

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

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Section I:

1. Thinking back to the start of the semester, what were your initial thoughts about participating in an oral history project documenting your experience during the ongoing global pandemic?

I thought it would be really interesting and unique to this class, but I was nervous because I'm generally uncomfortable and inexperienced with recording myself talking, and I knew that this would be recorded and kept for anyone to view. It seemed like a fun project to work on nonetheless and I felt lucky to be a part of it.

2. How did your feelings about the project change?

The more we prepared for our interview, the more confident and ready I felt. By the time of the interview, I wasn't as nervous, and I was able to relax and be myself. I didn't realize how much work went into a project like this beforehand, so I learned a lot.

Section II:

3. As an **interviewer**:
 - a. How did you prepare for the interview?

I made multiple drafts of all my questions throughout the semester and looked over them to make sure they were satisfactory. Right before, I made sure I had access to the script on my phone (while on do-not-disturb to avoid distractions) so I could easily read the questions while speaking to Ben. If I had had access to a printer, I would have chosen to print my script on paper. I scheduled a date and time and made sure I had good internet connection, clear lighting, and a microphone hooked up to my computer.

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

I was lucky enough to interview Ben, who is easily the person I am closest with in the class. Since early on in the semester we got along very well, so it was great to get to know him and bond a bit through this interview. I felt much more comfortable interviewing him and asking somewhat personal questions, and I definitely felt a connection, since we are both musicians.

- c. How did you feel after the interview?

I was a bit relieved that it was over and I wouldn't have to worry about it, but I also had fun and felt like I knew Ben a lot better. The interview was shorter than I expected, but I felt that we covered plenty of ground and had all the information needed in it.

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

As an interviewer, it is important to be engaging with your questions, but also respond at times. It should feel a bit like a conversation, with input from both sides.

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

You should act naturally and be friendly when speaking. Be ready with all your questions, but do not be afraid to go off script. In the moment, you will certainly want to ask follow questions, and some questions may no longer be relevant or necessary to ask.

4. As a **narrator**:

- a. How did you prepare to be interviewed?

There is not much I could do as preparation for being interviewed, but I made sure I wasn't too nervous and knew some of the things I wanted to talk about. I did my best to remind myself to speak slowly and clearly. I also wore something nice to look presentable.

- b. Describe your experience being interviewed.

I definitely felt it was awkward at times, and I think zoom played into that. There was a time when I couldn't hear what Christopher, my interviewer, was saying and others when the delay caused us to interrupt each other. Overall, Chris asked very interesting questions that brought up new thinking points for me.

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

I was very thankful that it was over and I thought it went pretty well, although I did worry a little that my answers were repetitive or "not interesting enough."

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

In this case, it is really important to be yourself and let your personality show. You really don't have much to worry about, as all you have to do is answer questions that you are asked, and there is zero pressure. There are never

wrong answers, and you don't have to answer a question if it makes you that uncomfortable.

Section III:

5. What information is missing? What else do you think those trying to understand the pandemic should know?

One of the first things that came to mind is that these interviews don't give any statistics about COVID-19, which might be useful context for people that may not know anything about the pandemic in the future. I also think it would be fascinating to give similar interviews with teachers at Columbia, to see their side of the story and how it compares. In general, these interviews give unique and fascinating perspective on the life of a college student during an unprecedented global pandemic.