

Gabby Watkins

Public History

PHSP #1

6-5-20

1. Documenting the pandemic crisis is important because something this drastic hasn't happened to our country for quite some time. We need to record every step of the situation while knowing that it will help prepare us for anything to come in the future. In the article by Audra D.S. Burch, Mark Tebeau says, "What we as contributors record is what the future generations will come to remember". I think this quote really hits heart to why we need to write people's stories during the pandemic. Learning from each other, experiencing pain as well as sadness, and helping our family and friends stay healthy are all actions we need to take while this virus still lives amongst us. By documenting this emotional time, I think the world can recover faster as we all come together to fight off Covid-19.
2. There are several reasons why the college student voice is important. College students were in the middle of spring semester when this pandemic ignited around the world and in our country. College students were some of the first invisible victims of the coronavirus. International students suffered greatly. Some of them were even forbidden to return home, and they struggled to find places to sleep. Personally, I was strongly affected by the pandemic as a college student. I had just returned home to Michigan from studying abroad in Seoul, South Korea when the outbreak suddenly boomed overseas. I was supposed to go back to Seoul for the following semester, but Korea was hit with the first massive wave of Covid-19. A couple days later, I received an email stating that my semester had been cancelled due to the pandemic. I was completely devastated. I felt as if a huge wave of loneliness washed over my life. Then, Coronavirus became even worse in the United States, causing many of my international friends at Columbia to face the same situation as me. As mentioned in the article written by Anemona Hartocollis, college students across the nation felt isolated from their peers, and anxiety of an unforeseen future made students even more lonely. My friends and I have been dealing with this pain ever since the pandemic pushed lots of classes online. I strongly agree with the article's point that college students' mental health significantly worsened. Colleges need to provide a better support system for mentally struggling students during this hard time. They also need to make a care program for students who are financially struggling to get by in this outbreak, especially the international students who cannot return home.
3. The medium I want to use for my journal is a photo essay combined with text.

4. I want to use this medium because I believe photography, especially faces of sadness, will be the strongest way to display the emotions involved in this pandemic. I've done many photo essays in the past for my major and on my own time. I think journaling is a lot more fun when pictures are involved because pictures have the power to express words in a much more graphic and relatable way than simply talking about the outbreak.

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PHSP #2

6-12-20

Response to option #2:

- **What strategies have you developed to deal with social isolation?:**
 - While stuck in lockdown, social isolation wasn't as hard as I thought it would be. I used to go out to eat with my friends every Friday, but the fun completely stopped after the stay-at-home lockdown went into effect. In the beginning, I didn't really know what to do with all the free time that was facing me each day. I would stay up very late watching movies until my eyes closed. The cycle kept repeating everyday, and I got bored. I took it upon myself to make an effort to call my friends during the long lockdown weeks. Soon, I was calling and playing online games with them almost every night until morning. This really helped pass the time, and I found a fun way to connect with my close friends around the world who were also experiencing the same situation. The biggest strategy I developed was definitely time management.
- **What about the physical isolation you have experienced?:**
 - Physical isolation didn't affect me as much as socially. I was lucky enough to have my wonderful, loving family accompany me in the lockdown. I never felt alone or the need to go out to see someone. I was happy being together with my parents, knowing we are safe and healthy.
- **How has the absence or reduction of physical contact affected you?:**
 - Personally, the only physical absence I missed during lockdown was being able to walk around outside. When I was in South Korea studying, I used to go dancing with my friends every weekend. Those times were priceless for me, and I didn't know how much I would miss it until the pandemic happened. I also used to walk around the streets in Seoul by myself and watch busking acts in the middle of the city. I became really sad when I came back to the U.S. because I used to be amongst so many people, but the pandemic put my trip on hold for more than five months. Regarding physical contact, I've gotten so used to staying at home that I rarely feel the need to go out anymore. I enjoyed the free time I had to relax and be with my family.

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PHSP #3

6-21-20

- **Response to prompt #1:** As the most severe quarantine restrictions begin to be lifted, what changes are you making?

As tight restrictions in Michigan have been lifted, my city is almost fully open again. Stores, restaurants, offices, and hair salons are now allowed to serve people with a limited amount of customers. Governor Whitmer has made it a requirement that employers and employees must wear masks at all times for those who have gone back to work. Thankfully, some shops insist that every person entering their stores must wear a mask and have posted signs on the front doors. I often see more kids wearing masks now than I did before the lockdown.

