

Transcript of Interview of Kate [REDACTED] by Emiko Armstrong

Interviewee: Kate [REDACTED]

Interviewer: Emiko Armstrong

Date: 09/15/2020

Location (Interviewee):

Location (Interviewer):

Transcriber: Angelica S Ramos

Abstract – Emiko Armstrong interviewed Kate [REDACTED], a Connecticut native, on the impact of COVID in its inception in the United States. They discussed her senior year in high school and Kate’s feelings on how her first year of college is going. They discussed Kates home life during COVID quarantine, her hopes for the future and what she thinks might be the lasting historic impact of COVID.

Emiko Armstrong 00:00

Hello, my name is Emiko Armstrong. It is currently 5pm on September 15 2020, and I'm here with Kate [REDACTED] to learn more about her experience during the COVID 19 pandemic. Kate, are you okay with your experience being shared with the COVID-19? project?

Kate [REDACTED] 00:15

Yes, I am totally okay with my experience being shared with the COVID-19 archive project.

EA 00:21

To start off, what were you doing when you found out that you are not coming back to school?

KR 00:25

Unfortunately, I can't pinpoint an exact moment because my school was a bit secretive with their plans. I think they were trying to avoid the whole closing down situation and panic that was happening across the United States. After the two-week period ended, they would cancel classes on two-week basis. And I think it was sometime in May, when it was pretty clear, we weren't going back. But I honestly can't say I remember an email or phone call that specified us being done for the year. I do. However, remember the phone calls, we would get saying classes are canceled until this given date. I also remember the build up to schools being closed. For me it was on Thursday, March 12, which was one of my close friends birthdays. They called the afternoon of Wednesday to inform us they would be closing down the schools but they never specified when they would reopen.

EA 01:15

How did it feel in the moment? Or what were your expectations surrounding coming back to school?

KR 01:22

For a while, it was fun, I got to hang out with my family and really just live life, which wasn't something I typically had to do in all my 12 years of schooling. I remember so often telling my friends Oh, it'll only be two weeks, because my assumption was everyone would follow the lockdown. And then because none of us would come in contact with anyone infected it would be over. I never expected to not go back to school. And I really didn't expect for it to still be going on now.

EA 01:47

off of that. When did it hit you that the situation was serious?

KR 01:53

I think I realized it was serious when the shortages started happening. I hadn't gone out in two weeks because I was following the lockdown. And then my mom asked me if I wanted to go to the store with her just to get out of

the house. I went with her and everything was just gone. There were please only take two signs everywhere. It's still difficult for me to grasp the situation is serious because a lot of people treat it like it's not. I mean, we're living pretty normal lives right now, except for the masks and social distancing. We're here at college in a pretty big city. It feels like a dream sometimes. But it also feels like life has always been this way.

EA 02:27

And where are you from and what restrictions were in place.

KR 02:31

I am proud to say I'm from Connecticut, which handled the virus pretty well. We enforced a strict travel ban. And I just remember seeing an online infographic about how Connecticut was one of three states that was handling things pretty well. I think Rhode Island was also on that list, but I'm not too sure. We had to wear a mask at all times and most stores were closed except for the grocery stores. There were also limits on how many people could be inside at one time. So, it was pretty, you know, regular. I do remember Connecticut had their three-phase plan. But they started reopening a lot later than other states, which I think contributed to the low number of cases.

EA 03:08

Considering all of the anti-police brutality protests going on, especially during a pandemic, what were your thoughts?

KR 03:16

I myself actually attended three protests during the pandemic, I had a hard time coping with it, if you will. I wanted so badly to fight against these injustices. But it was hard to work up to going to them considering the pandemic. I never wanted to get anyone in my family or anyone else sick. So, I always took lots of precautions. My first protest, I actually wore two masks because I thought it would help. In my town, all the protests were outside. And typically, we would walk and they would always remind us to socially distance. But there were definitely times when people broke that. My thinking was that the pandemic would allow people to ignore the issue. And then I could go out and protest in the place of those that couldn't because they had sick family members that they had to worry about. I just felt like during this time, we couldn't forget that there were still people facing so much injustice.

EA 04:06

There were also several anti mask protests. How do you approach others not wearing masks?

KR 04:13

Truth be told, I've only really talked to my friends about wearing their masks, no strangers yet. Obviously, there is a lot of political tension right now and you never know who you're approaching. So, I'm always cautious about that. I typically try to avoid these people because I'm worrying about my own health. And if they don't care about theirs, then that's their issue. But with friends, I always remind them to keep it on until we're in an isolated space like a house or a car.

EA 04:37

And how do you yourself feel about wearing masks?

KR 04:42

I'll be honest, it's such a bother. I think a lot of people right now are being really careful with how they talk about this because they don't want to sound like an anti-masker I'm not anti-mask, but I definitely don't like them. I don't think many people do. When I wear my glasses, they fog up which can be hazardous and the regular surgical masks. above my nose. I like the reusable ones. But washing them can be difficult. Sometimes being bothered for a short period of time is better than getting COVID. So I always wear my mask and I think everyone should just to protect their community.

EA 05:13

Did you ever have a family meeting where you talked about the implications of the pandemic?

KR 05:19

My mom would always sit in our living room and watch the news to figure out what was in the stores. She would come home and say something about the lines or what was missing. And she was always expressing concern, but never in a formal sit-down setting.

EA 05:32

Going off of that, what was the routine you had for navigating through your daily life,

KR 05:36

we got into the habit of disinfecting our groceries, every time my mom came home, our brothers and I would take the bags and put them on the kitchen floor. Anything a plastic we would disinfect before putting away for fruits and vegetables, we would wash them in the sink. And depending on what it was, we would put some soap on it. My mom was very, very worried about the food from the store and who had previously touched it.

EA 05:59

Were you ever worried for your safety or the safety of those around you?

KR 06:04

Honestly, I was never worried for my own safety. But I was worried for the safety of my mom and my grandmother. I knew I wasn't going to be able to see my grandmother during that time. But the thought of getting her sick was still really scary. As for myself and my brothers, I kept the thought in mind that we were young and wouldn't really be affected by COVID-19, which looking back I realized is really naive. It became a little harder to grasp that idea when I started hearing of younger kids being infected, because prior to this, they made it seem like only old people could get it

EA 06:35

what were some of the activities that kept you sane through quarantine?

KR 06:39

So I did a lot of TikTok trends like making a bucket hat and banana bread. For the first month I religiously exercised at home which kept my mind off things. But it was really music that kept me sane. I play guitar and piano and getting the chance to really focus on my instruments was so calming. My older brother and I also skateboard in the driveway together, which could be dizzying sometimes, but it led me out into the fresh air which was such a relief.

EA 07:05

And finally, what impacts do you think this pandemic will have on our future college life and history in general?

KR 07:12

It's weird to say but I don't think there will be much of a long term effect. I think that a lot of people will stop using masks after the pandemic simply because people are a bit more selfish nowadays. People want their own comfort and a mask doesn't fit that for most people. While online school has taken off, I think that because of the digital divide, it won't be used unless completely necessary. If they were to do online school on snow days, like a lot of people think I would honestly be shocked. Kids deserve a nice break. I think that it will teach governments in the future how to better handle a situation like this instead of creating widespread panic. I'd also like to see a greater sense of community between people but I highly doubt that will happen.

EA 07:52

Thank you so much for sharing your experiences.

KR 07:55

It's been a pleasure. Thank you so much for interviewing me today and allowing me to share my experience.