

Transcription
Interview with Nurrah Muhammad
Interviewed by Kelso Antoine

Kelso Antoine: Okay, my name is Kelso Antoine. I am here with my interviewee for the 2020 capturing quarantine oral history project. I am currently recording from my Chicago apartment right now. And it is December 1 2020. The time is 1:33 pm.

Nurrah Muhammad: Uh, I'm Nurrah Muhammad. I am currently in Chicago, Illinois as well, in my parents' home.

KA: All right, well, we'll just jump right into it. What was your earliest memory?

NM: Uh, My earliest memory-- I think I was-- And I-- I can't be sure if this is like an actual memory or just like something I conjured up in my head, but my earliest memory, I have to say is me sitting in like, like one of those, like toddler high chairs. Like a-- a, like the dining room table, like eating peas. Like with, my family around me. And I don't know why. That's just what I remember.

KA: Do you like peas now? Is that something you like to eat?

NM: Yeah, actually I really enjoy peas.

KA: Maybe that stemmed from Yeah, maybe that stemmed from an early memory? Um, what rules did your parents have for you growing up?

NM: Um, I think it was just like, the basic stuff. Like, you know, like, don't talk to strangers, uh, kind of like, Listen to your parents. Uh, listen to, you know, adults and everything. But then there was also kind of stuff that was like, specific to like, I guess, my family, uh, because my parents are Muslim. So, there was like stuff, like, stay away from pork, you know? Uh, like uh, say prayer, you know, like, five times a day, like all that type of stuff. Um, yea I can't really remember a lot.

KA: How do you think um the rules of sort of your religion growing up affected you differently in terms of who you are now versus your peers?

NM: I don't really think it-- uh, I don't know. I think I don't know if it's really shaped me. I think it maybe kind of sheltered me when I was younger. And maybe I wasn't exposed to as-- like other stuff that other people were that I know. Um, but I think I'm mostly shaped by the stuff that I guess I chose to do once I got older, because I started to, you know, make my own choices concerning that sort of stuff. Um, like as a like, entered High School. So, I really don't think it's shaped who I am now.

KA: When you say you were sheltered? What do you mean by that? Like, when did you sort of realize you were sheltered compared to your other friends?

NM: Um, well I, I went to a Muslim school. So a lot of my friends had the same experience. I did. Um, you know, but the experiences like were slightly different. But just like, I guess, in terms of like uh, I don't know, like stuff like talking to boys, or like having a boyfriend or that kind of stuff. Like, I never really experienced that. And I only learned about that type of stuff from other people. And I was like, Whoa, I have no idea about this kind of stuff. Just because my parents never really taught me like, that sort of stuff. (unintelligible) sheltered in that way.

KA: Sorry, can you repeat that last sentence one more time you cut out a little bit.

NM: Oh, yeah, my Wi Fi is weird. I just uh, I guess I was just sort of, like sort of sheltered in that sense. And there's also like, other stuff, I think, just like a-- just stuff I didn't know about that other people did. Because I was kind of taught to be I guess, like, more civilized than other people?

KA: Do you wish your parents would have talked to you about that versus you finding out um those things on your own or through your friends?

NM: No, I don't think they would have. I think that's something that I just found out maybe if I had asked them, but I don't think it's something they would have openly been like, "let me talk to you about this."

KA: Yeah

NM: That sort of thing.

KA: I know exactly what you mean. Um, what was it like growing up in modern Chicago as a part of Gen Z?

NM: That is a really interesting question. Um, I think I'm definitely on like, the younger end the Gen Z spectrum. Um, I think a lot of people my age are, like, in the middle of high school. Um, going to a religious school, it was a private school is really small private school, I didn't really have like, the experience that a lot of people my age did. I never went to public school. So, I don't really know what that's like. I grew up in a very, like, sort of tight knit community. But I definitely was exposed to stuff that a lot of, I think, black teenagers who grew up in, like the the hood, the neighborhoods that I grew up in, I think that's definitely something I have in common with them, you know, sort of like police brutality, gun violence, that sort of stuff. But I think as a teenager, and Gen Z, I think I'm definitely more like open minded to a lot of stuff and aware of certain things that maybe other generations weren't at this age.

KA: How do you think um witnessing those kinds of things just in your community has affected your opinion on sort of the politics-- the political climate of what's going on now?

