.

19

20 BT

21 Gotcha. Were both your parents from California?

22

23 ED

24 No, my mom. Well, my dad. He's from Ohio. And my mom's from California. So my mom. She is  
25 from uh she's in San Diego. And she was born in 1962. My dad was also born in 1962. And he's  
26 from Cincinnati, Ohio. And he moved to, he moved to San Diego and that's where they met. And  
27 then we, you know, moved to Irvine.

28

29 BT

30 Gotcha. So is Irvine like a suburb of San Diego?

31

32 ED

33 No, Irvine is like it's its own city. It's not like a giant city. But if you've ever heard of like UC  
34 Irvine, like in the UC system, that's what they're talking about. Like, it's a city. Like, right  
35 between kind of Los Angeles and San Diego. So like in the space between those two cities.  
36 That's where Irvine is.

37

38 BT

39 Gotcha. It's like the St. Louis of California basically.

40

41 ED

42 Basically.

43

44 BT

45 Cool. Gotcha, gotcha. Okay, um, what year are you in school? And what's your major?  
46  
47 ED  
48 Right now? I am a second year. I'm a sophomore, and my major is filmmaking with an emphasis  
49 in directing.  
50  
51 BT  
52 Gotcha. So your concentration is directing.  
53  
54 ED  
55 Direction.  
56  
57 BT  
58 What are your preferred pronouns? And how do you self identify?  
59  
60 ED  
61 My preferred pronouns are he, him, his, and I self identify as a male.  
62  
63 BT  
64 Gotcha.  
65  
66 All right, then we're just gonna jump into early childhood here. What's your favorite memory from  
67 being a child?  
68  
69 ED  
70 Hmm, favorite memory? Huh? That's got to that's, um, that's the kind of hard one man feels like,  
71 I don't think back on that too much. Um, well, one of my favorite ones, is, um, when I was  
72 younger, I had this, I had friends from like, across, you know, across the street that like I used to  
73 hang out with because, um, I was really blessed to have like, my entire street filled with kids,  
74 you know, who were nice. And my age too. Well, um, yeah, we also we used to do all these kind  
75 of, uh, we used to, like, you know, hang out all the time. And then for like, Fourth of July, his  
76 parents would always, like, blow off fireworks too. So, you know, we'd have little parties that like,  
77 I'd help put on for like, the entire street and like, the entire block and all the neighbors would  
78 come. And it was, it was a really nice communal event, because kind of in the place I am like,  
79 there isn't a huge sense of community. Like most of the houses look the same. Like in  
80 California, it's a very different environment from the Midwest, like, every single house is spaced  
81 out really close to each other because we're by the beach. So like, maybe if you go to a suburb  
82 here, there'd be like an acre of land. It's probably not right, you know, the right measurement to  
83 use, but there'll be a good amount of land around the house. That is not the case in Irvine. It's  
84 like house house house house and that land around our house is supposed, is like the beach  
85 basically. Um, yeah, we didn't have a big, my town didn't have like a really big community feel.  
86 But the fact that I had like, great neighbors and friends, my street. Yeah, um, I was really that,  
87 you know, blessed to have that and just community events like that at some of my favorite  
88 memories.

89  
90 BT  
91 Yeah, so like being friends with all the neighbors made that small amount of land kind of feel  
92 bigger.  
93  
94 ED  
95 Yeah, Mm hmm. Yeah. We had like, I lived in a, I live in a cul de sac. So, you know, they're just  
96 kind of like, right across the street from me. Um, yeah.  
97  
98 BT  
99 Gotcha. Gotcha. That's cool. Um, what rules did you break as a child?  
100  
101 ED  
102 Rules? Well, um, yeah, I have to think about that, too. So, like, my parents were actually kind of  
103 strict. So like, there was a, not a decent amount of fear in my childhood, but like, um, the, so you  
104 know, I used to, like, I'd get in trouble and shit, but like, I'm sorry I just cursed. Don't do that  
105 again. I'm doing. Yeah. But in general, like, the way they kind of like, ran the houses. They  
106 weren't super strict with me, but like, they made punishments seem like a really big deal. So I  
107 was like, pretty, kind of, you know, just scared to be a rule breaker. And like, that was kind of  
108 like, engraved into me, like I still am now. So I did not get, I'd get in trouble and stuff. But um,  
109 yeah, I think I'd have to think about it for a little while to think like, what specific rules I broke, I  
110 guess.  
111  
112 BT  
113 So you were more well behaved you'd say.  
114  
115 ED  
116 Yeah, I was more well behaved. I guess. Like, I don't know, sometimes. I wish I wasn't. Because  
117 I'm like, it really wasn't that, you know, big of a deal honestly. But yeah. I mean, it's like the  
118 consequences couldn't have been that big.  
119  
120 BT  
121 Yeah yeah yeah.  
122  
123 ED  
124 Yeah, I didn't really learn that until kind of high school to like, really stop thinking about, you  
125 know, the rules, like, kind of just like rule breaking or like, you know, being, you know, worried  
126 about what other people will think of me like, you know, yeah, it was very present when I was  
127 younger, but like, I didn't learn to kind of stop caring about that till I was older.  
128  
129 BT  
130 Yeah, so you got more independent, like in high school?  
131  
132

133 ED  
134 Yeah.  
135  
136 BT  
137 Gotcha. Um, what was your favorite activity to do with your parents when you were a child?  
138  
139 ED  
140 My favorite activity for us to do was. Well, um, you know, we're kind of like, we tried to be as  
141 much of a family as possible, like, do family events and stuff. So, um, there, we'd have a lot of  
142 family dinners. You know, eating breakfast, breakfast is family. But I think one of my favorite  
143 things was to probably like, visit my grandparents when I was younger, because they live, at  
144 least on my mom's side. They live in San Diego. So we were in Irvine, it's a two hour drive,  
145 basically. So um going down to see them with my parents. Like, it was always such a fun thing  
146 to do. And so they're not alive anymore. But when they were, it was, that was a really great time.  
147  
148 BT  
149 So it was just kind of more of an event.  
150  
151 ED  
152 Yeah, that was probably like one of my favorite things to do with them. Because like, they were  
153 there. I got to spend a lot of time with them. And then I got to see everyone else too and it was,  
154 you know, such a, such a positive environment.  
155  
156 BT  
157 Yeah yeah, that's real good. That kind of ties into the next one. What is your favorite memory of  
158 like being with your parents or doing something with your parents?  
159  
160 ED  
161 Man, I wish I could have prepped for these questions. Um, my favorite memory?  
162 Well, so maybe Whistler um, well, here, I'll try to just, I'll try to pick just a fond memory. So we  
163 you know, we can keep, keep the interview rolling. Because I can then I could like sit here for  
164 like, five minutes and just like think back.  
165  
166 BT  
167 Yeah, favorite is kind of relative, you know, but, uh.  
168  
169 ED  
170 Huh. Yeah. Let's see, oh, my favorite memories of my parents. A favorite memory of mine. It  
171 would. Okay, it would definitely be like, you know, so we took a fair amount of fun trips when I  
172 was younger. So I was real, that was really positive. But it would, I am, it might have to be  
173 Whistler. So when I was young when I was in third grade, we, I left the country for the first time.  
174 And I went to Whistler Canada. And I think it was that entire trip was just like, really great. Like,  
175 it's one of my, like, favorite trips ever. So, um, but I think one of my favorite memories would  
176 have to be when we, oh man, we took like a gondola almost up, and a to like, the mountain

177 basically, nearby and just kind of like hiking and like seeing that the, you know, natural beauty  
178 around Whistler like with them. That was like, one of my favorite memories. Probably.

179  
180 BT

181 Yeah, that's cool. So you guys were like a big vacation family?

182  
183 ED

184 Um, well, we didn't like leave the country too much. That wasn't until, like more recently. Um, so  
185 like, but we visited a lot of places in the West, like, I've been to most western states like Arizona,  
186 Nevada, Utah, Oregon, Washington. You know, we spent a lot of time like on the west coast  
187 and it wasn't until I got a little bit older that we kind of ventured more off to like the eastern  
188 states to go check out. Like, I had never been to Chicago until I was visiting it. Um, yeah. I never  
189 until I was visiting it in December. Nope. February of 2019. So when I was checking it, checking  
190 it out for college.

