

Interview with: Bridget Ekis

Interviewed by: Magdalena Naruszewicz

1. Hello, my name is Magdalena Naruszewicz and I'm in Chicago, Illinois. The purpose of
2. this project is to Capture Quarantine: The Student Life During The Pandemic. And I will
- be
3. interviewing Bridget. Bridget, could you describe where you are?
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5. Yeah, I'm also in Chicago, Illinois on the north side, in my bedroom.
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7. All right. Um, would you tell me your date of birth?
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9. The summer 1998
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11. What year are you at Columbia?
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13. A Senior.
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15. And your major?
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17. Photojournalism
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19. Your housing while on campus?
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21. I'm off campus.
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23. What's your place of birth?
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25. Waterford, Michigan.
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27. Where were you raised?
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29. Waterford, Michigan.
- 30.
31. Your mother's year of birth and place of birth?
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33. Clarkston, Michigan and 1970.
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35. Your father's your birth and place of birth?
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37. New Jersey, I'm blanking on the city and 1959.
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39. How did you get your name?

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41. How do I get my name? Um, that's a funny story. My dad was listening to the radio one day and he heard like something about Bridget Fonda on the radio. And then as soon as he heard it, he like called my mom and was like, Oh, I know it's gonna be Bridget.

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43. What are your preferred pronouns?

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45. She, her, hers.

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47. How do you self identify?

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49. I'm a woman, and a cisgendered woman? Um, I'm white. I'm not 100% sure what I am. I know, I'm Irish. And I would say that I'm like, bi-curious.

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51. What's your earliest memory?

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53. Hmm? This is tough. Um, I'd say a lot of my earliest memories revolve around like going grocery shopping with my dad.

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55. What are some of like, what are some fondest memories from your childhood?

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57. Yeah. I think making games with my cousins. One time we like made this game at my grandparents house where we would like all hide in the bathroom and like, figure out and we would like hide clues around the bathroom of like, a person that was outside of the bathroom, like my uncle or my grandma or someone. And then as soon as you like found all your clues like you would have in the bathtub and like ask the person in the bathtub like, okay, I'll do all these clues mean It's Uncle Marvin? Do all these clues mean it's this person? So definitely quality time with my cousins. A bunch of different family gatherings like, you know. Making sweaters at Christmas time, decorating pumpkins, Easter egg hunts. And yeah, I used to go grocery shopping every Sunday morning with my dad. So those are definitely some fun memories.

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59. How did you and your family celebrate the holidays when you were a child?

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61. Um, yeah. So when I was really young, we would all go to my aunt and uncle's house. And then my dad would be the one to cook like the turkey and stuff for Thanksgiving. And then everyone would bring little side dishes. And all of us cousins would have a little kid table. And then like, you know, the big kids and the parents could sit at the big table. And then Christmas was usually just my grandparents and then my parents and like my siblings. And then my birthday is the day after Christmas. So it would just be my birthday the next day. And then I would always be crossing my fingers for any presents I didn't get on Christmas Day and if I could get them on my birthday. And yeah, just be like okay, everyone come over again because it's Bridget's birthday.

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63. So you were saying that your dad cooked Turkey? Like what is the like what is a meal you remember your parents cooking during your childhood?

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65. Ah, there's this one like steak, my mom would make, that my dad with hate. It was like in this, like one of those things you plug in and like kind of it's not a crock pot but it like simmered by itself. And it had like carrots and celery. Potatoes and it was like this really thin steak that like cooked in there. And then I had like a little bit of broth and my mom would make that and yeah, I remember that. I also remember like having stroganoff so much like the boxed kind like the hamburger helper. I can't like eat anymore because I had it too much as a kid.

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67. What was your most embarrassing childhood moment?

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69. Oh my gosh, I pooped in the lake one time. And I was like, four, and my neighbor would babysit me. And while my siblings were at school, and my parents were at work, and we would like walk to this lake at the end of our trailer park. And like, every day before we went, she was like, okay, Bridget, you have to go to the bathroom. And I was like, no, I don't have to go. And I distinctly remember, like, wearing a one piece and like pooping in a lake. And then like having to tell her and then being all nervous, like with all the other kids there and what they would think of me and like, every time I went back to that, like, I was like, so scared. I was gonna like find my poop or something.

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71. So as a child, how did you spend your summer breaks?

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73. Probably not the best way. I remember summer break, like binge watching TLC. And going camping when I was really young, with my family, like all across Michigan. We went to the Quantum Falls, we went to like the upper part of the state. Yeah, I would like ride my bike. I would go in the backyard and play with myself because my siblings are so much older than me, so I spent a lot of time alone. But yeah, I spent a lot of time inside like, I just genuinely remember like watching a bunch of TV and eating a bunch of junk food.

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75. So now what is the--what is the first memory you have of going to school?

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77. Uh, in kindergarten, I told my mom to leave. Because I was really happy to be there. And I was so ready to have friends and meet someone new. And so I remember walking in and all the tables being like huge and round and like, everything being my size. And I was like, Whoa, this is awesome. And I remember like my outfit. I had this like, matching like Hello Kitty like shirt and pants and like Hello Kitty like roller backpack. Yeah, I think that's my first memory of school.

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79. What was your high school experience like?

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81. For my first two years, I would say it was somewhat positive. My freshman year I got like, I made varsity cheerleading, which I didn't think I would do. Like, I didn't have the skills to do it. And I made it. Um, but yeah, so my, the end of my sophomore year, I started working. And then I had to buy my car by myself. And I had to pay like this car payment every month and I had to pay like gas and I had to pay for everything. And I think the second half of my high school experience was like very just stressful. Like I had panic attacks for the first time. And I like didn't understand what was going on. And I didn't have free time. And I like either was doing AP homework or doing newspaper homework or I'm like photographing like a football game or photographing an event. And then on the weekends, I would work in a diner and I worked from like, 7:30 in the morning until like three or four. And then I do that every Saturday and Sunday. I made good money. That was fun. But I definitely didn't have like a lot of free time. And I don't feel like I did the whole like high school thing right. I feel like I was very just stressed.