88

89 NM: I think it's made me more concerned about how like political leaders will affect my
90 community as a black person, you know, like the black community, how they'll be affected by
91 who's in power in the government. Just because that affects me, because I am a person of color
92 in America, and I think that's-- I'd be more concerned about that sort of stuff than maybe a
93 white person would in this country.

94

95 KA: Um, well, can you describe a typical day in your life as a high school student? What it was
96 like going to your school.

97

98 NM: So I would get up around like, six 6:30. I got to pretty early, um because I had to be at
99 school, like, between like eight and 8:30. And in the mornings, um since it was like a military
100 school type of situation, you would have like, drill exercises. Like they have like drill teams, that
101 sort of stuff. And uh, the girls and the boys were, like, always separated. Um, and then we
102 would go into our classes, and uh some of the classes we would have with them, most of them,
103 I think, the girls and boys would be together, but they'd be like, on different ends of the
104 classrooms, that sort of stuff. It was a small school, so they didn't have really have a lot of room
105 to like, really separate us. Um, and that's how it was. I started going to school in second grade.
106 And so that's how it was for me until my second year of high school, and then they uh switched
107 things up so that boys went to school in the mornings until, like, 12pm, and then the girls would
108 go to school in the afternoon. So, I started getting up at like nine or 10. And then I would go to
109 school at like-- I would get there at like 12. And I would go into four. And it was pretty much the
110 same setup. It was just a shorter day and it was just girls.

111

112 KA: How did your sort of experience in high school with that separation of genders affect your
113 experience or what were-- what you were looking for, in terms of a college experience and
114 making your choice?

115

116 NM: Um, I think it definitely-- it kind of I think goes back to that sort of thing of kind of like
117 sheltering me, that I mentioned, like with my parents, because, you know, you don't have
118 experience with a wider range of people. And I think that's definitely something they didn't take
119 into account. Um, because it's like they taught us, you know, you shouldn't talk to boys. The
120 only type of relationship you could have with them is romantic. It's just a very, like
121 heteronormative ideals, you know, that we were surrounded with. And I had friends who were
122 guys, but it was mostly girls that I hung out with, because they really didn't want us hanging out
123 with the boys. And I mean, I guess, when I was younger, I kind of thought, you know, like, I
124 guess I'm not gonna really have to deal with the male gender when I'm older. But as I like got
125 into high school, I'm thinking, Well, why are they separating us, we're going to have to interact
126 with people of the opposite gender all the time when we graduate. And so, I kind of was just
127 looking forward to things being more normal once I graduated. So, I I think that was it.

128

129 KA: How did that sheltering effect to the way you interact now, with people of the opposite
130 gender that you meet, or just socially in general?

131

132 NM: I think I'm definitely more reserved in terms of social interactions. I don't know if that's a
133 product of me, growing up in the community that I did, or just because I'm an introverted
134 person, but I think I interact with you know, guys and women the same. I might be more
135 subconsciously relaxed around women, just because I was taught you know, men can be
136 dangerous (laughs). As a woman, you shouldn't get too comfortable around them, stuff like
137 that. But I think I interact with people pretty much the same, or at least try to.

138
139 KA: Is that something that was important to you in choosing a university? Your social life?
140

141 NM: Not really, I kind of-- in terms of social life, I don't-- I wasn't really concerned about that. I
142 have friends that I'm still in contact with. Um, They're still in high school. Uh, But we're still
143 really close. So, I wasn't too concerned about making friends, especially not when I learned
144 classes were going to be online. So, it's not really something I think about a lot. But I think it, I
145 think I'm definitely open to making friends. Yeah.

146
147 KA: Why did you decide to start college in the middle of a pandemic?
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149 NM: I don't really think it was a question for me. It was just like, once I graduate high school.
150 Um, I know I want to go to college. And once the pandemic hit, and lockdown started, I was
151 like, well classes are online now can't wait till I graduate (laughs). And it was just like, I actually--
152 the thought of not going to college never crossed my mind. It was always just like, okay, after I
153 graduate, I'll go to college. And then classes started online. And I was like, okay, after I
154 graduate, I'll go to college and classes may still be online.