191  
192 BT

193 Yeah, that's cool. That's cool. Um, how is your relationship with them changed since childhood,  
194 like over the years?

195  
196 ED

197 While since childhood, um, I think it's changed quite a bit. And there's a couple events that  
198 probably like, you know, was responsible for that. Um, so, as a child, like, you know, they  
199 always seemed kind of like, just big figures in my life. And they still are really big figures in my  
200 life. But like, I guess, in turn, so when they kind of like, told me to do something, like, I always  
201 felt like, it's what I had to do. And it's like, their opinion. They're, what they want, for me is what  
202 like, is for the best, I guess. Because there were they were always like, the ones were  
203 advocating for me, since I had like an IEP when I was younger. So I was always like, Okay,  
204 what they want for me is always the best, but I didn't really take enough time to think what I, you  
205 know, really wanted for myself. So, um, my mom, she got kidney disease when I was in seventh  
206 grade. And that, no, it was. Was it seventh grade? It was, I think it was sixth, sixth or fifth grade.  
207 Because it didn't go away till I was in like, like, it really didn't leave our lives until I was in 10th  
208 grade. You know, we had like good memories in between then. But like, it really stopped being  
209 like a factor in our lives to take into consideration until I was in 10th grade. Um, and basically,  
210 what happened is, when she got sick, I kind of had to learn to do more things on my own. So  
211 yeah, and then also, like, at the college, the high school that I went to, like, I went to arts high  
212 school. So that place really taught me to take initiative towards what I want. So when she fully  
213 recovered and like, I think she felt guilty and tried to take more, she be more present in my life,  
214 that kind of like, same parenting like you need to do what we tell you to do, like was present  
215 again, and I was like, no, this is this is not good. This is not what's best for me.

216  
217 BT

218 Right? Yeah

219  
220 ED

221 Yeah. Um, I'd say like, I become a little bit more independent of them.  
222  
223 BT  
224 Cool. Could you excuse me for one second, I gotta close the door my goddamn dog just barged  
225 in on me.  
226  
227 ED  
228 It's all good.  
229  
230 BT  
231 I'm sorry about that. I thought I closed the door all the way and then she just came walking in.  
232  
233 ED  
234 So yeah, it's cool. I have like, I closed my door and I put a Do Not Disturb, um, kind of like post it  
235 note on the door. Because like, my roommate and I are pretty closed and like I could definitely  
236 see them walking in. And like just seeing what's up.  
237  
238 BT  
239 Yeah. All right. Sorry about that. All right, let's get back on track. So um, follow up to the last  
240 point, you said you had an IEP when you were younger, what was, what was that for?  
241  
242 ED  
243 Oh, um, I have, I'm very, very high functioning, but I do have autism. And then I'm also what it  
244 was mainly for it is I have this other thing with my eyes. It's called Nystagmus. So, um, when I  
245 was younger, it doesn't really affect me as much anymore. But it was really hard for me to read,  
246 because I'd be reading something and basically, like, the processing speed of what I was  
247 reading was, like, pretty slow. So like, I kind of grew up, not really liking reading that much. And  
248 this persisted for a pretty long time. And then kind of when I got into middle school, and like, it  
249 kind of exited my life, I almost like grew out of it. And I kind of started to learn to enjoy reading a  
250 lot more. But because of that, I enjoyed a lot more visual medias and kind of just reading was  
251 more of a chore for me. It was, um, it wasn't so much like a kind of thing that I would do in my  
252 leisure time. There is. Yeah, it felt like more of a chore or like an insecurity of mine. And that  
253 really didn't change till later.  
254  
255 BT  
256 Gotcha. Okay, I didn't yeah, I didn't know that. Um, so like, when and how did you first find out  
257 that you were like, pretty creatively minded?  
258  
259 ED  
260 Hmm. Well, in terms of creativity, um, I was kind of like, I always loved drawing and doodling  
261 and taking parts in the arts. But when I didn't kind of, like, really put that into play until I was like,  
262 in middle school, because in middle school, I started to, like, I started to bird like, you know,  
263 birdwatch, almost and kind of take it, take a tally of like, you know, how many species I've seen.  
264 I still do, but more on the down low, like, I will go out to different places in Chicago and try to find

265 birds. We'll talk, we could talk more about that if you want. One, but basically, uh, so I first  
266 started to do that. And then I'm like, Okay, I see all these people with cameras taking pictures of  
267 them. So I wanted to do that, too. So I started taking pictures. And then one of my best friends  
268 who I met in middle school, he had a YouTube channel, and we got really close. So I started  
269 helping him out with his YouTube videos, and they're almost like little short film skits. So um,  
270 after I started doing that, I discovered that like, I really enjoy film, too. And what he said is, I  
271 should apply for the Orange County School of the Arts, which kind of around my area, it's like an  
272 art school for, and, and you know, people, you have to audition to get in there. And you spend a  
273 lot of time if you do get in there for whatever conservatory you do, you'll spend a lot of time  
274 focusing on like, I don't know, film, or musical theater or acting. So I applied my ,for I applied my  
275 freshman year of high school. So I had one year of kind of, like, conventional public school. And  
276 then I got in and I spent three years there. But at that point, like, you know, I just film became a  
277 really big thing in my life. Om and , I kind of just was like, okay, this is what I want to do. Yeah.

278

279 BT

280 Yeah. So that that kind of bleeds into the next question. What was like your first, like, creative  
281 project that you undertook? Like, how would you describe that?

282

283 ED

284 Hmm, my first creative project, that that it was solely me undertaking, I think was my audition  
285 film for the high school, basically. Um, so at first, I thought I wanted to do something kind of like  
286 a little bit more skit related, but my friend who had been taking classes there, and you know, he  
287 knew more about, like, scripts and story development than than me he's like, he kind of pointed  
288 out all these flaws and like, okay, sure, maybe I can continue on with this idea. But like, if I want  
289 to really show this high school like that, I know kind of like about story development, and I can  
290 make a compelling story, I really shouldn't do it. So since I kind of, um, I was a much more  
291 socially awkward person back then. So I just decided to, um, under take a film about like, a  
292 college professor and like, trying to get closer to like his students and because he was pretty  
293 socially awkward, so like, I spent time I spent like an entire week thinking of like scenarios of  
294 like, how the professor could get like closer to his students. But in general, like when I kind of  
295 like pitched the logline to my friend, he was like, Yes, exactly. Like, that's kind of like the way  
296 that's a good start to a story. So he really didn't help me that much with a project. It was really  
297 just me like before, like, I'd be working on film projects for his YouTube channel. So

298

299 BT

300 Yeah. So that's kind of like, branching off on your own. then that leads us into high school, how  
301 did you spend like a lot of your time in high school?

302

303 ED

304 Um, when I was a freshman in high school, so when I was at public school, I was in lacrosse.  
305 So I spent a lot of time doing lacrosse. And I mean, I still really like to do it. But it's been a  
306 couple years since I've like really picked up a lacrosse stick. So, but basically, I spent a lot of  
307 time going to games, and you know, like, spending time with the team. And then kind of like  
308 when I figured that actually got to be a more important thing in my life than film. So when I got I

309 did, I found out that I got into this art school, I was like, man, is this really what I want to do? And  
310 it turns out, it was really what I wanted to do. Yeah. And what, um, it kind of it was like, at the  
311 time, it was a decision, like, really? Should I really go here? And, you know, I ended up going,  
312 because I felt like I couldn't, you know, um, like, give up that opportunity. Um, but yeah, so I  
313 spent a lot of my freshman year doing that. And then my sophomore, junior and senior year, you  
314 know, I spent a good amount, like work going on film sets. I'm, like, kind of just taking part in like  
315 activities at my school. And then also, like, you know, I mean, I think I had a really great friend  
316 group there, too. So we hung out. And we made a lot of a lot of good memories, you know, for  
317 my freshman, sophomore, junior year. And then when I was a senior, like, I started dabbling in  
318 music production, too. So that became a pretty big thing at the time too. Yeah, but yeah, mainly  
319 mainly going on film sets. I'd say.