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83. What is a memory that stands out to you from your time cheerleading?

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85. Um, I think the moment I quit senior year. So, there was two seasons, there's like the fall football season and then the winter competitive season. And our team wasn't that great, and our coaching was really unstable. We had like a new coach every year and like the rival high school, like had this really awesome program and we didn't, which sucked. One year I just felt like I was like leading the team and like really trying to help everyone like I wanted the best for everyone and my coaches weren't like being as reciprocal of that. And we had to condition one time which was like conditioning was like basically working out because of like, you're doing something bad or like you're in trouble. So we had a condition because we like weren't listening or something. I kind of asked for it because like my coach would not like hold the other girls accountable for things. And I remember like doing jumping jacks one time and my coach like looking me in the face and being like, you know, it's one thing to be it's one thing to be honest, and it's another thing to be disrespectful. And I like stopped doing my jumping jacks. I said I got and I just like walked out of practice and went to the locker room and grabbed all my stuff and drove home.

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87. Were there any other extracurriculars you engaged in, in high school?

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89. Yeah, so I was on the newspaper staff for four years, and I did like photography and writing with that. And then senior year, I was involved in the broadcasting team. So I did like the school's news, like the TV news. And then, um, I was a part of a program called Link Crew, which was like juniors and seniors helped incoming freshmen come into the school. And yeah, cheerleading, tennis. I think anything else-- Yeah, that's pretty much it.

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91. How did you feel about your high school newspaper and the broadcasting?

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93. Um, my high school newspaper was awesome. We were like one of the best in the state. And my first two years, we had like a really awesome teacher. And then he left and actually moved to California, and it was this huge thing. But yeah, newspaper was awesome, it was like my home inside of school. And like, I could go there anytime of the day, like, my teachers were really like, I could lean on them for anything. I feel like I learned a lot of like valuable skills that like, I feel like first year journalism students learn in college. And so when I came to Columbia, I was like, I already know this. So I mean, it was awesome. Because I feel like I learned a lot of the like, foundational stuff that you need to know if you're going into journalism.

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95. Who are your mentors in high school?

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97. My-- I'd say I only had like one, it was like my newspaper teacher. Um, he was really awesome dude, he like was a recorder himself. And he would like share his experiences of what it was like working in the working up papers and stuff. And then he would always make class super interesting. Like one time, we would like during lunch, we would like listen to a podcast and like talk about it, or he would bring in outside articles that he thought were written really well as like inspiration. Or he'll do like a pop quiz, like news of the day. But he was always just like, one of those people that critiqued your work in a way that it was constructive. And I mean, sometimes it made me cry, because it was like, you put your heart and soul into it, and you're like, look at this awesome story. But then, you know, sometimes it's just not that great. But um, yeah, I'd say him for sure.

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99. Um, what was your first job in high school, like outside of newspaper and photos for the football team?

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101. Yeah. I worked in a diner in-- So I lived in Metro Detroit and there's like, they're called Coney Island's. They're really popular diners in Detroit and in Metro Detroit. And so I worked at Waterford Coney Island for like four years on and off. And I was a waitress, I was a cashier. I was a busboy. I was the to go person, it was really tiny joint, like six tables for seats at the booth at the bar. Yeah, I started there when I was 16. And I ended up leaving. I'd come back for summers, freshman and sophomore year. And I think just last year was like, about the time I stopped working there.

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103. What were your ambitions when you graduated from high school?

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105. Oh, gosh, I had this whole plan. I like knew exactly what I was gonna do. And I-- I was so proud of myself for figuring out how to go to Columbia and like making it. I was like, I'm gonna go to Columbia. And then like, after sophomore year, I'm gonna, like, get this like, one internship and it's gonna like, be it like a daily newspaper, but it's gonna be like, small paper. And then after that, I'm going to get like the Chicago Tribune internship. And then my senior year, I'm going to, like, apply to like, The New York Times, and I'm gonna, like, do all these things. Um, yeah, when I graduated from high school, I thought I was going to be this like a war time reporter. I thought I was going to

like, I don't know, do all these big stories. And I thought that I had to move to Chicago because it was like such a big city. And that's where like news happens. News happens in big places. But I feel like my time at Columbia has taught me that news happens everywhere. No matter where you're at.

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107. Why did you decide to attend Columbia?

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109. I decided on Columbia because it was only applied to two schools and they applied to Michigan State and Columbia. And it ultimately came down to Columbia because Michigan State deferred me to spring so I could have started in the spring instead of in the fall and I was so eager to get out and go to college. And you know, Columbia offered me more money. Michigan State was cheaper, but Columbia offered me more money. I visited Chicago, once for Columbia, and I loved it. And I just like felt this, like, I know I like felt this energy that I like, knew I needed to be there and I knew that was like my place. And also they didn't care about your SAT scores and my SAT scores were bad. So that was nice that I was getting a scholarship for my GPA and not for my SAT score.

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111. So why did you choose your major?

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113. Yeah, I chose--chose my major because I was practicing it already in high school. And I was like, you know, shooting events that had to do with the school and taking a lot more Sport coverage I would do in high school, obviously, because like, that's what's happening. And, um, yeah, I love like telling stories visually. I love the idea of like, being the person that like gets the shot gets the moment like, you know, and I wanted to be able to, like, tell stories that mattered and like, do that visually and like showed people what's going on in the world and what's going on where I'm at. And it was the only career choice that like made sense to me, it was like, that's the only type of work I can do where when I'm doing it, I don't genuinely feel like I'm working. I feel like I'm doing what I need to be doing.

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115. Did you engage in any--Do you engage in any extracurriculars at Columbia?