155
156 KA: Why did you choose Colombia?
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158 NM: Um, I think one factor that went into that decision was that my sister also goes to
159 Colombia. She's uh currently a third year. And uh, I think it was just a pretty easy choice. I, i'd
160 considered like UIC because I'd done a STEM program with them over the summer. And uh their
161 tuition would have been pretty easy for me to, for my family to pay and everything. And for me
162 to get financial aid. And I'd also considered Northwestern. But Columbia just seemed like the
163 easier choice because it's so focused on um the field I want to go into, because I considered like
164 uh engineering and computer science as my majors. And that was, uh you know, UIC and
165 Northwestern would have been, would have been good choices for that. But then after I
166 decided I want to go into animation and film, I was like, well, Columbia seems like the better
167 idea for that. Just because it's so centered on the arts and not really anything else.

168
169 KA: Why did you decide to shift your focus from engineering and art to just focusing on art?
170

171 NM: (clears throat) Um, when I was younger, I got into like-- in middle school, I got really into
172 engineering. And so, I always uh entered like STEM contests in uh like, after school programs
173 when I had the chance. And I was good at it, and I enjoyed it. And so, I-- everybody was like,
174 Oh, you're so good at this. Are you gonna be an engineer when you're older? And I was like,
175 Yeah, I guess so. And that was something that I considered, um, even though as a kid, uh--

because I, I always drew as a kid a lot. And so, when I was younger, before I started going to school when I was still homeschooled um, I was always like, well, I want to be an artist, because I'm good at drawing. And even while doing like STEM programs, I still went to art school. So those are two things that were kind of like constants in my life. But I think art was always a bigger thing. And after engineering was introduced into my life, and everybody always thinks of STEM careers as more valid careers, it kind of took over. And I was like, well, this is the thing that makes more sense. But then, as I got older and realized I enjoy art much more, I kind of was like, well, I think I'd enjoy doing this, you know, long term because I still enjoy uh computer science and engineering. I just think-- I don't think it would have felt as fulfilling as what I do now.

KA: Can you-- are you able to pinpoint sort of when that shift happened, or what happened to make you realize that art was much more fulfilling to you. And that was what you wanted to pursue?

NM: Uh, it was a bit like a-- kind of like a seesaw type of thing. But for some years, engineering was what I thought I was going to go into. And, like ever since. Maybe like the beginning of middle school to beginning of high school. It wasn't a-- because just last summer, I was in a um, computer science class, I got some credits for CS 100. Because I was like, well, if I go to college for computer science, I can use these credits. And last summer was when I was really like thinking, Okay, I could go into computer science, but do I also want to do art? And I think it was last year when I was choosing my major that I was uh-- it was like the end of last year I was applying to colleges. And I was like, Okay, what major do I want to pick? And I was like, thinking, you know, okay, I want to go into animation, because that's something I really love. But I could also do computer science. And then I realized, do I really want to do that for like the rest of my life? Like, do I want to go to college for that I could do that as a hobby or something. So, I chose film as a second major instead. So, I think it was it was kind of like a split second decision. I was like, Okay, I'm done thinking about this, it's going to be these two majors and that was it.

KA: How did that make you feel afterwards, just switching so dramatically like that, when you sort of your entire life thought that you'd be an engineer?

NM: Well, I wouldn't say it was my entire life, just like for the majority of like, my school years. Um, so I guess for a big portion of my life, that was a big thing that I was like set on. But I spent like maybe a year thinking about it kind of in the back of my mind. And when I was really forced to make that decision. It was kind of like just what am I more passionate about. And I chose art. And sometimes I still think like I should have gone into the STEM field like computer science and engineering, there's a lot of money in that you can find work pretty easily. And it's not the same thing with animation. Like at all, it's pretty much the opposite. And I kind of like, just there's like this tiniest inkling of regret that I feel sometimes, but then I think, well, I really enjoy doing this so much more and it kind of just snaps me out of that.

KA: Yeah, I know exactly what you mean, sort of the stability of the STEM program. The future seems very stable. And sure, and then you have animation and you're not so sure with art.

220

221 NM: It's kind of like you're taking a risk.

222

223 KA: Yea, but it's for something that that's fulfilling to you so-- Um. What has been your
224 experience with hybrid courses if you're taking any?