320  
321 BT

322 That's cool. That's actually a perfect lead into the next question. So like, since you since you  
323 went to a private art school, even for high school, obviously, you decided early on that you want  
324 to study film, like when and why did you decide film?

325  
326 ED

327 Early on, I decided to film just because it's what I got into, like, in terms of the arts high school.  
328 So before it was because I was helping my friend out with his, you know, YouTube channel. And  
329 he, see he recommended like that apply. But basically, since I was kind of just doing something  
330 film related with him, I was like, okay, this is fun. You know, I'm having a great time doing it, like  
331 I'm having a great time doing this. So why wouldn't I go into film? Like, I mean, I also dabbled in  
332 acting, and oh, I also did hip hop dance when I was younger. But in terms of those, like, I kind of  
333 stopped doing both of those, like, after a little while, because I just felt like it wasn't for me. Like,  
334 I want to try something new. Yeah, that's just just kind of film was what clicked, I guess.

335  
336 BT

337 Yeah, it was just there. And so it was easy. And then it turned out to be what you love. So yeah,  
338 that's really cool. So you said you had like a really good group of friends when you were in high  
339 school? How have you stayed in touch with them now since like graduation, and now that  
340 you've kind of gone separate ways.

341  
342 ED

343 Um, the way I've stayed in touch with them is, well, we'll still text and everything while I'm here.  
344 Most of yeah, most of them, they'll, they'll still reach out to me too, which is great. Some of them  
345 like my relationship, we're really not as close as we were in high school. And that's, that's okay.  
346 You know, people who you know, grow apart from each other, and they might grow back  
347 together. But, you know, I'm kind of comfortable where I'm at, with, like my friend group right  
348 now, but basically, will still hang out when I'm back home. They'll still text me, I'll still text them.  
349 My, so two of my good friends, we're still like regularly in contact, like pretty much all the time  
350 from my high school. And then a couple of them like we'll talk occasionally. And then we'll like  
351 maybe hang out like once or twice while I'm back home.



353 BT

354 Yeah, I mean, it's good that you still stay in touch with them. Yeah.

355

356 BT

357 Um, all right now moving on to college. What were your like ambitions and goals when you  
358 graduated?

359

360 ED

361 My ambitions and goals were actually so even though I've been doing film for a little while, like,  
362 it was a little unclear what I really wanted to do. Because I kind of dabbled in all these different  
363 things in high school, but for me, like picking a niche and like only focusing on that was like,  
364 actually a pretty big decision. So, um, my goal, my goals when graduating from college, um,  
365 well, I know now it was to be a director, but when I first kind of, like, came here, I'm like, I don't  
366 know, I could be a director, I can be an editor. I can be a dp. I don't know. But you know, after  
367 kind of like, taking several different classes now I kind of like know, I want to, like, do the  
368 directing. Um, yeah. But basically, you know, and uh. Yeah, basically, that's what, you know,  
369 when I first got into college, I, like didn't really know what my like goals and expectations were. I  
370 just kind of like, wanted to see what would happen. And so far, we're doing good.

371

372 BT

373 So you entered just general film and then chose a concentration later on?

374

375 ED

376 Yeah, that's right.

377

378 BT

379 Gotcha. Um, what made you decide like Colombia, specifically, like what made you decide that's  
380 for you?

381

382 ED

383 Hmm. I was actually, I think this is actually a pretty big point in my life. Because, um, my high  
384 school made college applications seemed like the biggest thing in the world. And they like really  
385 kind of, I feel like they really stressed the students out about it, because they made it sound like,  
386 if you don't get into like, your dream school, then you're kind of just like a failure in life, like,  
387 you're not gonna make you feel you yeah, you're not gonna make it in the field that you want to  
388 go into. So, um, at first Columbia was a safety school for me. And I wanted to get into like, the  
389 Chapmans the USCs is the, I don't think I applied to NYU, I didn't really want to go there. Um,  
390 the Emersons the Florida States, like kind of schools with good film programs. And I didn't get  
391 into Chapman. And I didn't think I'd get into USC, but I didn't get in there either. Um, and I got  
392 into Columbia. And at first I'm like, okay, I don't, I'm not sure if I'm going to go here yet. But I  
393 want to see, like what these other colleges say, before I decide on like Columbia. And as it  
394 turned out, I got into Emerson. And then I also got into UC Santa Cruz, which doesn't have a  
395 really great film program, but it's, a it's a good college, and it has a great campus, I think, um,  
396 but basically, I visited Columbia, in February, and I really loved it. Like, I was really impressed

397 with the other students who I met there, and their facilities. And that was like, man, I think I  
398 could really learn a lot about film here. And I think it would be a great environment for me. Um,  
399 and then I visited Emerson, which I also got into, and then I'm like, okay, it's kind of like the  
400 more prestigious one. And then I love Boston, but they're the film program. Like, I was not  
401 impressed at all by like, the staff there. I don't think they gave me you know, a lot. They didn't  
402 really like. They did not seem, make it seem as if, like, the, or they try to like present to me and  
403 like, you know, I'm, why am I struggling on this? It just, it wasn't as impressive to me, like, the  
404 film look like Columbia had so much better facilities, like better staff, better, everything, pretty  
405 much. So um, even though like, the only reason I'd be going to Emerson is because the like, the  
406 kind of like, I'd be buying the name almost.

407  
408 BT  
409 Yeah yeah yeah.

410  
411 ED  
412 Yeah. Um, but because of that, it was like, between, like, Emerson and Columbia for a while,  
413 and then I'm like, okay, so I can't afford Emerson. But when it comes down to it, I don't think the  
414 staff and I don't think the facilities are as good as Columbia, so it only makes sense to go to  
415 Columbia.

416  
417 BT  
418 Right. Yeah, that makes sense. That makes a lot of sense. Um, so why did you decide to move  
419 like halfway across the country to go to school?

420  
421 ED  
422 Oh, my goodness. I like I was so excited to get away from California. Like, I look like, if, when if  
423 and when you ever move there, you're gonna realize that a lot of Californians kind of live in a  
424 bubble. And the world is a really big place, like really big place. So when I got here, I mean, like,  
425 I kind of, I met people from like, all across the country, like, I'd met, you know, people from the  
426 Chicago suburbs, from North Carolina, from Iowa, from France. And like, there were just so  
427 many like, people and like, it just kind of like, showed, you know, what a big what a big world it  
428 is. And like how many, you know, different, like, people who come from, like, different, you  
429 know, backgrounds and places and how I can, like, connect with them. So, to me, that was like,  
430 a really exciting thing. And I feel like I just did not get that at all in California. I lived in like a,  
431 almost like a bubble. Um, and when I got here, and like, you know, discovered the kind of  
432 amazing amount of different people who live here and who, and who are like, you know, just  
433 attending Columbia, who like I can get to know, it was just, really, it was really great. But when it  
434 comes down to it, it's just I wanted to have a different envi-, I wanted to be in a different  
435 environment. And it was a pretty, I think it was a pretty big kind of intimidating decision. Um,  
436 because, like, none of my other friends, they all stayed in state and like, they still have not  
437 traveled really, anywhere, like lived anywhere else. So for me, I was like, Okay, well, I'm leaving  
438 this place I've known my entire life for someone for, for somewhere where I know absolutely no  
439 one. So it'll be a fresh start. But like, a completely fresh start, like, no one from my old life is

440 going to be here. And as it turns out, I think that was a good thing, actually. Because it was like,  
441 you know, I could just be a new me almost.

442

443 BT

444 Yeah, that's always exciting. You know? How did you feel? I mean, you kind of answer this, but  
445 like, how did you feel about like moving so far away from the rest of your life and leaving  
446 everything you've ever known behind?

447

448 ED

449 I felt a little scared. But almost I was, I was actually kind of excited for it. I had no idea what was  
450 coming to me, again, pretty, like, I had no idea who I was going to meet there. how it was going  
451 to go, I sometimes what I'll do is like, I'll kind of envision like, an event or situation I know is  
452 going to come in the future. But I just like, I don't know how it's going to go. And it's me moving  
453 into my college dorm. So like, what what I would be able to see is like, my, you know, parents  
454 kind of like, leaving leaving me in college and me being like, okay, well, what now, but when we  
455 actually moved, um like, I got to meet my roommates, I got to kind of, you know, see this the  
456 thriving, um, the thriving city and like, the excitement of being in a big city, so when they left, I'm  
457 like, okay, bye bye and I'm just kind of like, what now you know. So I was really excited to kind  
458 of dive into college life and let life just hit me. You know, like, because I'm me in general. I'm in  
459 kind of like the history me being alive, like, I haven't really enjoyed change. But when I got here,  
460 I'm like, okay, this is a change that I'm really excited to implement into my life.