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117. Freshman and sophomore year, I did more like I, I was a part of this group called Society of Professional Journalists. But I didn't really go to any meetings and like, it was kind of all over the place. So I mean, I guess I am still a part of it. And then there was another group where it was like this girl's journalism group. I forget the name of it. And I did it for like two months. And then I just kind of like, had a falling out. And I worked for the Chronicle for a year. So my sophomore year, I worked there in the fall and in the spring. And I mean, outside of that. No, I think I got really burned out in high school during extracurriculars. So my college experience I kind of just wanted to do school.

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119. What was your experience working with the Columbia Chronicle?

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121. It was a giant learning curve. Because in classes you're like, taught how to pitch stories and assignments and how to gather sources and show like what you're doing is credible. But you know, when you're doing that in a newspaper level, and you know, your sophomore in college and pitching to these editors. [interruption] apologize. you're pitching to editors that are like seniors, and you're like, nervous. And yeah, it was a giant, like, wake up call for me to take the stories I had and do them more seriously. Hold on. [interruption] Okay. Um, yeah, so my first semester, I was doing multimedia. And it was like, mostly video work, which I had almost no experience. And so I was like, very new and I wanted, like, I wanted someone to, like, guide me through and help me do it. Unfortunately, I didn't really have that it was very much like Patreon stuff, do your own stuff, like, yes, you can ask for help. But like, it wasn't as like collaborative of a team, as I expected it to be. And then my second semester at the Chronicle I did writing, which was also like a giant wake up call and was so like, challenging and like, I can do it. And it's interesting, but it's hard. And I think, you know, I'm grateful for my experience. But I know that I don't want to be a breaking news reporter and I know that like, I can't, I- - I can write stories quickly. But I'm not that great at it.

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123. Did you ever have to pause Columbia and like to do something else?

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125. Uh, yeah. So last fall, I actually took off last fall semester. If that's what you're asking. I think that's what you're asking about. Um, yeah, so summer of 2019. I couldn't figure out my aid for the fall semester and I wasn't adding up and like, my parents' credit was bad and like all these things like all these other play, all these other ways for me to pay for school just wasn't adding up and it was really disappointing. And it like honestly broke my heart because like, I was like, the first kid to go to college. And it was really a big deal to me. So I had to, like swallow my pride and like, go home for six months. And you know, I got a job at Starbucks. And then I did like in the college classes and like God, like, Oh my gosh, doing community college classes just made me so grateful for Columbia because I was like falling asleep. And like, I just didn't care. And like everyone there didn't care. And like I was even like a film class. And I was like, Oh my goodness, like, I wish all my film friends from Columbia were here. Like, they'd be so much more engaged, and all this stuff. So yeah, and then come, late November, December, I applied all these scholarships, I was working with all these people from Columbia, trying to convince them that like, I need to come back and I need this kind of money. And I and I actually petitioned to get one of my scholarships increased. And they did it, which--I'm so incredibly thankful for. Because there's no way I would have been able to come back. So yeah, I came, I only took a semester off, which was awesome, because I was on track to graduate a semester early already. And so when I came back, it was like, I wasn't really losing a semester, I was just going to graduate on time instead of the semester early.

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127. So what did you have to change in order to come back to Columbia?

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129. Um, what did I have to change? I think it was mostly just financial aid stuff, like I was just applying to way more scholarships, and I ended up getting like, I think, two \$5,000 scholarships. And then my one scholarship that was for like, 10 grand that was split, like for the whole year turned into like, \$13,500, or something. So I was getting like \$7000, or something or not \$7000. But I was getting more, or about 6000 per semester. And then since I didn't use any loan money from the fall semester, where I wasn't there, I had more loan money I could take out for the spring. So yeah, I think the biggest thing that changed is just that I was finding other ways to pay for college, that wasn't just one specific loan I was using before.

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131. Did that impact your mental health?

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133. Yeah, the entire time I was home was terrible. And my parents didn't really help me with that much with financial aid stuff, and they haven't from the get go, like, I filled out my fastball by myself every year. And like I asked them for all their information, I plug it in, I make all the calls to the Department of Education, like I do all that work. And it's such a headache, and like, I always feel like I'm doing it wrong. Um, and I always like ask the people that are at the college or the people that are at the Department of Education. Like for help and like, further explanation, because these people are working for you. So you should be asking them questions, even if they seem simple or stupid. So it was like frustrating, because my parents would just be like, Oh, well, you know, when I come back to Columbia, that's all right. What are you gonna do? Oh, well, whatever, if you don't go back, and I was like, whatever we mean, whatever. Like, I'm already two years deep into this, like, I looked into going to Michigan State Michigan State would have accepted like 17 of my like 60 something credits, I would have like been starting at square one. I almost went to Wayne State University in Detroit. And that campus was just like, not welcoming. And like, the people that I worked with just weren't friendly. And I was like, I want Colombia, like, that's my goal. Like, I want Colombia back. So it felt really good. I was really proud of myself, because it was like pulling myself out of this like slump of like, it's already like fall and winter. And like, disgusting. And like, I moved to my first apartment, like, on January 1, it was terrible time to move. But you know, I still made it happen. So that was nice.

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135. So you were back in spring at Columbia? How did-- How would you describe your mental health pre pandemic?

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137. Pre pandemic, I think I was...I was a little jostled, like, I was happy to be back in Chicago. But I didn't understand how, like hard the hustle was going to be. Because I was working at Starbucks, I transferred to the store. And the manager was very difficult to work with. I did not get along with him. And then I left the company. And then I tried to go to a different store. And that really didn't work. And then I worked at a restaurant and that boss was terrible work there for a month. And then I worked in another restaurant for a month and that was just not a good fit. And then I worked at Jewel for a month. And that was awful. And yeah, it was kind of just like a miracle that I paid rent like January



through April. Like I don't even understand how I did but I did. Yeah, my mental health was like happy because I was in Chicago and I was 21 and I could go out to bars and like have fun. But I was also just like, Oh my gosh, I haven't had to like do hard school on time. I need to remember how to like be a student again.

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139. What were activities that you enjoyed doing in college before the pandemic begin.