Personally, my family and I have chosen to stay at home for the time being as restrictions ease away. The environment is still not safe enough to return to normal life, and people are not following health rules in public places. There are still daily cases being announced, and there are rumors of another lockdown for my county. My family and I haven't made any major changes in our lifestyle since the stay at home order was lifted. I only find myself going out if I need groceries. I watch the news every day, and, recently, there have been concerns about a second wave of coronavirus in America. Twenty-two of the states that opened last week have seen significant spikes since the BLM protests. There is a fear that the more people believe Covid-19 is finished, the more it leads them into thinking they do not need to wear masks anymore. This

fear is a big issue in Michigan, especially, and I am not risking anything that could bring harm to my health. Knowing this, I think it is best to continue staying at home until it is absolutely safe to venture back to how my lifestyle used to be.

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PHSP #4

6-29-20

Prompt: Connecting in College

As Coronavirus lockdowns and restrictions remain intact, I haven't been in physical contact with nearly anyone. A big chunk of my life revolves around being active in student clubs and filming projects on a regular basis, but since COVID plagued the world, this college aspect of my life has been shut down. Living in the busy city of Chicago, then moving to Seoul, South Korea, has always kept my daily life revolving around people. Personally, it was a big change to have face-to-face communication suddenly stop and not to meet up with friends on the weekends. I've tried my best to stay in contact with close friends and family, however, I tried to avoid going out altogether. I think sticking to this isolated routine has made me appreciate how much I love city life, and this physical separation makes me miss my friends overseas every day. One of my favorite things to do in Seoul was to take the subway to different shopping districts and markets, then return home to a beautiful campus.

Although U.S. states are opening in phases, I know staying home is my safest option since a cure has yet to be discovered. These days, I don't find myself feeling blue about not having any outside physical contact. I'm happy enough living with my loving parents who are also happy to have me home. I'm looking forward to returning to South Korea very soon, so I can make new friends and reunite with old ones!

Gabby Watkins

PHSP #5

Public History

7-4-20

Prompt: How has your life experience during the first six months of 2020 changed you, made you?

The first six months of 2020 have definitely changed my life, my family and friends' lives, and the lives of every single person in the world. It's very ironic how everyone believed 2020 was going to be "that" year; A year of good fortune, happiness, and abundant opportunities. Though, this year quickly took a turn towards hell's highway. I spent the beginning of 2020 in Seoul, South Korea, and returned to my parents in Michigan near summertime. Coronavirus hit South Korea very hard in the first half of the year, however, I made it back to the states safely in time. The month I returned home, I received the devastating news that my second semester in Seoul had been canceled. I was completely crushed, and my whole world turned upside down. I felt as if a part of me was lost in a labyrinth of dark space. I was lost inside. I didn't know where my life was headed. I kept asking myself, "What about my dreams?". A month after Seoul was plagued with the virus, the cases in the U.S. rose out of control. Michigan became one of the first hotspot states in the country, and my family and I were forced to go into quarantine. At first, the isolation of the lockdown did not affect me as much as it did to others I knew. While the days of

quarantine dragged on, I felt myself dreaming of the day I could return back to South Korea. The only thing I could cling onto was my priceless memories I had made overseas, making me appreciate how good I had it before the pandemic began.

The death toll kept rising in America, and I almost convinced myself that going back to Seoul would be near impossible. Continuing to feel hopeless, I realized sitting around and succumbing to the grey cloud hanging over my head wasn't going to bring me any closer to where I wanted to be. So, I took it upon myself to start doing the things I had put off for a long time. I started to read novels I had procrastinated reading, I turned my stories into scripts, and I committed to exercising every day. By doing the things I loved most, I distracted my mind from the pain and loneliness I was drenched in for quite some time and reinvented myself. Soon, South Korea quickly became one of the most responsive countries to act on keeping the virus isolated. By the end of April, Korea only had about ten cases per week. The country began opening their doors again, and I received news from my school that I was accepted into the fall semester. I cried profusely the moment I read the email, screaming with joy.

Even though I had to fight through a very dark time in my life, I was thankful to myself that I put the time in to focus on me. The freedom of unlimited time allowed me to do things I couldn't do if I was attending school or going to work. This experience taught me that it's the littlest moments that count most in life, and we have to keep believing in miracles. I grew to treasure quarantine because my parents and I were able to stay safe and healthy as the rest of the world struggled through the horrors of a deadly virus. It's depressing to live through a year where Covid-19, police brutality, and political tensions have infected our world at such high levels. Although these past six months have been traumatizing for most, I am thankful that I had the

opportunity to take a step back, allowing me to repaint the picture of my life with a bigger brush and brighter colors.