461

462 BT

463 Huh. Yeah, but yeah, that makes a lot of sense. Um, so you know, you, you had your first  
464 semester as an entirely normal semester. How did that, how did that compare to your  
465 expectations of like, what college life was going to be?

466

467 ED

468 I think, um, the first semester of me being here blew my expectations away actually. Because,  
469 and, like, I was really fortunate to have three other really great roommates. And also my dorm,  
470 the first semester, I think it was also really spacious and comfortable too. So that was that, that  
471 was really great. We had a lot of really great memories together. And then I met kind of literally,  
472 on the first day of classes I met, what would become my new best friend here and then after  
473 that, when I finally got to my film classes, I was I was put into like a group almost for, like a film  
474 project that like, or a documentary, where like, four of us would help each person make a  
475 documentary about someone else in that group, and the three other people who I was in the  
476 group with, like, we all became really close too. And then also dorm life, which is I'm not sure if  
477 you're planning on living on campus, which I really suggest you do. Kind of in a non COVID  
478 world, um, there were all these, you know, like my, I'd be bringing people into the dorm, and  
479 like, my roommates could be bringing people in the dorm, and like, I'd go and hang out with  
480 them, too. And then, like, you know, a week, spend nights like walking around the city and  
481 making memories. It was, it was amazing. Like, I was kind of like on a living hiatus. Almost. And  
482 I think the very first day of classes is actually like a really great representation of how the rest of  
483 this, that semester would go too because I had math first period. And then after class, like I got

484 into the elevator, start talking with a senior, and he's like, hey, do you want to go hang out with  
485 my friends and I we're about to go get lunch before next class. I'm like, oh, yeah, sure. That  
486 sounds that sounds good. So I went to hang out with them. And I met four people, right off the  
487 bat found four new friends. And then later on, when I got to my next class, I recognized one of  
488 my roommates' friends, and I wanted to go hang out with them and the two other people who he  
489 was with, so we kind of kicked it off. And now that's two more friends. So we got six friends in  
490 one day. And then lastly, I went to the music building because I started doing music production.  
491 And this is where like, my best friend comes into play. He was with one of his friends. And that  
492 person kind of reached out to me, and she was like, hey, what are you doing? I'm like, Oh, you  
493 know, learning to make 808s on Logic. And, you know, it kind of just took interest in what I was  
494 doing. And kind of we just hit it off from there. Like, I brought them up to my dorm. We  
495 exchanged music we've done like, we kind of just really hit it off. But the fact that I made eight  
496 new friends in one day, like, is just crazy. Yeah. Like, I've never had a first day of school that  
497 was that good.

498

499 BT

500 Yeah. Um, yeah, so it sounds like you had a great first semester. Um, so like, how busy were  
501 you prior to COVID and everything shutting down?

502

503 ED

504 Um, pretty busy. Like I was, I was a pretty busy, pretty busy person, um, something that made  
505 COVID really hard, and we'll get, I'm sure we'll get into it later. But, um, is that the fact that I'm a  
506 kind of very high maintenance person, and I've had to learn to not be as high maintenance, but  
507 basically, when, when I got to school, I'm always like, I want to get as much out of this college  
508 experience as I can. So I felt like, I always had to be hanging out with someone, I always had to  
509 be on a set, I always had to be on a job. So I tried to, like one of my rules was like, get outside  
510 at least once every day, or like, you know, try to meet up with a friend as much as possible. So,  
511 um, you know, that was really great and everything, but like, when COVID shut everything  
512 down. It was like, really hard to kind of adjust my lifestyle. But yeah, no, I was, I was, I was  
513 pretty busy the first semester and just before COVID in general. .

514

515 BT

516 So like prior to COVID you were pretty busy. Um, so like, do you remember what you were  
517 doing when you found out that Colombia was going remote?

518

519 ED

520 Yes. Yeah, I do. Um, very vividly. I think I've talked with a couple friends of mine about it, but  
521 like, kind of looking back on it. I feel like um Coronavirus is going to be kind of like one of those  
522 things where like you just remember where you were when you heard about it, like, almost like a  
523 911 or like a Kobe Bryant thing. Like you just remember where you were, you know, where you  
524 were when you heard that person died, or this happened. So um with me, it wasn't so much like  
525 where I was, but it was the events leading up to it. Like the entire week is kind of just engraved  
526 in my memory, because it started off completely normal. And then like, really wasn't at the end  
527 of the week. So what basically happened is the, at the start of the week, like it was just a normal

Monday. You know, I went to actually no, I don't have class on Mondays. I just did my thing. Then Tuesday, we started hearing talks about like, you know, Coronavirus and them being like, okay, if you feel like you're sick, just stay home and you know, you won't get like, counted tardy or absent or you won't, you won't lose points, you know? So I'm like, Okay, cool. Um, and the entire time, they're like, there's no chance that the school is going to shut down because of like, this virus going around. Um, and then on Wednesday, I went to my lighting class at eight AM. And I talked with my professor about it, I'm like, do you think that like, the, the school is going to close down and he's like, oh, there's no chance pretty much like no chance that's going to happen. Um, and, yeah, then like, it was just a normal class period, I did my thing for the rest of the day, I was working on a presentation. And my roommate, he got off the phone with his girlfriend, and his girlfriend goes to DePaul and the, I kind of went out in the living room with my other, you know, roommate. And he was like, hey, so it turns out DePaul just closed down, like, they're forcing all the kids off campus. And I'm just like, wait, what? Um, and then we like, all like, I just could not work for the rest of the night, we spent the rest of the night researching about COVID and how it's shutting down the NBA too. And, like, just the whole night, the takeaway from the night was that it wasn't if the college would close down, and it's just when it's going to close down. So going to class the next day, everybody was pretty quiet. Because like, we knew what was going to happen. So like, even, you know, my, my editing teacher at the time, she's like, she referred to as, like, when it happens, because I feel like everyone kind of had like, a similar night to me on Wednesday night, where we're like, yeah, this, the college is gonna close down. So what happened is I got back from class, and then I was going to go to my second class that day, and also like, the last one in the week, but the teacher was like, oh, so I have a kind of a cold today, I don't think I have any symptoms of COVID but I'm just going to exercise, like the policy, the policy and just cancel class for today. Um, and then, or like it, you know, to kind of promote that it's okay to do this. So then, I think at, you know, one or 2pm, my roommate and I were just kind of, were sitting down at our desks in like, the room that we shared at the time and we got like, the Columbia notice on our phones, like an important email, you know, was just sent to your 365 account, please go check it out. And then one of his or at the time, his friends texted him. And he told me, he was like, it's, it's the email, and we check it out and at first it was like, so there won't be any school for the next three weeks, it will just be online. Then the three weeks turned into no online school for the next three weeks. Just, you know, you're going just like no school for the three weeks. Okay, cool. And they didn't allow people into the dorms anymore, either. So for the rest of the night, um, I just kind of kicked it with my roommates, because I knew it would be like the last time because what they did is that night they take, they were talking and they're like, Hey, I think I'm gonna have to go back home tomorrow. So one of my roommates, he went back home the next day and the other roommate, he went back home that Monday, and then I spent about a week, I spent another week in the dorm with the roommate who I'm currently rooming with right now. And it was just, it was just sad it was like, you know, every day something new, something new was going to go wrong. So like we kind of just like, went to bed like, oh, what's gonna go wrong today? So that's what it was like.

572 BT

573 Yeah. So that whole process was just kind of like a downward spiral. Transition transitioning into  
574 like, um, the beginning of all of that, like into the current day. Like, so, um, you moved home  
575 right? When all of this happened.