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226 NM: I was taking one hybrid course. It was for a big Chicago class and up until a few weeks
227 back. I had been going every other week to an in person class and um it seemed pretty good. It
228 was like uh-- we would all go into like this-- like a big auditorium or auditorium type of room
229 and um all the like rolling chairs were just set up on the floor big six feet apart. So, everybody
230 you know was safely distanced and because the class-- like we don't really do anything in class,
231 we just kind of go over the material we'll be covering that week, just like watching the videos
232 and talking about it briefly. So, it was just pretty boring it was pretty laxed. And our professor
233 decided to cancel in person classes for the rest of the semester. And honestly, I'm kind of happy
234 about that, because well one-- for one thing, it's less of a risk for me and my family, because I
235 won't be exposed to COVID-19. Therefore, I won't be exposing my family possibly to it. And
236 also, I don't have to get up as early (laughs) so I can drive downtown. So, I think it's-- hybrid
237 courses have been pretty easy for me. But I-- I'm honestly, more okay with the online courses.

238

239 KA: Is there your-- you talked about sort of the risk that um it would be for you taking hybrid
240 classes? Is there anyone in your family who's at risk if they get COVID?

241

242 NM: Uh, no, I don't think so. I think my dad may have asthma or something, but nobody's really
243 like, it wouldn't really be detrimental to their health more than it would be for other people.
244 Uh, It's only four of us living in my house uh currently, so. Yeah, it wouldn't be like, like a big
245 thing like, Oh my God, this person like they're at risk. If you can't you gotta quarantine. If you
246 have any symptoms like that. It's-- it's kind of just like a hopefully you don't get exposed to it
247 because you don't really want anybody to get sick.

248

249 KA: When did you first become aware of the Coronavirus?

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251 NM: I remember this moment very vividly. And I kind of like that I do. Uh, I was in the car back
252 in February. And I was-- my mom was driving me to a dual credit class at a city college
253 downtown. Uh, Harold Washington. And I was going for a-- a trigonometry class, I think. Um,
254 and I was sitting in the car and we were, like, just stopped in traffic. And I think-- I'm just like, I
255 remember everything very vividly. It was uh, I think we were on Lake Shore. The lake was like,
256 right there. And I was-- I remember seeing it like out of the window, and I heard um the news
257 playing on the radio. And they were talking about some new virus and everything and how it
258 was similar to the flu. And I was like, hmm well, that's not good. Hope I don't get it (laughs).
259 And then I just-- when uh everything, everything kind of started I just kind of remembered that
260 moment. I was like, Huh. That's when it started.

261

262 KA: Yea, I had a very similar experience too. You sort of don't think anything of it. And then you
263 look at where you are now. And you're like, if only then I knew what-- what this would turn
264 into. Um, what plans did you have before quarantine, that the pandemic has halted?

265
266 NM: Uh, I had a-- I had two possible programs for this summer back when I was in school still. It
267 was either internship at the Field Museum, or I was going to do the same STEM program at UIC
268 that I did last summer. And I was kind of waiting for the internship because it was like-- it was a
269 paid internship. And it-- the pay, it seemed really good. And I was like, well, that's a good
270 opportunity. And so, I was kind of leaning towards that and I applied and everything. And
271 during the application process, while they were processing everything. The uh, pandemic kicked
272 off, and they never got back to me because I guess they just canceled everything. And so, I was
273 kind of disappointed about that. But I had my summer free so that was good. But I didn't get to
274 visit any family (unintelligible) that we have the chance over the summer. And we didn't get to
275 visit family like we usually do for Thanksgiving. So that sucked.

276
277 KA: That sounds so cool. The Field Museum oof. Um, how did the announcement that the
278 college would close impact your living situation?

279
280 NM: Uh, I had already intended to stay at home for college uh, because my parents don't want
281 to move into a dorm, and that was especially true when uh the Coronavirus came up so there
282 was no change in plans for me. So yeah.

283
284 KA: What is your current living situation like?

285
286 NM: I live at home with my mom and my dad and my older sister, who is also a student at
287 Columbia.

288
289 KA: Have you noticed anything change in terms of your relationships and the way you interact
290 or feel about the people living in your house now that you're stuck with them all the time?

291
292 NM: Uh, I don't really think anything's changed. I definitely think my family's more like into
293 family time now. They're like, "Come watch a movie with us." And I'm like, no. (Kelso laughs)
294 And they're like, "why do you never want to spend time with us?" I'm like, I didn't spend time
295 with you before (both laugh). Why would I now? And I mean, I-- I do watch movies, and
296 everything. I've kind of gotten more into that as the pandemic has progressed, because I'm
297 stuck with them now (Kelso laughs). I definitely think my sister is a bit more-- a bit more
298 annoying. She likes to barge into my room sometimes. Hopefully, she doesn't do that now. But
299 uh, I think it's pretty much been the same. I mostly keep to myself in the house, just stay in my
300 little bubble.

