

Transcript of Oral History Interview with Julia Norton

Interviewee: Julia Norton

Interviewer: Radhika Barot

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Location (Interviewee): Boston, Massachusetts

Location (Interviewer): Boston, Massachusetts

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Abstract: This interview gives insight into Northeastern student's transition as a high school senior to college and her experience in dealing with COVID-19.

Radhika Barot 0:01

I'm Radhika Barot and I'm interviewing Julia Norton. Do you give me consent for interviewing you for the COVID-19 archive project?

Julia Norton 0:09

Yes.

RB 00:10

Okay. Can you just tell me what the date and time is?

JN 00:13

It is Sunday, September 20 11:06am.

RB 00:19

So, when the news of COVID-19 broke out, where were you?

JN 00:27

I was- I was at my work, actually, um, there's, there was a TV in, there's a takeout counter. So, it's a TV in the hallway sort of. I just remember, everyone kind of stopped what they were doing. Nobody was really working, because we all kind of went to the front to see the TV because, like, it was just all news channels coverage of what governor Baker was saying. And just seeing the headlines of no school for the next two weeks was crazy. I remember I ran to tell my manager that I'd have a lot more availability now.

RB 01:03

Okay, did you end up working the rest of the quarantine?

JN 01:06

So, it was weird because I- so I worked for like a small business. It was a small, tiny restaurant. And I think they really wanted to cut corners and save money. So, a lot of people they didn't ask to come back, they only had like shifts of, they only had the same five people working until about June. And then I slowly started picking up more and more shifts. So, I'd say I kind of missed out on working from March through May. But after that, it kind of picked up and I worked through August.

RB 01:41

Okay, so that time period that you weren't working, you're obviously focusing on school, but do you think you picked up any new hobbies or any new interest during that time?

JN 01:51

I do think during that time, I-, because I had so much time, I could really kind of educate myself on politics, which is something that I've always kind of meant to do. I've always thought it'd be good to get involved. So, I did end up learning a lot about politics. For the most part I had- I had an art class that I was taking that I needed to finish my portfolio for. So, I did a lot of artwork and I ended up just like that, I kind of use the time to think of what direction I was going in with my portfolio. And I kind of perfected it during this time. Because throughout the school year, I felt like I was so unfocused. But this time I kind of I kind of brought everything all together to make it one concentrated idea. So, I definitely spent a lot of time working on art. And just kind of educating myself. I did get into reading too. And I tried to read things that were in like my desired career field. Like a lot of books about, like consciousness theory. I thought that's something that would help me as I go on through neuroscience, which is my major and something that I'm interested in doing the future.

RB 03:02

Okay. Now, do you think that reading doing art, whatever else you were interested in, do you think that was therapeutic for you with having to deal with, you know, just like really being alone and like away from friends?

JN 03:16

Yeah, I definitely think it helped me a lot. I got a lot more comfortable with the idea of being alone. And it really kind of made me see that I don't like need to be constantly doing things like keeping myself busy all the time with other people I can kind of, there's a lot of options I picked up on new hobbies. So, my free time is a lot more productive now.

RB 03:47

So, what was that initial transition from like your regular day to day life to complete isolation? Like, what were the things you did before quarantine and that after that, what was that transition like?

JN 04:02

So, the transition for me actually, at first, when there was only two weeks, I was really happy I felt super overwhelmed senior year because I had a lot of stuff going on. I was trying to balance four AP classes with all the sports that I was doing, trying to get enough sleep also trying to hang out with my friends. I'm just trying to balance a lot of relationships on top of work and school and I just like this my last year here so I obviously want to spend time with my family and I felt bad because I wasn't spending that much time with my family. So first, the transition wasn't bad for me at all because it was a break that I felt like I really needed for the whole year like I wasn't too upset when it was only two weeks. I mean obviously after that, like as time went on, I feel like I kind of grew more like it was much harder to transition because I had no schedule. I was sleeping until 11 and staying up till three in the morning.

RB 05:00

Moving on from this experience, do you think that you've gained a new perspective on yourself or just life in general?

JN 05:08

Yeah, I definitely have gained a lot of new perspectives, there was something even on a more personal level, there was a I was in a relationship that wasn't very good. But I couldn't see that it wasn't very good. And just kind of this time to myself allowed me to think and like, notice everything that wasn't right about this relationship. So in the future, I can definitely know, like, what the warning signs are, and what really isn't a healthy relationship. I also definitely gained a more global perspective, just because, um, you kind of this is a lot of time, a lot of time to watch the news, you can kind of see everything that's going on, even within the pandemic, how there was the all the protests, which didn't necessarily have anything to do with COVID-19. But kind of having all the time to watch closely what's going on, it really opened my eyes to a lot of injustice injustices, that as somebody who is white and grew up in a 98%, white town probably wouldn't have noticed as much before, but now that it was kind of in the spotlight, and everyone was watching, because there wasn't a lot going on. I definitely gain new perspectives on things as a side effect of having all this time

RB 06:35

Okay, to finally, what did you think about our country's response to COVID? And what do you think it'll take for us to recover as a country?

JN 06:45

I thought that our country's response, at first was a lot better, you saw a lot of kindness, you know, people, even little things like so many times, I'd go to Dunkin for a coffee, and I roll up to the window and realize somebody already paid for it for me. So, I saw a lot of that. And I really thought all the kindness was good. But then time went on. And this pandemic really seemed to inconvenience people more than it scared them. And I noticed a lot of division, I noticed, I noticed a lot of like, anger between people plus, not wanting to wear a mask and kind of like, not

understanding that little things that you should take personal responsibility for. To help other people, they just weren't being done, even if it's the simplest thing. So, I feel like it really showed what America is all about. And I think it has definitely caused a lot of rifts and people in between people like the people who didn't social distance, didn't wear masks. And the people who took this seriously, I feel like that is a pretty big rift and we're going to kind of need something to unite us again after him. And if it's all like, we all come together for the vaccine or we all come together just to kind of rebuild ourselves because I feel like, like, overall mental state of America is kind of gone down.

RB 08:13

Yeah, I agree. I feel like we have a really long way to go.

JN 08:21

Yeah,

RB 08:22

But thank you for letting me interview you

JN 08:28

Of course.