576

577 ED

578 Yes, I did go home.

579

580 BT

581 Um, so like how did that announcement affect your living situation? Like did you know right  
582 away, like, okay, I'm going to have to go back?

583

584 ED

585 Um, at first I was like, Oh, you know, I could just quarantine in my dorm room. Like they're not  
586 taking us out of the dorms. I'll just quarantine here. And then, um, my mom, she was like, Elliot,  
587 you're coming home. I think it was March 28th. And I was like, Oh man, like, I'm going to have to  
588 go home? What? Um, and, uh, then March 28th turned into March 20th, um, really quickly. And  
589 I'm like, wait, why are you guys forcing me to go home? It's not like they're kicking us out of the  
590 dorms or anything. Like, I have no reason to go home. Um, I, like, I thought I could just  
591 quarantine, you know, with my roommate in my dorm and it would be fine. Uh, and then what  
592 happened is, uh, the, the dorms announced that they're going to like kick everybody out the  
593 Sunday after I was going home. So if I was going home on Friday, the 20th, they're kicking  
594 everyone out on the 22nd. So I'm like, oh, I guess I have to go home then. Yeah. But it was hard  
595 for me cause like, you know, I was talking about like being on kind of like the living hiatus almost  
596 the first semester. So transitioning from that to cope, it was just like, what is happening? Like life  
597 does not make sense right now. This is not a day like Elliott wake up, wake up.

598

599 BT

600 Yeah, yeah, yeah. It had to be rough. Um, when did like COVID first like appear on your radar?  
601 Like when did you first become aware of all of this?

602

603 ED

604 Hm. When I first became aware of all of it, um, it would have to be, I think I was scrolling  
605 through Snapchat and they were talking about like having 30 COVID cases in India and I'm like,  
606 Oh, looks like they're going through it. They're going through it right now. Um, and then what  
607 happened is I was working a TV job and two people who I was talking with, they said, oh,  
608 there's um, two COVID cases now in Chicago. And uh, the only two places in the entire country  
609 that where COVID was, was, um, in Chicago and in Orange County. So I, I just remember kind  
610 of funny, cause like I live right next to Orange County in Irvine. Irvine is like 20, 30 minutes away  
611 from Orange County. And then like I also live in Chicago, so I was like, Oh, wherever I go, I'm  
612 still still around COVID those were the first two moments where like, I really like learned about it,  
613 but I didn't think it was a big deal. I'm like, okay, two people have the virus. So what, so when  
614 they closed the dorms now and I'm like, wait, there's like thousands of COVID cases no?. So  
615 that's like totally under my radar. I thought it was like a couple people here and there had it.

616

617 BT

618 Yeah. Um, so I, I know that you've said before, like just through us talking, like you did a lot of  
619 freelance gigs with editing and directing and stuff prior to COVID. So like how did COVID affect  
620 your employment and stuff like that?

621

622 ED

623 Mm, how it affected my appointments is I was, I'm lucky to have like two or three kind of  
624 freelance jobs while I was in quarantine. Um, I had an internship that didn't last super long and  
625 then I also worked for another person as a video editor. And then, um, I, uh, I was just finishing  
626 up a job with a third person and I was a video editor for like a short film he was doing in LA. And  
627 like, we finished that up kind of at the start a quarantine, like, um, in the first four weeks or so,  
628 like I'd been working on it since October and we finished it up and, uh, what was it? Uh, May  
629 yeah. So yeah, that's kind of like it, it affected it. Like I was not doing nearly as many in-person  
630 things, but, um, it was, I'm just grateful that I was able to do a couple of things in quarantine.

631

632 BT

633 Yeah. Yeah. Um, so then, like how did COVID affect your work ethic and like motivation?

634

635 ED

636 Motivation? Um, I was weird. So when I had to move home for Coronavirus, um, in terms of,  
637 since I was still in that really high maintenance mind state, and I had nothing to do, um, when  
638 the teachers put out homework, as opposed to most people being like, Oh, I'm stuck inside all  
639 day. Like, I don't really want to do it. Like homework was kind of like, just it gave me something  
640 to do. So, um, you know, I just, I just, I did it, you know, I'm like, okay, sounds good. I'll do all the  
641 homework. It's cool. It gives me something to do.

642

643 BT

644 Yeah. So you're like one of the rare cases where you actually got more motivated by all this?

645

646 ED

647 Um, I wasn't more motivated, but like, I think my grades wouldn't have been as good as they  
648 were if COVID didn't happen. Like, um, I don't know. I think I had like a couple, you know,  
649 mostly Bs in my classes, um, my second semester, and then those all jumped to As because all  
650 the teachers kind of like, um, watered down most of the assignments cause they were, they  
651 were aware of everybody's situation. So I, uh, for me it was just like, Oh, okay, just get this done  
652 and this done and this done. Yeah.

653

654 BT

655 Um, what, what, like aspect of your life was most affected by all of this?

656

657 ED

658 Um, this is, this is actually coming out of, I think, left field, but, um, this is easily the biggest thing  
659 I've been struggling with since COVID arised, but, um, about three and a half weeks then

660 actually had a change to my physical health. And I think it was, it was definitely due to COVID,  
661 but it's still with me right now and I'm just hoping it goes away. I'm kind of in denial about it, but,  
662 um, um, imagine film, grain, like, you know, like if you're looking at like an image and you kind of  
663 see film grain on it, like a low quality image, do you know what I'm talking about?

664

665 BT

666 Yeah yeah yeah.

667

668 ED

669 Imagine seeing that like in real life, like just kind of everyday, like it's called, um, visual snow. So  
670 what happened is, um, I think three and a half weeks in, right after I turned 19, cause I had, I  
671 had like a COVID COVID birthday. Like, uh, my, my birthday was April 9th. So like it was in the  
672 heart of COVID. Yeah. But a week afterwards I started seeing like this, a weird double vision  
673 and the entire week I was kind of like stressed out about my eyes cause I was still in like a really  
674 high maintenance, um, mindset, mind state, and um, exactly a week after I turned 19, I started  
675 seeing this really weird visual kind of like grain haze and uh, yeah, it's um, like I don't, I know  
676 almost nothing about it. Um, my eyes are fine. I, but, so I think it's caused by my brain. Um, but  
677 it's just kind of like, it really consumed my life the entire time during, uh, coronavirus, like my  
678 entire kind of like, or during quarantine and like my entire, um, schedule was like based around  
679 trying to, uh, fix it, trying to make it go away. And uh, so I was, you know, unsuccessful, it's still  
680 with me. Um, but like, you know, it was just a really big deal and like more recently it's kind of,  
681 it's forced me to learn, to relax, to not be so much high maintenance, um, to like learn how to  
682 de-stress. Because I think that's kind of like what caused it in the first place, but you know, who  
683 knows, like not trying not to think about it as much, but like if, you know, if I didn't have this then  
684 like, you know, I think like COVID, I could definitely, um, you know, I could have handled it a lot  
685 better, you know?

686

687 BT

688 Yeah. So like just seeing every day to now is like kind of like watching like a burned out tape or  
689 something.

690

691 ED

692 Seeing almost like that. Seeing every day is so there's definitely aspects of my life where like,  
693 it's not really as prevalent, but like let's say, uh, if you look towards like the sky or if you look at  
694 at a blank wall, then like you really notice it, but maybe if you're in like a forest or if you're in like  
695 a busy city street, there isn't very much, there aren't very many areas where you could really  
696 notice it. So in my suburban house where like, um, you know, I'm kind of looking at the same  
697 thing every day. Like it's, it was really easy for me to just obsess over it. So now that I've had  
698 like friends who, I can really talk to about this. Um, and not, not too many people know about  
699 this. Like, um, it was, um, my closest friends know about it. Um, and they know kind of like what  
700 I'm going through, but you know, like now that I've been kind of back in college, I've had a lot  
701 more things to focus on.

702

703 BT



704 Yeah, yeah. Um, yeah, that is kind of a big effect. Um, so you're back on campus. Um, describe  
705 your current living situation

706  
707 ED

708 Right now. I live in 30 East, um, with two other roommates. Uh, we don't live in like the same  
709 like bedroom. Like we kind of, we, we share overall the same room, but like I have a bedroom,  
710 they have a bedroom and the other one has a bedroom. Um, right now I'm living with the person  
711 who I like physically like was in the same room with last year. So we were really good friends  
712 and I'm glad that I get to live with them again. You know, I'd probably would've gone crazy, like if  
713 they weren't living with me.