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141. I loved going to comedy shows with my friends and a lot of friends and comedy and they would show me places all over the city. We'd go to improv shows we'd go to sketch shows, I'd go to their shows. Yeah, I loved going to comedy shows. I was like my one thing on the weekend, like, at least every couple Friday nights of the week or of the month, like going to comedy shows.

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143. Were you engaged in politics pre pandemic?

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145. Um, I mean, I, I always somewhat keep up with the news and know what's going on. I feel like with the Trump administration, I've kind of not had as critical of an eye looking at what's going on because like, it's not news that he tweets something, you know, it's news that policy is moved or it's news that legislations changed, or it's news that, you know, protests happen. But yeah, I would say I was like, politically engaged before the pandemic.

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147. When did you first become aware of the Coronavirus?

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149. Um, yeah, I was in between jobs. And I remember, like reading about it, in China. And then I started hearing that it was getting worse in Italy. And I have a friend in Milan. And that was like one of the hardest hit cities in the beginning. And so I actually was just looking at these like WhatsApp messages the other day, and I was messaging her and I was like, What does lockdown look like? How are you? Okay? Like, who gets to move from your family? Like, how do you go to the grocery store? So that was, that was it. And then I remember in March, I was like, still working, looking for work that like, wouldn't be sustainable is like, right before I got my job at jewel. And I remember like, seeing it on the news. And like, you know, telling my parents and all my friends like, Hey, this is gonna be a serious thing. Like, we need, like, this is going to be a big deal. And like, everyone was like, all right. And then like, a couple weeks later, like, you know, we're in lockdown. And we can't go anywhere.

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151. How did this news make you feel?

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153. Um, it made me like, have this is sounds bad. But I was so stressed out from school. And so like, done with school that like, I was kind of like, at a relief point. Like, I was like, Oh, my gosh, can I just like, apply for unemployment? And can I just like, chill

for the next, like, couple months, because that sounds awesome. And like getting paid to just, like, safely be in my home and like, do my homework like, rock on? Like, I love that?

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155. Oh, how's your employment affected by the pandemic?

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157. Yeah, so I was like, in between work, clothes going from this one restaurant and didn't like, and then I was still trying to transfer to this other Starbucks, it was literally not even like a mile from my house. And then, um, unfortunately, like, because the pandemic they ended up going on a hiring freeze, and then I couldn't even come back into the company. And like, be at the store I wanted to be at so I kind of sat around for like, two weeks. And then I was like, Alright, I need to find a job. And I was like, I don't want to work at jewel, but I live there like a five minute walk to jewel. So I guess I'm gonna find a jewel. And then I worked there for like, a month. And then that was when everyone was like, ooh, college students should like go back home. And I was like, should I go back home? Like, I don't really want to go home and pay for my apartment. Like, I don't know how this is gonna work. And then eventually, I did just go back home. And then I did go on unemployment for a while until the end of July. And then because like, I was like, You know what, like, I have no savings. I have no no extra like cushion money. Like I'm just going to take this money and like, put it to good use. And yeah, so then I got my job. I worked at a daycare now I got my job at my daycare in August.

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159. How was your mental health affected by your relocation?

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161. Um, yeah, it was like, depressingly motivated, cuz like, I'm very different from my parents. We don't eat the same things. We don't think the same way. We just don't practice the same kind of lifestyle. Like I would rather get up and like get a bunch of things done in one day and then like, have like one day of rest or like, you know, vice versa and like, my parents are just very slow and like, I didn't have a car a while. I did have a car back home and then I got in a car accident and I totaled my car. So totally my car in the middle of a pandemic and then leaving my family with only one car was not good. But it's kind of a blessing in disguise because it was a lease and then I ended up like my money, like, I had gap insurance on the whole thing, so I didn't have to pay the rest of my loan, which was cool. But um, yeah, I think I was motivated to, like, make work that still mattered and stuff I was working on, like two documentary projects at the time for class. So I was like, trying to just like, do as much schoolwork and like, also, like, spend as much time with my family as I could. But yeah, it was definitely kind of like, a bummer, because I'm not like my parents, but my dog loved it. Because like, we have a giant backyard in my parents house. So that was awesome.

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163. How has the pandemic changed your relationship to your parents?

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165. Hmm. I feel like I'm a lot more empathetic and sympathetic to them. Like I, I'm, I feel like I just got to like, know them closer. And we already are very close, like, kind of absurdly close. Like, sometimes I forget. They're my parents. I think they do too. And

they say things that like, probably I should not know. Um, but yeah, I think I think the pinup just made me realize that, like, you know, it's so important to just talk to people that you love, and so important to just communicate with them and tell them how you're feeling? Even if it feels funny or weird, like, you know, especially if they're important people to

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167. How do you balance relationships with others and yourself in order to continue to grow?

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169. How do I balance relationships? Um, I feel like I have people now like, I've, I kind of have this like, network where, like, I have friends that like, Don't expect me to talk to them every day. And I have, like, my roommate and I are closer now. And yeah, I think I just have this past year, I think I've been recognizing like my own boundaries, and like, what I can handle and what I can't handle. And I think just communicating that to people and like, you know, putting up a wall or like, something makes you uncomfortable, or you don't want to talk about something like clearly saying that. Or if like, if my sister calls me and just wants to complain about her life, and all these things, like, if I can't handle that, at the moment, I'll just like, be like, Hey, I'm so sorry, you have to go take my dog and walk, talk to you later. I think that's healthy, because you need to be able to grow yourself, and you need to be able to take care of yourself before you can take care of literally anyone else. And so I think that if anything is pandemic has, like actively pushed me to continue to like, be self aware and taking care of like me.

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171. Did that change? Did that affect your relationships with others during the pandemic?

