Katarzyna Kumor Oral History

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**SPEAKERS**

Katarzyna Kumor, Jared Walpurgis

**Jared Walpurgis** 00:01

All right, this is Jared Walpurgis from Northeastern University. Third year Asian Studies major conducting an interview with fellow Northeastern student. If you want to introduce yourself

**Katarzyna Kumor** 00:13

Sure, I am Kasha I am doing this interview back at home in New Jersey, I am a fifth year business major at Northeastern University. It is Saturday, September 19, or 20th 19th at 6:24pm. And I consent to doing this interview with you for a COVID-19 project.

**Jared Walpurgis** 00:42

Amazing all the logistics taken care of.

**Katarzyna Kumor** 00:45

Awesome.

**Jared Walpurgis** 00:47

So starting off, when and also where were you when you first heard about Coronavirus? And what was your initial reaction to it?

**Katarzyna Kumor** 00:57

Um, so the funny thing is, is that I had already a sense of what pandemics are and how I mean grave they could be to our human species just cuz in November 2019, I was I really like to watch the series explained by Vox. Basically, they in each episode, they tap into different topics. And there's one that was hosted by Bill Gates, about pandemics. And so it was only one month before the coronavirus was essentially developed in China, but I really didn't think anything of it, I thought, I mean, this is huge, this is gonna just pandemics themselves could have a huge impact on our population. But I just thought it was something so far away from us that it wouldn't ever reach our lifestyles until, I guess, February 2020, when I was in Boston, doing my last semester on campus with a full course load that I started hearing from other students and professors that they're being prepared by Northeastern to move their entire curriculum online. And that's not that's kind of when things started to set in. But again, I just thought, Oh, these are just precautions, these are things that institutions have to do to be prepared, but nothing's going to change. And little did we know that we had spring break, most people went to various places around the US even around the world, just to get back on campus and essentially be kicked off within three days. So things escalated very, very quickly.

**Jared Walpurgis** 02:44

Yep. Northeastern gave us not entirely a proper heads up I'd say.

**Katarzyna Kumor** 02:51

And the three days notice, actually 72 hours that's they would like to call it via email was definitely the cherry on top for especially people that were living on campus. I, um, fortunately, at the time, I was living off campus so I could make more flexible decisions for myself.

**Jared Walpurgis** 03:10

You were way luckier. I was on campus.

**Katarzyna Kumor** 03:13

Yeah, but I mean, people wiped out pretty quickly, especially when you went to the grocery stores and everything was wiped out. He kind of realized it's probably best to go home, at least in my perspective at that time.

**Jared Walpurgis** 03:28

Yeah, so how have the last six months, been both even up to like how have you felt about it?

**Katarzyna Kumor** 03:37

Um, I finished my semester. And then I also was taking two summer one courses in May and June. To finish up my degree, essentially, and I'm taking my last class online right now before I finished my degree in December. I am currently on Co Op, so like a six month internship at a Better Mortgage. So they, they, the company is in downtown New York City I supposed to have like a 60th floor view and live in Manhattan and basically take in this new city and just like take the next step from living in Boston to even a bigger city with more attractions, more people more experiences. And my life couldn't be further from that at the moment. I'm just in New Jersey, in a suburb where I grew up, most of my friends are around the nation, some of them even around the world. So it's been pretty tough trying to be satisfied with kind of backtracking to the life that I had four years ago.

**Jared Walpurgis** 04:56

Yeah, it's got to be pretty surreal. Having like, office work in the same house that you grew up in?

**Katarzyna Kumor** 05:03

Yeah. Yeah. Living, sleeping, working, eating, socializing and all, all under the same roof that you grew up in for, like 18 years? I mean, it's definitely not what I expected myself to be

**Jared Walpurgis** 05:20

How has it been working from home been? Like, have you been managing it? Well?Yeah

**Katarzyna Kumor** 05:25

It's been tough. I think, at least within my family across the board, what I've noticed is that, because we work from home, there's less commuting time, we realized that we're actually working a lot more than what we used to work. Um, so hours start like, anywhere like between eight and nine, and then go all the way basically non stop until seven or eight sometimes until 10pm, just because there's so much to do. And a lot of people have that mindset of just because they're home, they can essentially work, non stop. And it also it's, you kind of get that pressure that you have to because you've seen, you see those like green circles of everyone status being on and online that you feel like you have to do the same. So there's definitely a lot of a lot of learning left for me to do in trying to understand how to set up my routine in a way that isn't like, wake up, work, go to sleep, wake up or go to sleep.

**Jared Walpurgis** 06:31

All right, maintaining maintaining a normal work schedule, even when normal work is not what you're doing.