714  
715 BT

716 Yeah. Um, so like how, how has the pandemic changed your relationship with your parents?

717  
718 ED

719 Um, I think it's changed in some negative ways in some positive ways, like in a positive way, like  
720 looking back at it. Um, it's kind of, it's kind of pointed out a lot of like toxic things in my life that I  
721 really just need to get rid of. Um, and then in like a negative way, it's like, I'm kind of like even  
722 more sick of like the environment of being back home because of the pandemic. Like, um, in  
723 there, I think there's a lot of positive changes that I could have made that I kind of learned to  
724 make in the pandemic. Like if you look at how I like didn't make too many decisions for myself,  
725 um, that was like the, my, um, awareness of that was even amp- so much more amplified in  
726 quarantine. So learning to be my own person, um, that was a big, that was a big change that  
727 was really through them, um, learning to distress and not be so high maintenance. Um, that was  
728 also through the pandemic. Um, and through kind of like the way I like converse with them and  
729 uh, yeah, just being an authentic me, you know, like I think that the pandemic really brought that  
730 up.

731  
732 BT

733 Yeah.

734  
735 ED

736 The, um, in the negative way, it's like, I'm more I'm so I'm more sick of them. Um, I like, uh,  
737 really kind of just kind of dread going back home. Like I love them and everything, but I just  
738 don't want to be thrown back into that quarantine, um, like, uh, living situation again. Um,  
739 because like, since they're kind of the ones who have like, you know, made me so high  
740 maintenance when like I go back home, it like I'm thrown right back into that mind state again,  
741 like when I came, when I came back to Chicago for the semester and like my two best friends  
742 came to help me move in. They're like, hey, Elliot, chill, relax. Because I was like in such a, like  
743 a, you know, uh, high maintenance mind state. Um, so I'm worried that I'm going to be like  
744 thrown back into that when I go back home, but now I'm more aware of it. So I'll, I'll know how to  
745 like, you know, resist I guess.

746  
747 BT

748 Yeah. Yeah. That makes sense. Um, how have your practices like to avoid COVID how has  
749 that changed and evolved?

750  
751 ED

752 Um, it went from not knowing very much about COVID to being way too concerned and about  
753 getting COVID to kind of like easing away a little bit. So it started off with like, you know, when  
754 we first heard about the pandemic and I was still in Chicago, like, I didn't know how big of a deal  
755 it was. Um, and like, I didn't really have very much protective gear like that entire week. I was  
756 still here. Like I went back home on the plane without a mask. I just had gloves on. So, you  
757 know, doing that today, that seems crazy. But back home, like, you know, back in March, I was  
758 like, yeah, sure. Why not? Um, so when I got back home, my mom, since she had, um, she had  
759 kidney disease, she's immunocompromised. So, um, it was like a really big deal that we like  
760 could not get that we didn't get COVID because if we get COVID, then she's probably gonna get  
761 COVID and like, she's going to be much more affected by it than we are. So, um, like I was  
762 really, like, I wore gloves all the time. I wore masks all the time. I, I saw almost nobody. And  
763 then, um, as the months went on, like, as we got into kind of July and August, like, well, maybe  
764 well, I'll, I'll back it up a little bit, like kind of the end of May and like into June, um, I maybe saw  
765 a friend around my area, like once a week or so, and then that kind of turned to like once or  
766 twice a week in July and August. And then when I got back here, um, I kind of went out every  
767 day with like protective gear and, uh, eventually I stopped using gloves because like, I didn't  
768 really see the need for it anymore. And, um, I saw my close friends, uh, definitely, definitely a  
769 good amount. Like, um, I'm not being nearly as kind of like, paranoid and like, I guess, safe too  
770 here. Um, like I'm still, I'm still staying safe, but I, um, am seeing close friends and I'm seeing,  
771 you know, I'm hanging out with my roommate and I'm like, you know, kind of making sure, like  
772 I'm going outside a good amount while staying safe and, uh, kind of reconnecting with people  
773 who I knew from before COVID. Yeah.

774  
775 BT

776 Speaking of staying connected, like, how are you communicating with your professors?  
777 Because I know that that's kind of a big thing.

778  
779 ED

780 Um, I mean, I communicate with them by sending emails, like in terms of before and after  
781 COVID like, really that hasn't changed. Like, if I have a question, I'll just send them an email and  
782 then, um, I've tried to like make conversation and connect with them too. So like, um, with a  
783 couple of my professors, like after, you know, everyone leaves the zoom call, we'll still talk for  
784 maybe 30 minutes or so. Um, yeah, so there's that sure. Like, well, you know, kind of like  
785 staying connected with them through zoom, um, and like actually verbally speaking with them  
786 and making conversation that changed, but in terms of reaching out to them through like email  
787 and stuff that really hasn't changed.

788  
789 BT

790 Gotcha. Um, so with zoom and all that, how has the transition into online learning kind of gone  
791 for you?

792

793 ED

794 I hate online learning. Um, so I'm going, so with this, it's, it's kind of interesting. So I love in-  
795 person teaching so much more, but it's like, it's kind of it's, I am almost scared to like go back  
796 into in-person teaching because, um, since I see things a little bit differently now, um, I feel like  
797 still, even to this day, I feel like I need to kind of like, get this figured out before I can kind of like  
798 resume my life almost like, uh, I definitely think it's, you know, due to like the pandemic and  
799 being super stressed out and it's just the way that I'm dealing with it. Um, but like going back to  
800 in-person class or like, um, going back into like, um, you know, a classroom environment, it's  
801 almost like, oh my, you know, I don't want like half to kind of like, you know, be super distracted  
802 about how I'm seeing things in that in-person class. Um, and, uh, so like in terms of zoom, like, I  
803 kind of just know how I'm going to see things through zoom, but with like in-person class, like I  
804 really want to resume again. But then in the back of my head, I'm also like, Oh no, no, no, no,  
805 you have to get this figured out first. So, uh, yeah, the, the, the transition to online learning is  
806 like, I hate it, but, you know, I kind of just have grown accustomed to it. Um, yeah. And I'm like, I  
807 can't wait for online, online learning to end, but then again, like also in the back of my head, I'm  
808 like, I'm like, this needs to go away before, like, you know, in-person learning can resume for  
809 me. So.

810

811 BT

812 Yeah. What, um, like what were hybrid classes like for you, have you had any of those?

813

814 ED

815 I had four hybrid classes this semester. Um, the name hybrid is really misleading because the  
816 way they made it sound like is, um, I'll be going to class every two weeks or no, once every two  
817 weeks or once every three weeks. Um, I've had, I have four hybrid classes. I've been to class  
818 about five times this semester, literally. Yeah. Um, so like I had an economics class that was  
819 hybrid. We met twice, twice. Um, and then my camera seminar class, we met twice also. Um,  
820 and then for my intro to digital cine, we met once and then my image design wasn't even like, I  
821 don't even consider it a class. It was literally like five people, including me and the teacher,  
822 learning about how to, um, check out equipment from the film cage at the 1104 building. So  
823 yeah, I've had five classes a semester. Um, and yeah, the rest of it is pretty much been online  
824 learning.

825

826 BT

827 Um, so, you know, since obviously you hated online learning when it started last semester, like  
828 why'd you decide to continue with college in the middle of all of this rather than just, you know,  
829 taking maybe a semester or so off?

830

831 ED

832 Um, I mean, I like maybe if I feel like, um, I'm really not getting as much out of my college  
833 experiences as I could be, like next semester, I might decide to take a leave of absence for  
834 maybe a semester or so. So I don't have to like pay tuition during that time. But, um, I don't  
835 know. I mean, I just feel like it's, it's still right. Like, I still want to kind of like, finish my education,

836 even though this is going on. I think, um, it would have been a much different scenario if this  
837 happened when I was still in high school, because if I were still in high school, like, I didn't, one,  
838 I had, I wouldn't know how good Columbia would be, you know, kind of like, you know, from like  
839 the, you know, all the events that happened my first year. So what I probably would have, so,  
840 but with the decision between Columbia Emerson and, um, Santa Cruz, I, uh, probably just  
841 would take a year off, honestly. Um, and maybe like reapplied to those colleges later and see if I  
842 got in. Um, yeah, but now that I was now that I'm in college, I'm like, you know, the pandemic  
843 will be over when it's over, but I just, like, I don't know. I think I still need to like, continue my  
844 learning.