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173. Um, I think so because I was in like, a long term relationship with my ex boyfriend for almost two years. And then he like, came here a lot. And then like, during the pandemic, he kind of lived here. But then it kind of like came down to a point like, the under summer and I was like, Well, we've been dating for two years. This isn't what I need right now. And like, right on the same path in life, and, like, yeah, you're a good person, and like, but I just don't think that you're like my person. And like, it kind of came down to me being like, could I see myself marrying you? And I was like, no. And so I just had to make that like tough call. And I knew I needed to make that call for a while. And I was like, really hesitant to and I feel like the pandemic almost pushed me into this like mindset of being like live in the present live right now. Is this what you need and want right now? And it wasn't so you know, I got rid of it.

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175. What are some ways you know, you've outgrown a relationship or friendship?

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177. I think when it becomes like talking to that person becomes a chore, or when you're not excited to or when you don't feel like seen or heard by them. Like they're not actively participating in your life. Like, I can't, I don't understand that people are friends with others or in relationships with others who like don't remember stuff about them.

Like, I'll be talking to someone and they'll be talking about their friend and maybe I'd ask a question about like, when their birthday is or what kind of favorite food they like, or what's their, what activities they like to do. And like, it astonishes me how little details sometimes people can go into about like their loved ones. And I feel like that's something I pay very close attention to. Like if I see a post that makes me think of my one friend, I'll send it to her. If I see something at the thrift store when I'm going shopping that looks exactly like my cousin like I'll buy it for them. You know, it's just like little things like that and being attentive to like who they are.

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179. What is a reason for your values changing like this during the pandemic

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181. Reasons, for my values changing. Um, I don't know, if my values like changed, I think I was just finally like living my truth. Like, I always had the same idea of what I liked and what I wanted, like, whether it be in a partnership and my relationship or what my relationship looked like with my parents, both my siblings, or was anybody and I think now I'm finally like living in the way that I would like to be in like, a way that I want to be practicing. Which can take time.

182.

183. How do you make genuine connections during this pandemic?

184.

185. I feel like I make connections with like store clerks a whole lot. I like love talking to strangers. So I always try to like, even if I'm at the grocery store, and like the clerk, like, I don't know, has a cool mask or like, I get excited about some discount, I got my I always try to, you know, do that. And I always tell like grocery store workers or anyone working during the pandemic, even I can think of today since it is Black Friday, and I went to Target like, I always tell people, like, you know, don't work too hard. Or like, you know, leave some time for yourself. I hope everyone's kind to you today. So, yeah, I feel like that's how I make genuine connections. And just like, I don't call people, I call people a lot like I call my family so much. Like I call my parents every day, I call like my siblings, almost every day, every couple days. Um, talk to my roommate every day, you know, like, I have two really close friends that don't live in the same state as me, and I talk to them on a weekly basis. So I think I'm just very up to date. And I'm pretty good at like, keeping things going.

186.

187. You said you're up to date, what are your media and news sources?

188.

189. That was a good transition. (laughs) My Media and news sources-- I would say the New York times the Tribune--Chicago Tribune. Um, let's see, I listened to the Daily almost every day, but the New York Times. I mean, any of the large outlets like you know, the Wall Street Journal, Science Magazine, trying to think.. I don't watch a lot of TV news. I read and like to watch Vox videos sometimes. I listened-- Oh, I have three newsletters that come through my email every day. So I have the AP newsletter, Associated Press, New York Times newsletter. And I have this newsletter called the

Skim, and it's like for women. It's just it's written really simply I like it and just like breaks down the day. Yeah.

190.

191. Do you think social media is helpful in spreading news?

192.

193. Oh, yeah, I do. Um, I think there's can be danger, in that people only read headlines or, you know, especially with protests and that kind of coverage. Like citizen journalists. That's what they're called, like, people aren't really reporters, but end up seeing something and posting it. I think that they're really vital to help tell stories because they're already on the ground and seeing what's going on. But I also think social media can be dangerous, because like, someone who's not a credible, credible source can also just spread information. And if it has enough likes and retweets, and is shared enough times people will believe it. Even though it takes like, not even a second to Google. Whether or not it's true or right. Yeah, I think that can get scary sometimes.

194.

195. What would you have wished to know sooner regarding the pandemic?

196.

197. Um, I think the news about like Trump knowing about it, like, like the news came out. I feel like in the summer that Trump knew about it and like January and just decided not to act on it. Like, it probably took reporters so long to get that story. But Holy cow, like they kind of broke my heart to know that he knew about it for so long. And just like prologue to the state in which the country should respond. So I wish I would have known earlier about that. And I don't know I feel like there's a ton of stuff I wish I would have known better but like it sucks because science takes a long time sometimes good reporting those too and like we all didn't really understand the ramifications of what this virus was going to be.

198.

199. How did you first react when school was switched to distant learning and shelter in place began.

200.

201. I was frustrated by the fact that there's going to take them three weeks to do that. Because I remember standing at work when I worked at this restaurant, and there was this girl that was from Nepal there. And like, she was like, Oh, yeah, my school already went online. And I was like, we'll take top Columbia, who knows where we're gonna go online, like, take your time. And I was like, it's probably gonna happen in like, two weeks. And then I think the next day, I got the email, and I remember, like, getting nervous, and like, I'm like, should I even go to work anymore? Like, or should I just like, do school? Like how? I don't know. Um, but I think my initial reaction was that it took way too long for the adjustment. And I mean, I understand like, everyone was freaked out. Columbia literally touts itself as being hands on learning. institution, which I mean, it is. But just the fact that, like, so many other schools across country, like didn't take that long, I was like, why did we need to use spring break? And then two more weeks?

202.

203. How did your transition to remote learning go?

204.

205. I'm in one of my classes, my teacher didn't really know what to do. And we didn't either. And I, that was tough. Um, I think it went fine. I think that like, it got annoying that like, every time we'd meet on zoom, it just ended up being like, wow, guys, can you imagine what the world is going through right now? Oh, my gosh, like, this is so wild. And it became so much less about school, like I could tell that, like, my professors, like did not hold us to the same standard, which was really, really awesome. Because I also could not hold myself to the same standard as before.

206.

207. How did you cope with anxiety and depression during the pandemic?

208.

