

**Oral History
Capturing Quarantine
Spring 2020
Final Reflection**

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1. How did you feel when you read the email notifying students the oral history project would change from *Interfaith Chicago* to *Capturing Quarantine* due to the transition to remote learning?

Frankly, I found the idea of suddenly becoming the historical subject of a history class I was taking to be very daunting. The idea of myself as a historical actor shifted my perspective on the situation entirely.

2. What were your initial thoughts about participating in an oral history project documenting your classes' experience during the first months of the global pandemic?

Initially, I was excited to be able to better understand the crisis through this class. Since the pandemic, a lot of courses have felt unimportant, or at least not urgent or relevant for the moment. So being able to document this experience made the class feel like it had greater purpose.

3. How do you feel about the project now?

I wish I could have invested myself more into it, but I was simultaneously going through personal problems. Still, I feel so incredibly proud to have partaken in this project. Everything I have been learning lately, has not been from my classes, but from the world around me. This project allowed me to learn from the world by connecting with someone I had a class with.

4. As an interviewer:

- a. How did you prepare for the interview?

I made sure to read through his biographical data form and have a good understanding about his background. The first 2-3 minute interview we had was really helpful in understanding our dynamic, as well as understanding his speech patterns. I noticed myself interrupt him a couple times during the first interview because I had mistaken a pause as him stopping. So once I was aware of that, I had to become more patient and attentive with his responses. I also looked a lot at my script and then tried not to look at it much during the real interview, unless to keep track of where I was at.

- b. What was it like to interview a classmate?

I don't think it was nearly as intimidating as it would have been if I were to interview someone older and part of a community, I was unfamiliar with. Because we are peers, it felt easier and more relaxed.

- c. How did you feel after the interview?

I was very emotional. I was relieved that we did the thing, but I was also saddened by the subject matter.

- d. What is the most important thing you learned as an interviewer?

I learned how to put some of my emotions aside. I wanted to cry during parts of the interview and had to put that aside to finish the discussion. I had to focus on the purpose of the interview and then allowed myself to process the conversation once it was over. I also wanted to respond to a lot of negative things he was saying about himself, but I knew I had to let him continue talking. I learned the importance of maintaining the flow of the interview. To not interrupt this flow, I would write down rebuttals to every negative thing he said about himself, to tell him after the interview.

- e. What advice would you give to future interviewers?

Be prepared for your narrator's emotions and your own emotions.

5. As a narrator:

- a. How did you prepare to be interviewed?

I had been talking to myself a lot more and answering questions related to the topics we would be discussing (when in quarantine). The day of the interview, though, I focused less on what my responses would be and just sort of grounded myself. I was a bit nervous, so I had to calm myself down and focus on starting from a place that felt absolutely true.

- b. Describe your experience being interviewed.

It was not as bad as I made it out to be in my head. It actually felt nice to voice my opinion on the current crises. I felt listened to. I also learned more about what I was actually feeling about the situation, just by talking about it.

- c. How did you feel after the interview ended?

Relief. Then dread. There was a question that stuck with me and followed me for weeks after: "What does the future look like?"

- d. What would you tell someone who is hesitant to be interviewed?

Start with being true to yourself and your experiences, and if you aren't sure about something, you can always admit that. It really is as simple as having a

conversation, you just dive a little deeper. Be patient with yourself and your ideas and don't stress about eloquence. Honesty first.

6. (OPTIONAL) Questions about narrators' private lives and personal relationships were not included in the formal interview, how do you feel about this?

- a. How has your gender, sexuality, race, and/or ethnicity affected your experience during the global pandemic?

- b. Exploring and developing new relationships is an important part of the undergraduate experience, how has this aspect of your life been affected?

- c. How are you dealing with the absence of physical contact?

I feel deprived of something I need. Today was my grandma's birthday and all I wanted was to hold her. This whole time I have been thinking of all the people I would hug if I could. I guess this is something that has been feeding into my depression, so I haven't gotten good at dealing with it yet. Now, when I want to hug people, I tell them. I'm trying to be better at expressing my love and the way I care for people in ways that aren't physical. Writing to them has been a good way to do that.

7. Is there anything else you would like to include?

All of this is changing our very definition of connection.