845

846 BT

847 Yeah. Um, okay, so moving on to current events, because we all know there have been a lot of  
848 those this year. So, like, have you found yourself, well, how have you found yourself more  
849 interested and active about like, global and national issues lately?

850

851 ED

852 I mean, I think I find myself more active about global and, you know, national issues through  
853 like, films that I'm making through like the internet through like, I mean, I feel like I have to do it  
854 through the internet, because last semester, when it comes to, I don't know, BLM, like they're  
855 saying, like, get educated. So not to say that I wasn't educated before. But like, I spent a lot of  
856 time, you know, at kind of BLM events at open mics at like, you know, just really learning a lot  
857 about the African American culture in Chicago. So like, when they said get educated, I'm like,  
858 yes, I have been doing this for the last nine months. So, but the way I'm doing it right now,  
859 needs to be through online because with you know, Coronavirus going up in Chicago. Um like, I  
860 just, I'm not super comfortable with like, marching. Maybe I would if I were like 10 feet away  
861 from everybody else. You know, yeah. It's, like, I'm still definitely staying active. Just, you know,  
862 maybe not in person. Like when Biden won, um, you know, there was a parade near the Trump  
863 Tower, but like, I couldn't, I couldn't go to that, you know, just cuz of like COVID is really going  
864 up. Or, during the BLM protest, I did go to a protest around my area in Irvine. So it was a bit  
865 more of a smaller one. But I was just comfortable in that setting. Because I was, you know, I  
866 don't know, at least nine feet away from everybody else.

867

868 BT

869 Hmm. So with Black Lives Matter, like, how did you find out about George Floyd and everything  
870 that went down this summer?

871

872 ED

873 Um, I found out about it, like, through just online like, through, through social media posts. Yeah,  
874 I just, I just found out about it on Instagram.

875

876 BT

877 Like, what was your response? You know, like your reaction?

878

879 ED

880 My reaction, it was like, it's, it's just so ridiculous, like, so we are in 2020. And things like this are  
881 still happening. That's just kind of crazy to think about. Um, so of course, I would, you know, it's  
882 an injustice and needs to be, you know, resolved.

883

884 BT

885 Um, how do you think social media has affected all of it?

886

887 ED

888 I think social media has been, it's, um, spread a lot of awareness, but not so much change, I  
889 guess. Like, because there's a lot of people who have, you know, posted about it, like, I am in  
890 support of BLM. But like, with COVID, it's like, it's, there's a difference between, like, being in  
891 support and like, actually, being active in that community, you know, and like, really helping that  
892 community. So, a lot of people I think, I think because of that, um, there has been a lot of  
893 awareness, but maybe not so much a lot of change. So maybe that change will come up when  
894 COVID ends and like, you know, we can meet in person again, but um, yeah,

895

896 BT

897 Yeah, makes sense. Um, how did you vote this year?

898

899 ED

900 I voted. Oh, like through, okay, I voted for Biden, and I voted through a mail in ballot. At first I  
901 wanted to vote in Chicago, but it turns out, you have to be a resident for six months before you  
902 can do that. So um, you know, that's just a kind of, I think that just kind of means that like, if you  
903 live in a dorm, then you're not like a permanent resident because you're like moving around  
904 every four months. Yeah. So, I voted through mailing. My parents sent me the ballot in for  
905 California, and I mailed it in there.

906

907 BT

908 Gotcha. Uh, how did you react when you finally finally found out the results of the election.

909

910 ED

911 I was really excited. And I mean, it didn't completely feel real. I'm like, wow. Biden's president.  
912 That'sm that's kind of crazy. I'm almost no way how it didn't feel like Trump was really president  
913 in 2016. Yeah, it was. Oh my gosh, like, we did it. Yeah. Because on, on Tuesday night, like, I  
914 was just really I was really scared, because of like, all the Republican votes coming in, and I'm  
915 like, Oh, my God, oh my God. Oh my God. Oh, my God. But then when the mail in ballots came  
916 in, you know, it was like, oh, is there a glimmer of hope? Um, yeah. And then over the next day,  
917 I'm like, oh, my goodness. Like, he might actually pull it off. And then, you know?

918

919 BT

920 Yeah. Um, oh, um, has the, has the election and, you know, current politics. Has it affected any  
921 of your relationships? Like with friends or family?

922

923 ED

924 Um, maybe, so, I guess, I guess not really, because, um, a lot of my friends have a similar  
925 outlook on politics to me, like, they're, they were for Biden, they were for BLM. So it was like,  
926 you know, at least the the friends here, you know, they took part in it and everything. And then  
927 my friends back home, there were a couple people who I think lean more Republican. But in  
928 general, they were like, for Biden, and they were also for BLM. And I think the couple friends  
929 who I have back home, who might not kind of like lean that direction. I actually didn't hang out  
930 with them too much during quarantine. So it never even really came up. You know?

931  
932 BT

933 Yeah, yeah. I know, this is kind of a dumb question. But like, how do you feel about mask  
934 mandates and social distancing all that

935  
936 ED

937 You need to do it. I feel like, if we did it right the first time, then we still wouldn't be living like this.  
938 Because like, the whole reason for quarantining is so the virus can die out because it has  
939 nowhere to like, transfer to next. So, um, when everything opened back up, I think after  
940 Coronavirus was going down, you know, we shouldn't have done that. Like, we should have  
941 been in quarantine for maybe another month or two, even though it's really hard. And I know  
942 everyone was getting stir crazy. Like, I think it was just something that we had to do. So I'm, I'm  
943 okay with, you know, waiting for a vaccine now. And the way we're living right now, but I think  
944 it's definitely necessary. Like, we need mask mandates. And we also like need to socially  
945 distance just for our own health.

946  
947 BT

948 I figured that would be the answer. But you know, you never know. It's, it's weird. Um, how is  
949 COVID affected like your overall attitude and outlook on life and your mental health?

950  
951 ED

952 It's really affected my mental health, in I think, in many different ways, like, with COVID and  
953 mental health, well, because of, I think, um, I would I think if COVID didn't happen, a lot of the  
954 things that I struggled with mentally and also physically wouldn't have happened either. I think I  
955 wouldn't have been so in my head, and like, I think I wouldn't have I don't know, if the situation  
956 never really came up. Like wouldn't be something I just don't think I would like, have struggled  
957 with mental health as much as I did. Like with like, depression of being in this situation. Because  
958 since I had such a great first year, transferring into quarantine, like, it was almost surreal. And  
959 the entire, the entire time I felt like no, no, no, this isn't happening, like I'm going to wake up or  
960 when, I when I fell asleep for like the first two months for the first two weeks. Like, I would kind  
961 of just almost relive an event that I had in college with like, you know, a dream twist to it, like  
962 moving out of my dorm after COVID or like, I don't know, going out with friends, you know, or  
963 um meeting friends just really, really weird. Really weird stuff. Really weird stuff. Uh, and then  
964 how has it affected my mental health? I still, I still think, like a part of me also, like, hasn't  
965 accepted the fact that you know, COVID is here, like I know definitely it is here. And like, it's not  
966 going anywhere for just a little bit a little while longer. But a part of me is still like, I'm going to  
967 wake up and it will be March 13. And I'm going to go take my lightning midterm. Part of me will

be like, you know, it's time to wake up, like, just close my eyes. And I like I wake up in my old dorm. And, you know, this is never an issue COVID is never an issue. It's March 2020. You know, I have an 8am class.

BT

How do you deal with like, those feelings? And like, who do you talk to about it?