209. Um, I feel like I just like, found solace. And like, my acts like my past relationship, like, I was like, Oh, well, I have to be home, but at least you know, he's here. And I can, like, hang out with them. And like, don't not think about school, we can watch movies, and we can, you know, go to McDonald's, you know, like, it's like, so happy that, you know, we were long distance for two years. So I was like, Oh, great, well, I can just be home. Um, but I don't know, I think the pandemic is the first time in my life where I just was like, Bridget, it's okay. If you're not an A plus student, it's okay, if you don't get 100% on every single assignment, and it's okay, if you just do the assignment. I think I switched to my classes in the spring to pass fail, because I was just so nervous about what it was going to do to my GPA. But I was like, that's okay. Like, this is a crazy time for all of us. And if anything, like, I've just been a lot more kinder to myself, this entire pandemic, and I've tried not to, like beat myself up and like, you know, hold myself to the same standards as I would if the world was in a normal place.

210.

211. What was your lowest point in quarantine?

212.

213. Ah, I would say, Gosh, well, probably like the middle of July, end of July, I applied to like, 40 jobs. And I was so stressed out because the unemployment money the like, extra \$600 a week was going to be gone. And then it would only be like, 300, or something or like less than that, I think, like \$112 or something. So it was gonna be like \$200 for like, two weeks. And I was like, I don't know how I'm gonna live on that, or I'm gonna pay my rent. Like, I was proud of myself that I didn't miss this. I don't know how I did not miss a single like my payment, like the entire pandemic. And this is also my first apartment. So I don't even know how I was like managing, you know. And so yeah, I was so low, because all I would do is like, wake up and apply to jobs. And then like, watch TV, and then like, be like, I should be applying to more jobs. And like, but then I just, like, kept my intentions clear. And I was like, very, like, I don't know, I was like, I don't want a job doing this or this or this. I want a long standing job that I like, and I'll be at and in it, it will survive past the pandemic because that's the hardest part about getting employment right now is like you have to be like, okay, what's going to be essential? And then I was like, Alright, I've never done daycare before, but I'd love to do that.

214.

215. On a positive note, what's your highest point in quarantine?

216.

217. My highest point in quarantine... I went to Las Vegas. That's really reckless. And just insane. But it was it was awesome. And, and my cousin had a wedding that was indoors and I went to and none of us wore masks and it was different time man, but that was a lot of fun. So I definitely say like my cousin's wedding was like the best part.

218.

219. What was the benefit of lockdown?

220.

221. I think I'm, I'm learning how to appreciate what life was like before. And also just like, figuring out how to fill time with like, new hobbies and like, like I got really into cooking. And I still am like pretty into cooking. So I think that was a pretty big benefit from lockdown.

222.

223. How did your plans for the summer of 2020 change?

224.

225. I didn't really have like any overt plans. Like, I wasn't really applying to internships because I just moved back to the city and I was like, you know, this can be your one summer you had an internship last summer but like you can take a chill pill. I was just kind of letting myself like work and like being the city in the summer and I couldn't wait. So it was kind of a bummer that like my first city like my first summer in Chicago was like during all this but yeah, I mean, they didn't change much. I didn't really have that many expectations for the summer.

226.

227. How did the reopening phases feel like?

228.

229. Confusing-- I feel like all I did was like Google like okay, now I'm outside Should I go on the CTA Can I go on the CTA? Where can I go on the CTA? What is open? What is not open? Um, I already didn't really eat out enough because I didn't like I can't really afford to, you know, especially here like I can like get McDonald's every once in a while or like Chipotle a but like, I like treat myself maybe like once a month getting like nice food. Um, so. Yeah, I don't know. I don't know if that really answered the question.

230.

231. But then, how did you feel about Coronavirus after the spring semester ended? After the spring, I remember just being like, wow, remember, we all were like this is gonna be over in July. And then like July happiness, like, still not over? Um, I feel like after the spring semester ended, all I could think about was like, What school gonna look like, should I move back home? Is it even worth it for me to stay here? But I was like, I have a year lease on my apartment. So I guess I should stay.

232.

233. During the summer, how did you learn about the killing of George Floyd?

234.

235. I can't remember if I saw it, like on Twitter or Facebook, but I feel like it initially it was just like everyone posting about it. Um, yeah. And then I remember like, reading the story and of how it happened. And just like, unfortunately, I wasn't surprised, because I



feel like I took one journalism class where my teacher actually was writing about like the Laquan McDonald case that had been Chicago, where he was shot 16 times. And he's actually writing a book about it. And like, we got to go to like, one of the trials for that. It was like an opening proceeding for like the defense. So yeah, when that happened, I was just kind of like, dang. Like, the laquan McDonald thing happened in like, 2016. And like, this is still happening. I didn't watch the video, though. I knew that like I, I didn't need to see it in order to understand the tragedy of it.

236.

237. What was your response?

238.

239. Um, I saw that a lot of my friends were like, really getting into the Black Lives Matter movement and sharing all these organizations where I could donate money. And I remember signing like a lot of petitions that I would find through Instagram. And then I think I donated like \$1 to like a couple different organizations. And

240.

241. How did social media impact the Black Lives Matter movement?

242.

243. Um, yeah, I think it did a really good job on like, getting people all corralled together and believing in it. Because I remember when I first learned about Black Lives Matter. I'm not going to say I was a person that thought, oh, all lives matter, right? Black Lives Matter. But I didn't understand the full breadth of it. And you know why they chose to name it that way. Or like, I didn't really fully get how like, oppressed black people are in America. And like, I was like, Oh, it's really not that radical to say Black Lives Matter. Like they just do and they are being taken care of in this country. And I knew that from journalism. So I was like, yeah, this is a no brainer.

244.

245. So speaking of journalism, why did you decide to return to college during a pandemic?

246.

247. Um, I don't know, I'm a senior. And I was like, I just have to get this done. Like, I just have to finish. (laughs) And I just have to, like, plow through. If I was, I would say, if I was a sophomore, or even like, if I was a freshman entering college, I would have not came back.