**Katarzyna Kumor** 06:38

Right. Because when you think about it, when you when people would be in the office before you would grab coffee with them, go to lunches with them also, just like have natural breaks where I mean, you can talk about the business, but in a very casual way, here, everything is very intentional, where meetings are only set up, if they are for a certain purpose, those casual instances of just like, being closer with your team or just reaching outside of your team has been a lot more difficult.

**Jared Walpurgis** 07:12

I haven't thought about that before actually.

**Katarzyna Kumor** 07:15

Yeah, you don't realize it until you have to work non stop without having like a good break.

**Jared Walpurgis** 07:23

Hmm. And when, when your internship is up, are you going to have the option of staying with your company and if you do, or are you going to take it or look for look for a different job.

**Katarzyna Kumor** 07:36

Um, I believe it's on the table, there's still a lot of discussion that needs to be had, just with me and I guess, my family and but also with my co workers and trying to figure out what works best. So I haven't looked for anything else that's out there. Um, it probably is a good idea to do so just to know my options. But I do feel like there is a certain set of convenience, in not having to onboard again, having to ramp up, learn my coworkers from scratch, all of that I've already done. And if I continue to do so it's just that smooth transition. Because anywhere I work at this point is going to be online, and I'm saving a lot of money by working from home. So it feels like that is the next natural step to do so. But it would be a good idea to also do some more outside research just to know what's available.

**Jared Walpurgis** 08:37

If you if you didn't have that online hurdle, or like, if life was normal, if you were in that, that 60th floor, like penthouse office, um, would you would it be the same? Like how do you think the that I your, your opinion on that would change, like where your process like, would you consider staying there more or like, consider more outside options if you didn't have to go through an online hurdle? Stuff like that.

**Katarzyna Kumor** 09:06

Yeah, I think, I mean, my life has definitely, like turned itself upside down. I think I would be considering a lot a lot of different things in my decision. If I if I were working in New York City living in New York City, the Coronavirus was not a thing we have to worry about. Because I would be thinking about work culture, I'll be thinking about not only about the place that I live, but also how much it costs. And I think there are more opportunities if we are able to choose where we live and in what office we work at. And now that that decision has already been made for me by working from home, because that's basically the sentiment of all businesses right now to work online. That isn't a factor in my decision anymore.

**Jared Walpurgis** 10:01

So like, a lot of things kind of blend together, like distinguishing factors have broken down a bit.

**Katarzyna Kumor** 10:07

Right, exactly.

**Jared Walpurgis** 10:11

Um,so Northeastern commonly boasts about its Co Op program. However, how have you seen it be affected by this are like How have your friends you know, be affected by this?

**Katarzyna Kumor** 10:22

Um with my friends, I'm basically the only one that's doing a co op, most of my friends graduated at the end of their fourth year in May 2020. So they didn't experience a graduation, unfortunately. And a lot of the job offers that they had full time post grad, either were canceled or postponed. And it definitely we all talked about this once. I was a part of Sco ut, which is Northeastern design studio. And a lot of us who were graduating or near graduating at that time, discussed how it feels like, we don't have that natural transition from school to working full time. Because everything was basically sent online and virtual and no real graduation and no feeling of closure. Regarding college. It feels like we aren't very prepared for I guess, the job market that's ahead of us. It feels like we haven't closed the door behind us. And it makes it very hazy for what we are able to achieve in the future given the postponements, and I guess maybe lack of opportunities now in the job market.

**Jared Walpurgis** 11:49

So like, this Limbo state is just another source of stress in the whole, the whole situation, like just another thing to think about.

**Katarzyna Kumor** 11:59

Yeah, it's like another thing thrown at us. And just

**Jared Walpurgis** 12:02

another layer put on top.

**Katarzyna Kumor** 12:04

Exactly the cherry on top on.

**Jared Walpurgis** 12:07

So any final thoughts that haven't been brought up? Or things you just want to say regarding anything related to the COVID situation?

**Katarzyna Kumor** 12:17

Um, not really, I guess for me, it's just, I'm sorry. But I think it's just like, it doesn't seem like things are gonna change in the near future. It seems like I mean, even with my job and not reopening until like, possibly the earliest in the second half of 2021 really puts things into perspective of like, how our lives have come to a halt on almost

**Jared Walpurgis** 12:50

Everything's frozen currently.

**Katarzyna Kumor** 12:51

Kind of

**Jared Walpurgis** 12:51

Like, I know last year, like feels like it hasn't existed or like it won't exist.

**Katarzyna Kumor** 12:58

Right? It feels like this weird moment. Like almost like the Twilight Zone. Which actually watched today, which is funny.

**Jared Walpurgis** 13:07

Well, we've we've now entered the Twilight Zone. Yeah. Yep. Um, all right. So thanks for thanks for doing this.

**Katarzyna Kumor** 13:20

Yeah, of course.

**Jared Walpurgis** 13:21

So, again, our finally this is a Jared Walpurgis from the Northeastern University history department. And Yep, signing off.