ED

Um, well, I talked to my dad a lot. Um, I talked to other friends, I think I didn't, um, stay as connected as I wish I could have with my Columbia friends and also with like, friends around my area too, because we, we talk every, maybe one like once a week or once every two weeks. But like, I think I really could have kind of like, stayed up to date with them a lot more than I did. And I'm sure like, a lot of mental health and physical health problems really wouldn't have come up. If I did do that. Um, and then, so with my, with my dad, he's a good listener. And I think that's where I kind of, like inherited that from. So like, he'll kind of like, let me say, my piece. And then after I've already got it off my chest, it's like, okay, what can we do about it now? With my mom, she's kind of like, find a solution right away, or like, she's, it's almost like she's on an agenda. You know, like, when, when I had my first in this is not in COVID related. But like when I, when I was having my first real in person class, and I was still really paranoid about my eyes. I'm like, man, I'm like, scared of going to in person class tomorrow, because I'm going to be seeing things a very different way. And she's like, if you feel like you can't take it and tell me so you can drop out and I'm like, oh, thanks so much. I'm really like, that's definitely what I want to hear. Okay, you can't deal with it? Okay, just drop out of college. Oh, perfect. Yeah, exactly what I want to do. Yeah. Oh, yeah. Because of that, I think I bottled up a lot of things. And that just, you know, resulted in so many things going wrong. But, you know, it's more okay, now. It's not okay. But, you know.

BT

Yeah, hopefully, it will be. What aspects of your life did you take for granted before COVID?

ED

Um, every. So I took for granted, man, so many things like, human. So there's, I think there's several different points in 2020, where I realized what I've been taking for granted. Like, when it first closed down, it's like I just took for granted being able to be in college, and being able to go out freely, and hang out with friends, like, you know, without any protective gear and just have a normal life. I took a normal for granted. And then, when this happened, I took all my body parts acting completely normally for granted. Like, um, it's, it's a really big thing, too. And then when I moved back to college for the, this semester, for the first two weeks, like I had, there was nobody here so I was just alone in my head. And like, you know, that was kind of that was hard for me to deal with. So I took for granted even though I didn't really like my situation, at least if I, you know, was feeling lonely, I had to do is go downstairs and someone was there. And now I'm about to, even though this semester still feels surreal to me, it feels like it almost hasn't started yet. And I'm about to leave again to go home. So I'm about to probably take for granted again, what I've been able to do while I've been here.

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BT

Yeah. Um, how do you feel about like the national response to the pandemic?

ED

Really, really bad. Um, I think there's uh the, at least one positive thing about the national response to the pandemic is the fact that like, maybe Trump wouldn't have lost if he didn't respond the way he did. Like, I think what happened is, um, if so one thing that Democrats really knew about Trump is like, he's kind of a big baby, like, you know, he says a lot of stuff, but when it's time to act, he won't act. So when the Coronavirus came up, and he didn't act, you know, like, we were forced into a situation that we don't want to be in. And he's not, he was not taking us out of it. And he's still not taking us out of it, like COVID is going up again, we're probably gonna have to quarantine again. So when people realize that it's like, no, like, this person cannot stay in power.

BT

Yeah.

ED

So I think there was a, there is, I, on one hand, I really wish that he would have made everybody quarantine longer. And I really wish he would have taken more initiative to make sure everybody is safe. But on the other hand, you know, at least I know that, like we have a brighter future ahead of us.

BT

Hmm, um, how do you think COVID is going to carry into the next year? Because I think at this point, it's foregone conclusion that it will, but how do you think it will?

ED

Oh, yeah, that was definitely going to conclude in into the next year. Uh, I think it's the way that life has been going on right now is going to kind of like, um just put itself into the next year. And maybe by summer of 2021, we will have a vaccine that everybody is taking. So even though probably, we'll still have mask culture, we'll be able to maybe drive many different places, or we'll be able to, like, see friends pretty regularly. So COVID is definitely still going to be with us. But you know, we won't have to live in fear of it as much anymore. At least for the first no, for the second half of the year.

BT

Yeah. Um, so how do you compare America's current situation to foreign countries who have reacted differently?

ED

Um, I compare America's response to, not as good. In, in foreign countries, like, I think, like, let's say Spain, or Italy, or France, they were hit a lot harder with COVID. So they really knew to like,



1056 they took a lot of initiative to quarantine. Like, if you looked at the way Italy was quarantine, like,  
1057 you know, animals started swimming back into the canals in Venice, because no one was no  
1058 boats were like, driving around, it's the water was really clean. Yeah. Um, so I think because of  
1059 that, like, and just other countries taking it so much more seriously, now, they're able to kind of  
1060 live a little bit more loosely than we are. Because, you know, just there's not as much COVID in  
1061 the country.

1062

1063 BT

1064 So like, just generally, how do you feel about the future moving forward from where we're at  
1065 right now?

1066

1067 ED

1068 I'm hopeful, but I'm also really scared. Um, I think I'm more scared for personal reasons. But I  
1069 think if we, if I put my situation personally to the side, I think we if we have a positive outlook on  
1070 the future, between Biden becoming president, at least, you know, something that I'm excited  
1071 about is we'll take climate change a lot more seriously, even though we really should have been  
1072 four years ago. So I think that's, I think that's positive. I think that we're going to take COVID a  
1073 lot more seriously when he gets in office too, which I'm, you know, I'm really excited about and I  
1074 think that with the vaccine has a 90% um, what is it? 90%? working?

1075

1076 BT

1077 Yeah, one has a 90% one has a 95% effective rate.

1078

1079 ED

1080 Yeah, exactly. So I think because those two things like we have a lot to look forward to, um, in  
1081 my personal situation, like I'm really scared because something that's on my mind a lot is that  
1082 This and I almost makes me see time differently because, um, let's say so one, I have no idea  
1083 when it's going to go away or if it will go away. So because of that I'm scared of the future. I'm  
1084 much more than I have been in the past. And then let's say it also kind of affects the way I see  
1085 the past too, because maybe I haven't, let's say, I haven't watched a movie in a while, like, I'm  
1086 on Netflix. I'm like, oh, I haven't watched that in forever. And then I'll be like, yeah, the last time I  
1087 watched it was before this came up, and then like, that'll automatically pop into my head, and I'll  
1088 be like, I'll watch it later.

1089

1090 BT

1091 Yeah yeah yeah.

1092

1093 ED

1094 It's, it's a really big like, it makes me almost paranoid. So, um, I think I'm scared for my future.  
1095 But I think the future of the country is moving in a really positive direction.

1096

1097 BT

1098 So you'd say that, like visual distortion has been like a big, big effect on your life?

1099

1100 ED

1101 Yes. Less of a big effect now so. And do I think it's going to permanently be with me? No, I  
1102 don't. Um, but in terms of like, the effect that has had on my life, right now, like, I can't deny, you  
1103 know, how it's kind of changed my outlook.

1104

1105 BT

1106 Yeah. Um, and just finally, generally, is there anything else you'd like to add to the interview?

1107 Any other points?

1108

1109 ED

1110 Um, maybe, huh? I don't think so. I think, I think, okay, maybe one last thing that I'd like to add  
1111 to the interview, is that, um, even though, I think my expectations, just like last year, for this  
1112 semester, were much lower than what I really got. Um, because when I came back to Chicago, I  
1113 was around a positive environment again, where I didn't have to be so stressed or worried about  
1114 what was going on around me. And I'm really thankful that like, I was able to see my roommate  
1115 again, I was really able to see best, my best friends again, I was really thankful that I'm able to  
1116 kind of like walk around the city, and go to restaurants I loved last year, or reconnect with  
1117 people who I knew before COVID. Um, and like, the, you know, that did not have to happen, I  
1118 could be at home, doing the, you know, online learning right now. And I could still be in that  
1119 same mind state of like, being super high maintenance and like, you know, kind of like, what's  
1120 wrong with life right now? Just kind of controlling my mind state. But that didn't happen. So I'm  
1121 just, I'm thankful for all the things that I've been able to do this semester. Is it what I want? No,  
1122 you know, yeah, but, um, am I thankful I've been able to do a lot.

1123

1124 BT

1125 Yeah um, yeah, makes sense. Well, thank you, Elliot. It was, it was good. It was a lot of fun. I  
1126 feel like I learned a lot. I hope you had fun.

1127

1128 ED

1129 Yeah, no, thanks so much. I, this was great.

1130

1131 BT

1132 Yeah, thanks. Yeah.

1133

1134