

## **Transcript of Interview with Katarzyna Kumor by Jared Walpurgis**

**Interviewee:** Katarzyna Kumor

**Interviewer:** Jared Walpurgis

**Date:** 09/19//2020

**Location (Interviewee):**

**Location (Interviewer):**

**Transcriber:** This transcript has been provided by Otter.AI with a 2nd pass for accuracy provided by Bryan Paintiff, HST580 intern, at ASU.

**Abstract:** Katarzyna Kumor is a fifth-year business major at Northeastern University and begins the interview by talking about a series on Vox that she had watched prior to the pandemic that was hosted by Bill Gates covering pandemics. From this she knew how crazy pandemics could potentially get, but did not think coronavirus would be as bad as it was until February of 2020 when she heard that classes at Northwestern were preparing to be moved online. Next Katarzyna describes how the lockdown has changed her plans after graduation, and instead of working and living in New York City, she is back living with her parents in New Jersey and doing an internship remotely. She further talks about her challenges with finding a good work/rest routine and the uncertainty of what lies after her internship is over. Additionally, Katarzyna describes how not having a graduation from college and switching to online classes her last semester has caused a haze, that the transition from school to work didn't get to happen as there was no official closing of that door.

**Jared Walpurgis 00:01**

All right, this is Jared Walpurgis of 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 because in November 2019, I was I really liked 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.

**Katarzyna Kumor** 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 as they would like to call it via email was definitely the cherry on top for especially people that were living on campus. I fortunately, at the time 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. You kind of realized it's probably best to go home, at least in my perspective at that time.

**Katarzyna Kumor** 03:28

Yeah. So So how have the last six months been? What have you been up to and 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 in 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 better mortgage, so they, they the companies in downtown New York City I was supposed to have like a 60s 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.

**Katarzyna Kumor 04:56**

Yeah, it's got to be pret- like 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 where I expected myself to be.

**Katarzyna Kumor 05:19**

How is how has it been working from home, then like, Have you been managing it well, or? 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 realize that we're actually working a lot more than what we used to work. So hours start like, anywhere at like between eight and nine, and then go all the way basically nonstop, 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 nonstop. And it also it's kind of 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, work, go to sleep.

**Katarzyna Kumor 05:26**

All right, like 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.

**Katarzyna Kumor 07:12**

I haven't thought about that before actually.

**Katarzyna Kumor 07:15**

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

**Katarzyna Kumor 07:24**

And when, when your internship is up, are you going? Do you have the option of staying with your company and if you do, 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, 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 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.

**Katarzyna Kumor 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 had 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 in, 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.

**Katarzyna Kumor 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.

**Katarzyna Kumor 10:10**

So, Northeastern commonly boasts about its co-op program. How have a, how have you seen it be affected by this or like how have your friends you know, be affected by this?

**Katarzyna Kumor 10:23**

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 Scout, 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.

**Katarzyna Kumor 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, just like another thing thrown at us.

**Jared Walpurgis 12:02**

Just another layer put on top of it.

**Katarzyna Kumor 12:04**

Exactly the cherry on top.

**Jared Walpurgis 12:07**

On, 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 12:19**

Not really. I guess for me, it's just, oh sorry. But I think it's just like, it doesn't seem like things are going to 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 or almost.

**Jared Walpurgis** 12:49

Yeah, like everything's frozen currently. Like,

**Katarzyna Kumor** 12:52

Kind of.

**Jared Walpurgis** 12:52

last year, of 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 I actually watched today, which is funny.

**Jared Walpurgis** 13:07

Well, we've we've now entered the Twilight Zone yeah.

**Katarzyna Kumor** 13:11

And it comes full circle.

**Jared Walpurgis** 13:14

Yep. Um, all right. So Thanks for Thanks for doing this.

**Katarzyna Kumor** 13:20

Yeah, of course.

**Jared Walpurgis** 13:21

So, again, or finally this is Jared Walpurgis from the Northeastern University history department and yup, signing off.