248.

249. How are you in your professors communicating?

250.

251. Oh, mostly through I mean, email, like, I don't really I talked to them. I only talked to like a few. I've only like zoom called a few of them who I really had questions and like, wanted to talk to. And then I text one of my old professors from the spring semester, because I'm just really close with him. And, you know, we talk about journalism, photo stuff, and like, he follows me on Instagram, and he share stuff with me. So..

252.

253. What challenges have you faced this semester with remote learning?

254.

255. Um, I think just the experience, like, I'm taking two classes that are about like, video journalism, and like, documentary work, and that's like, where my aspirations are going, instead of like print and photo work. And I think, just like, photo journalists in general, right now have to be so precautious. And after, like, where so much PBE and, like, get tested so frequently for COVID. And, like, do so much stuff in order to cover stories. And I just remember thinking to myself, like, I'm a student, and I'm just like, not like, right now, if I'm not like employed at a paper, I'm not willing to take the risks, to put myself in danger. Especially like, in the early days, like, even when, like the protests were happening. Downtown, like, I was like, Is it really worth it for me to get on the train and to go downtown with all those people and like, I'm nervous, like, I don't want to get sick. Um, so yeah, and then also, like, experience with lighting equipment and sound equipment, I'm severely lacking, like, I don't feel like I know what I'm doing. And I don't feel like I have, like, the tactile like, experience and, and also to, like, I'm expected to make like, a documentary. And then I'm doing like a documentary photo project. And then I'm doing like a YouTube series project. And it's like, I can't interview people in their homes, or people at their workplaces half the time because they don't want me in their space because of the pandemic. And like, I can't get footage of people doing things because they don't want me close to them. And, you know, it's like, it's all the challenges that like real journalists are facing right now. But it's even harder for like students because like, you know, they don't want to, it's just hard to like, balance the risk of, yeah, I don't know, I'm just very upset. But like, I don't, it's my senior year, I do all this work to come back. And then I just, I don't get to, like, bring it all to fruition.

256.

257. What has been your experience with hybrid courses?

258.

259. I'm in one hybrid class. Now. It's all remote. And it was fine. It was an econ class. I don't even know why it was hybrid. We just sat in the classroom and listened to a lecture, that could have happened over zoom. So yeah, I don't understand why my production classes or why my photography classes were not in person, but my econ class was

260.

261. How have your practices to avoid getting COVID evolved?

262.

263. Um, I remember when I worked at jewel in the early days, when we like, first were like, ooh, we should move our masks. I don't know. And then like a couple of us would, and I'm like, I should start doing that. Um, so yeah, I used to only have like one or two masks, and then I just wear them. But now since I'm in daycare, and like, it's really important to like, make sure they're clean, like I have like eight masks. And then like, I wear a new one every day. And then I wash them all out of the week with my laundry. And I mean, I hand sometimes like after, Everywhere I go, I wash my hands as soon as I get in the door. When I'm at work, like I wash my hands after every, anytime a kid touches me I wash my hands before I feed the kids I wash the hands like ever held them in the bathroom, like always washing my hands like my hands are so dry. So I think my practice and then also to like I used to hang out with people a lot more but I think

recently because things are getting really bad like, like for Thanksgiving and Christmas. I'm not going back home because I'd have to quarantine from work and it's too much of a hassle and like I can't afford to do it and you know, my dad's 60 plus, so it's like, kind of scary. Um, so yeah, I think I used to like, like, hang out with people more and like stuff but recently I've only like been hanging out with people outside and I've been really cautious because I have a job that I have to keep and you know, be careful about

264.

265. Who do you talk to about your concerns?

266.

267. I talk to my mom. And my mom can tell if like, I'm off for something. I call her every day after work, or, you know, just whenever I talked to my new boyfriend about things, and my roommate, and my friends, I talked to everyone, like, not really exclusive to one person.

268.

269. How do you deal with feelings of depression and anxiety?

270.

271. No. Yeah, I'm still working on that. I feel like I, if I was really anxious about something like I really just try to not beat myself up. I really just try to like, give myself grace, like and say that, like, you know, it's okay to not be functioning at full capacity and like the world struggling right now. And it's totally normal that you're struggling is totally normal, that your art doesn't look like how it would have like, I can't hold it. It's kind of like, it's kind of like a athletes like, I can't hold myself to the same athletic standard as I was in high school because I don't work out. And I haven't worked out in years. So I can't expect me to be my 16 year old flipping around doing cartwheels by myself, you know, like, I'm not like that anymore. So I just tried to, I feel like the way I take care of my anxiety and depression during quarantine is I make myself a good meal, or I buy myself one. That's like my favorite thing to do. And I take my dog on a walk, and we like goats for my neighborhood. And I take pictures on my phone of all the pretty houses that I like.

272.

273. How are you following the presidential race?

274.

275. I wasn't following it that closely. Because I was like, I'm gonna go vote for Trump. But I kind of was falling like the like earlier in the race when like, there are more democrats and it didn't pan out as much. I was following like, those more.

276.

277. How did you cast your ballot?

278.

279. Voted absentee in Michigan. So my ballot came here and I filled that out and then I sent it in the mail.

280.

281. How do you feel about the outcome?

282.

283. I'm just delighted. I'm just so excited. Hopefully, this new administration can take the pandemic more seriously. And, um, you know, we could be in a place like, like New Zealand?

284.

285. How has the election affected your relationships with family and friends?

286.