301
302 KA: Um sorry, there's so many questions, I just-- what has been the most difficult part of having
303 to stay at home with your parents during quarantine?

304

305 NM: I don't really think there's anything difficult about staying at home, like specifically with my
306 parents. But I definitely think it's kind of sad, I don't get to see my friends. I didn't hang out with
307 them often. But I don't really have that opportunity anymore. So, I think that's one thing. And
308 also, just like other small things about having a stay at home, like not being able to go to the
309 movies or eat out or go shopping, like I used to.

310
311 KA: How has your relationship with your friends sort of changed from the beginning, before the
312 pandemic to now?

313
314 NM: Um, back at the beginning of the pandemic, I-- well before the pandemic started. Like, like
315 really shortly. Like, that didn't make any sense (laughs). Like a small amount of time before
316 lockdown started and people really became aware of the Coronavirus, I started making more
317 friendships like online. And so, there's one friend that I've really like, kept that friendship with
318 from the beginning of this year. And uh, I still keep in contact with her. So, we like communicate
319 online. And there are like some in person friends that I have from like back in high school.
320 They've all like transferred from the high school I used to go to, but we kind of like fell off um,
321 for a little while, like last year. But um, as the pandemic started, we kind of got back in contact
322 again. And kind of over the summer we got like really close. So now we're like, we talk like
323 every day, pretty much.

324
325 KA: What about the pandemic do you think caused that change in the relationship?

326
327 NM: I think we I think it's because everybody really didn't have anything to do. So, we were all
328 on social media more than we were-- we were kind of looking for things to do. And so, we were
329 talking with friends and you know, we were like, well, how is this person doing? And they're
330 like, Oh, yeah, I've talked to them. They've been good. And so, we kind of started reconnecting
331 because we had all this time on our hands.

332
333 KA: Um, what values and qualities do you now look for in a friend or a partner? And how has
334 that changed from before the pandemic to now?

335
336 NM: Um, I think I just look for somebody that I can talk to easily, and that kind of understands
337 me and my sense of humor, because a lot of people don't get it (Kelso laughs). Somebody who
338 kind of respects that I, I'm not a very sociable person. Um, Because I'll text people but
339 sometimes I don't really feel like talking. And I don't always like talking on the phone. And one
340 of my best friends, he doesn't really get that. He still gets mad about that. But I think I love him
341 too much to kind (both laugh) of just like, like, stop. But, um, I think something that's definitely
342 changed about that, since the pandemic started is like somebody who kind of, is sensitive about
343 like, mental health issues, just because my mental health hasn't really been that much affected
344 by the pandemic, but just-- just like, sort of-- you know I just, I've been thinking more about it,
345 maybe, since all this started. So, I think it's something that I've began to-- I've started to be
346 more aware of about myself.

347

348 KA: Um, who do you go to, to talk about these sorts of things when it comes to mental health
349 and how you're feeling?

350
351 NM: I don't really a lot, I sort of keep that sort of stuff to myself, and I'm working on that. But
352 when I do, or, like when the topic comes up in conversations with my friends, I'll talk to them
353 about it. But that's um-- It's not very often. Just, I think, when other people bring it up, or it's
354 really bothering me, but yea I'm not really one to open up about that sort of stuff.

355
356 KA: Um, what practices-- what are your practices to avoid catching COVID? What do you do?

357
358 NM: Uh Well, first of all (laughs), I think everybody needs to do this, if they don't wear masks,
359 when you go outside. Try not to make contact, like, just try to stay at a safe distance um from
360 people that you don't see often, or like, they don't live in your household. And uh, if you come
361 into contact with people that are sick, um just like stay away from them. And uh I guess like
362 watch out for symptoms. Uh, Also, my, my mom has been in my-- my mom, my dad have been
363 like really diligent about like wiping off groceries and packages. I don't really wear gloves out
364 anymore. Uh, I think that's a personal thing, though, just because I like problems with certain
365 like, sensory things with my hands. So that's like a personal preference for me. But I definitely
366 do wash my hands whenever I come back home and before I eat things. Uh, Like if I'm in the car
367 or something, I'm eating something, I wash my hands or use hand sanitizer, just to try to like,
368 minimize any contact with germs and stuff like that.

369
370 KA: How often do you go outside or do try to go outside?

371
372 NM: Uh, I go outside, not very often, and I didn't before unless I had to go to school or
373 something. Um, but me and my sister take care of like stray cats that live in our backyard. So, I'll
374 go outside if I have to feed them, or let them in and out of the garage. And uh, some--
375 sometimes I go to the store with my mom or our mosque. Just tell about with any like,
376 broadcasts that they're doing, i'll just sit around and help, like, clean off any surfaces if they
377 need that sort of stuff. But I don't really get out that much.

378
379 KA: How has your relationship with nature and outside sort of changed from the beginning of
380 the pandemic to now?

381
382 NM: I think I spend a good amount of time looking out the window (laughs). I have plants in my
383 room, and I want to get more. But I had those before. Maybe. I had like one or two before, but I
384 think I've started to like plants more since the pandemic started. Um, I do like going outside.
385 Sometimes I feel like I just need some fresh air and maybe I'll go outside if I'm feeling like that.
386 (Unintelligible) Um sometimes I go outside and I uh-- I have a-- a bow it's in the background
387 right there. And I'll-- If I feel like it I'll go out there and shoot some arrows and just kind of like
388 listen to the wind and leaves and stuff and it just it's relaxing.

389
390 KA: Shoot some arrows. Um, what are your media and news sources?

391

392 NM: I mostly get news from like Twitter. I don't go on tik tok anymore that much. But
393 sometimes I hear stuff on there, but mostly Twitter. I'll hear stuff like from my parents, my
394 friends. Um, and if I feel like I need to like check something, I go on Google, and I'll like find like
395 the New York Times The Washington Post. But I'm not really diligent about like watching or
396 reading the news.

397
398 KA: Do you think-- Or how do you think people's news sources affect their political and social
399 opinions?

400
401 NM: Well, I know that some news sources are very biased. Um, when it comes to politics. Um,
402 Like I think the Chicago Tribune is a bit conservative. Um, And I think that if you're not really
403 leaning one way or another, and you start to get into, like, uh political news and that sort of
404 stuff, and you read something that's leaning to the left or the right, you might start to take on
405 those views. And you're like, Whoa, this is-- Oh, I-- I understand now. This is how it is. And it
406 may be-- that view may be biased. And I think that can affect your political views if you're not
407 really set in, like a certain way.

408
409 KA: Yeah. Um, in what ways has quarantine affected your personal view of the election that we
410 just recently had?

411
412 NM: Well, I-- I already had uh certain political views, just I am definitely more into socialism
413 than capitalism. I don't like capitalism. I'm more uh liberal. I'm not conservative. Uh, why am I
414 saying I'm more liberal? I'm not conservative at all. Um, So I'm definitely more on the left. Uh, I
415 definitely say I'm a Democrat um. I think that uh before the-- before the pandemic, I was like,
416 hoping that Bernie Sanders would win. And when he kind of dropped out of the race, stopped
417 campaigning or whatever, it was-- I decided to start learning more about Joe Biden, because I
418 wasn't a big fan of him before. And then learning about certain things with him and the vice-
419 presidential candidate. I'm-- I'm glad that he's going to be in office rather than Trump. But I still
420 don't think he's the best option. But I was pretty-- My, my political views are pretty are like
421 already kind of set in stone before this happened,

422
423 KA: How did sort of viewing the election but not yet being able to vote feel, especially when you
424 already held these sort of strong political opinions?

425
426 NM: Uh, Well I think not being able to vote kind of made it easier for me, just because, while I
427 definitely prefer Joe Biden being in office rather than Trump. It's like, I still don't really think
428 he's the best person. And voting for him would have been kind of like, eh for me, like, I-- I, I
429 would rather vote for him than Trump, but it's still like something I'm doing with a nagging
430 feeling in my head. So, I think it's kind of a good thing for me that I wasn't able to vote, but also
431 kind of a bad thing, because you kind of have to sit around and hope that Trump doesn't win,
432 because you couldn't vote. And It's like, you feel like you didn't have a part in that. But also, it's
433 like, well, that's out of my control. So, I don't-- you know, it's like, my conscience isn't getting at
434 me or something like that. It doesn't really make sense but yeah.