287. Um, gosh, I don't know. My parents are weird, because like, I pushed them to go to the polls. This is my first election voting in because the last time I barely missed it. And so I pushed my parents go to the polls back then. And then they my dad wanted for Trump. I was like, Are you kidding me? And yeah, it was cool to like bond with my dad or the fact that like, he switched to blue this time. That was awesome. That my mom voted for Trump. And I don't really talk to her about it, because she doesn't really understand politics. She has no idea what's going on, and she just doesn't get it. So I just try not to even bicker about it with her. But, yeah, I mean, I feel like I don't really have any people in my circle that actually I do. I have one friend who voted for Trump. And it's weird because she's been my friend since I was like six, and she lives in the country and like, it's so weird. I live in this giant city and we were just like, I don't know, we just love each other regardless. And like I try not to get into it with her. I got into her. Got into it with her the other day about her boyfriend posting a picture of his gun on Instagram. And I was like, that's not cool. Like why did why did he do that? Like, why-- but I mean, at the end of the day, like we both have like somehow have equal morals and I feel like she only voted for Trump because everyone around her did. But yeah, that's only been that's the only point of like contingency is like that one friend but we just don't really talk about it.

288.

289. Okay, so in case the Coronavirus lasts well into next year, how might that-- how might that affect you?

290.

291. Ah, ... question. I don't know. I applied to an internship in Seattle for the summer and am currently applying to jobs and stuff. So I mean, I don't know I think I might move back to Detroit like actually live in Detroit after I graduate. I think I'll be sad if we don't get to have a commencement even if we have a commencement with masks on. Like, I want to be able to have a commencement ceremony even though I don't think we'll be able to. Um, yeah, I mean, I think it will affect me in the same way it has been affecting me and I feel like the longer this goes on, the easier it kind of gets to like, adjust your life and not have expectations that once were.

292.

293. In case of another shutdown, what do you think should have been implemented from the beginning to better accommodate people?

294.

295. I think I mean, I think we're working towards, you know, right now having another stimulus check. And it's so essential. And I mean, also just like boosting unemployment, helping people, because like, people just need to live and pay the bills. And, you know, even if the country goes in insane debt, like we already are, so, like, we might as well just keep borrowing more money, because like, the people need it right now. And we'll

be able to, like, bounce out of this. And people are so worried about the economy, and it's like, I don't understand why we're not worried about people first.

296.

297. What are some new ideas that blossom during this pandemic?

298. Um, so I love Pinterest, thrift shopping, and like finding vintage clothing, and all of my clothes are like secondhand. I've had ideas of like starting a vintage shop, or starting like a YouTube channel about teaching people how to thrift. I've somewhat learned how to sew over pins like over the pandemic's. So I kind of want to make like a YouTube channel just to be like flipping clothing and like taking pieces and like building new things. So I think from an entrepreneurship side of things, every time I find something a thrift store, like I have like an eye now where I know it's like good quality, or this or that I'm like, Oh, I can sell this. And I'm like, I don't know how or for how much I could sell it. So yeah, I think that's like a new idea that I've had.

299.

300. What aspects of life did you take for granted before the virus?

301.

302. Oh, really like mundane things. Like I used to hate being on the train, and like going to class at 9am, and not being able to get a seat. I would take anything right now to just stand on the Brown Line for 40 minutes, and be like, squashed like a sardine next to other people. I feel like I took for granted, just like how unsanitary we all were in the beginning. Like I thought this from the beginning. Like when the pandemic started, I'm like, everyone's just going to turn into a germaphobe after this was all over. And I feel like I took for granted like hanging out with people. I didn't really hang out with people that much in the spring semester, because I was so busy, like with work in school. And I was just never on the same schedule as my friends. So I mean, I kind of took for granted like hanging out with people because I didn't really do it that much anyway.

303.

304. What was the most significant change in your life due to the virus?

305.

306. Um, I think unemployment-- like being on unemployment, and then also just like reevaluating my goals for the future and where I expect myself to be.

307.

308. How has this semester lived up to your expectations?

309.

310. It really hasn't. I wish I could say as I'm slipping so hard, it's been so hard. It's one thing to start a semester in person and then go online. It's another thing starting completely online. So I don't know, I feel like we all just need to be honest with ourselves. Like, we're only reading parts of assignments that we need to read. We're only doing parts of things that we need to be doing if there's a test on it. Like, I'm not going to watch a 30 minute lecture if I don't have to, you know? So, I don't know. I wish there was just more like honesty from both ends. And I feel like teachers are assigning more work because they think we have all this more time. And it's like, we don't and it's the same. And, you know-- teachers who had never taught online before, I just don't

think I mean, I don't blame them though. Like it's hard. Like none of us know what we're doing. So..

311.

312. What should Columbia be doing differently?

313.

314. I don't think anything. I think Columbia has like adapted to the virus really well. You know, I think the pre-check and the-- the contact tracing at the schools done really well. And like --we've isolated cases really well and we haven't had a large outbreak. And you know, letting people move into the dorms but not have any roommates. And the second--The other thing like I think that Columbia has handled it really well.

315.

316. What is something you feel you need more support in during the pandemic?

317.

318. Oh, I need more money. I always need more money. Um, yeah, I think I just need more--probably just-- I mean, more support from like, my professors sometimes because I am a full time-- I work full time and I'm not willing to sacrifice that for school and I can't really afford to sacrifice it for school. Or else I would just be living on this insanely tight budget that I'm just not comfortable living with. And I'm just not one of those people that thinks that like, you need to be hustling and grinding as hard as you can in order to make it where you want to be. Like-- I'm very much like, I want to enjoy my life right now. I want to enjoy like what I'm doing every day. And so sometimes it's hard when like, I don't turn an assignment in on time or like, I don't know, like, I'm just not as part-- I'm not like participating as much in class.

319.

320. How do you feel about the future?

321.

322. Hmm. I feel indifferent. I don't feel hopeful. And I don't feel like grim like, I'm not like dreading it. But I think now more than ever, this pandemic has just made me live in the present so much. That I'm almost too afraid to be ambitious, because I just don't know if it'll positively impact my mental health. I think--if I think six months in advance from now, it's really overwhelming.

323.

324. What else would you like to add?

325.

326. Mmm. I don't think anything. I think that's all.

327.

328. Alright, well, thank you for your time.

329.

330. Yeah, my pleasure.

331.

332. Thanks for listening. Stay safe.