435

436 KA: Um, how do you think social media impacted the Black Lives Matter movement?

437

438 NM: I think it definitely, definitely made people more aware of what's happened because this
439 has all been happening for years. It's been a major part of our country. It's what our country is
440 built on racism. And I think the-- I mean, that's how people found out about the murder-- the
441 murder of George Floyd through social media. It was a video that has spread around. And but I
442 think that it's not a good thing for people to be spreading videos like that on the internet. It
443 definitely I think did more good than bad because it really let people see the kind of stuff that
444 law enforcement gets away with and the kind of problems that we have in our country. And
445 kind of, I think that and the-- the kind of stress that people are under from the pandemic kind
446 of push people into action. So yeah, I think social media definitely played a big part in getting
447 people to kind of wake up.

448

449 KA: Um, what did you learn-- How did you learn about the killing of George Floyd?

450

451 NM: I think I was, I might have been in the zoom class. When I heard about it, I was probably
452 like, half asleep, and was like, What? But because you know, I hear about that stuff all the time,
453 just like from growing up in the black community, people are more aware of that. And I was
454 like, dang. Like, another person, like, this this shit keeps happening. And then people started
455 talking about it more. And I'm like, Okay, this is definitely starting something. And I kind of saw
456 that this was pushing people to kind of act more than they were in the past.

457

458 KA: How did that sort of make you feel, you know, growing up in a predominantly black
459 neighborhood, and knowing and witnessing all of these things already yourself, and then having
460 people just now come to realize that this is an issue in this country, or even having people not
461 acknowledge at all that this is still an issue that's happening.

462

463 NM: I think I've been pretty numb to that for as long as I can remember. Not like seeing that
464 sort of stuff. Because it's hard. It's definitely hard to see that sort of stuff like, but hearing about
465 it, it's like, it's just one thing after another, it's like, another person of color has been killed or
466 brutalized by the police, or some racist... white person, and it's like, you know, after hearing
467 about it, so many times, it just kind of feels like the same thing, even though you know, it's not.
468 And these are people's lives. It's like, and it-- it kind of makes you sad to see, or to know that.
469 It's something you've gotten used to, because it's never something you should get used to. But I
470 think after seeing the kids, harassed by police officers, and just the police just around the
471 neighborhoods, (dog snores) and then I'm sorry, if you can hear some snoring in the
472 background, it's my dog (kelso laughs). Just, I think growing up in the black community, and
473 hearing about that stuff again, earlier this year, it kind of made the fear that was in me kind of,
474 like, rise up again, a bit more. And I guess all the activism that I've seen from this incident is
475 kind of-- kind of gotten me to feel a bit more passionate about it. But I think growing up in a
476 black community, it's I think it's made me really aware of this stuff, though.

477

478 KA: Um, what are some things that you do? Or what are some things that other people can do
479 to take part and be an activist, um, for these social issues from home since we are quarantined?

480

481 NM: Uh, I've seen like a lot of different petitions and um, like fundraisers going around online,
482 uh, and I've signed uh, quite a few petitions that I've seen, like for arrests and uh reparations to
483 be made. And if you can't donate, cause back when all this was happening, I saw a lot of it
484 circulating like on my timeline, I wasn't able to donate. Um, so you know, if you can donate, you
485 can still spread awareness. Um, you can post about it, you can repost things, you can sign
486 petitions. I think, just learn about it and make yourself aware of how you can help people in
487 your life. It's like if you're not a person of color, or even if you are how you can help other
488 people of color. And just how you can be more like aware of this stuff, I think.

489

490 KA: Um, how has this election affected your relationships with your friends and your family
491 members?

492

493 NM: I don't think it's affected my relationship with them at all. Um, you said this the election
494 right?

495

496 KA: Yeah.

497

498 NM: I heard that correctly?

499

500 KA: Mhm.

501

502 NM: Okay, I want to make sure because my audio is kind of weird. But yeah, it hasn't affected
503 my relationship with them at all. We all shared or I'm pretty sure we all share the same political
504 views at least me and my siblings. My parents, because they're older they might I know their--
505 Their political views are a bit different, but we're all pretty much Democrats. None of us like
506 Trump. Um, I don't it's not it hasn't affected my relationship with them. We have talked about it
507 more. Um, like while the election was happening, but that was pretty much it.

508

509 KA: You are lucky. Um, how do you think the pandemic has changed the world?

510

511 NM: Uh, I think it's separated people more. It's made our society function differently. I know
512 definitely in America, because I think America has been affected by this the most because our
513 president didn't take action he should have. Um, which is really just aggravating. It's frustrating.
514 But I think it's definitely made different societies in function differently. And it's affected the
515 way we interact with each other as people and Yeah, just like interacting with the, with each
516 other-- with each other, and just getting things done like work. Um, It's, I think it's definitely
517 made society more technology based, probably.

518

519 KA: How do you feel about the future?

520

521 NM: Um, I'm kind of nervous, but also excited to see where this goes, I want to see how long
522 this lasts. I hope it's not for the next year again. Uh, But I kind of want to see how this affects
523 people coming out of this, like, when, hopefully soon when we get out of this, like whole

524 lockdown situation, I want to see like kind of how society starts functioning again, where if it
525 functions differently, um, you know, how people start treating illnesses and how people start
526 treating like uh, political situations differently. I just want to see how like the world has
527 changed, like once people start interacting, how they used to, if they do if that's possible.

528

529 KA: How do you think this pandemic has changed you?

530

531 NM: Um, I don't know if I've changed. Maybe-- I don't know. It's, I think maybe I've thought
532 about myself more maybe like, my emotional state or mental health. Uh, I've learned new
533 things about myself. I-- I definitely have yea. Um, it's changed me in some big ways. I think. Just
534 like with my identity and everything, and it's changed me in smaller ways that I probably don't
535 even notice. Uh, but I think I'd really have to think about that question. I know, it's changed me,
536 I think, as an artist, I don't know if that's the product of the pandemic, or just just time and just
537 having time to work on my art. But I definitely noticed a difference in my like, in my work from
538 now. And what, like nine months ago?

539

540 KA: Um, what do you think Columbia should be doing differently?

541

542 NM: I don't think they should have had in person classes at all. I think they should have kept
543 things online. I think they should have lowered tuition. Because we're not being able to use the
544 amenities on campus. So why are we paying for what we both have paid for before? Uh, I don't
545 think that they should-- what am I trying to say, Well, okay, so back to the tuition thing. I don't
546 think we should be paying as much as we would be if we weren't online. I think maybe they
547 should have people like handling online classes better. Because I know some professors aren't
548 very tech savvy. And uh, that can make it harder on some students. And I think they should uh
549 be more like aware of students' mental health, and how this could be affecting them. Because
550 you know, you're handling college while also handling a pandemic. That's for a lot of people a
551 big thing. Yeah.

552

553 KA: How much has the pandemic affected your mental health?

554

555 NM: I don't think it's affected me that much. It's-- I wasn't really like-- It wasn't something that I
556 got about a lot before. I think I've thought about it more than I used to. Just because I've had
557 time and I don't know if it's affected me that much maybe. Yeah, I don't really think it has and
558 mental health isn't something-- really psychology isn't something that my parents really are
559 into. So, it's something I kind of talked about with my friends, and um sometimes my brother.
560 But yea it's-- has hasn't really been different than it used to.

561

562 KA: how has this semester lived up to your expectations or how hasn't lived up to your
563 expectations?

564

565 NM: Um, well, before I graduated, and before the pandemic started, I expected to be on
566 campus. Um, so I think how my classes and how my work is done is different than I thought it
567 would be. Uh, but when I heard everything was gonna be online, I was-- I kind of really didn't

568 have that many expectations. I was like, Okay, well, let's see how this goes. Um, because
569 before, um if we were on campus, as an animation student, we would be using like physical
570 materials. And uh, but I'm glad we're using technology because that's what I'm used to. It's
571 what I've been using for like the past two years as an artist. Uh, I haven't done all that much
572 traditional art since I started doing digital art. So, I think it's been good for me that we're using
573 a lot of technology for this. Uh, but just in terms of expectations, after I heard uh everything
574 was going to be online, I didn't really have that many. Atleast not really consciously.

575

576 KA: Is there anything else that you would like to add Nurrah?

577

578 NM: I guess I'm just excited to see how things go from here. And I hope that this pandemic
579 passes quickly. And I hope that people keep wearing masks and start wearing them if they're
580 not so this can end.

581

582 KA: All right.

583

584