

Interview with: Christopher Donahue Interviewed

by: Purlz (LaCole Purley)

Purley: We are now recording....I am Purlz, also known as LaCole Purley from fall of 2020 honors oral history class. This is for the capturing quarantine student life during a pandemic project. I am currently recording in St. Louis, Missouri.

Donahue: My narrator is Christopher Donahue....from Chicago, Illinois.

Purley: His date of birth is December 2020 [My mistake. I meant to say 2000]. He started his years at Columbia in 2019. With a major in filmmaking and a minor that has not been decided yet. His place of birth has been in Maryland. Been raised in La Crosse, Wisconsin. His mother's year of birth is 1961. Place of birth, Cleveland, Ohio. His father's year of birth and place of birth is 1960 in Winona, Minnesota. So Chris, what are your preferred pronouns?

Donahue: He/his

Purley: How do you self identify

Donahue: Um...How is... What are we supposed to say for this question?

Purley: Male, female, binary-

Donahue: Male. Thank you. Yeah.

Purley: No problem. What is your earliest memory?

Donahue: Oh, my earliest memory. Okay, so I'm, I'm in my old house, my old apartment, which is in Darmstadt Germany...And I'm probably like around two or three years old, none of that. I don't have any like time bearing on any of that time. But yeah, probably two or three years old and I just remember like..um..coming out into the hallway next to our bathroom. Um, which like went to the bedrooms in between, like, the living area and I went up to my mom and I just asked, "Where are we?"...It was very like existential because I just, I don't know. That's just the first thing I remember asked. I remember asking my mom, "Where are we," and then she told me where we lived. And I was like, oh, and then I told her I wanted chicken nuggets for dinner.

Purley: What was your favorite movie or TV show to watch growing up?

Donahue: Oh man, to watch growing up...I watched....I watched a lot of Disney movies, but I, my favorite movie as a kid. And I think it just, it is now one of my favorite movies as well. Um, is the Polar Express. I love the Polar Express. A lot of people think it's like scary

37 or weird, but I don't know. It's like one of, it is my favorite Christmas movie. And it's like probably
38 my third favorite movie ever. Definitely favorite movie from when I was a kid.

39 Purley: What were your dreams for the future, when you were a child?

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41 Donahue: Oh man, when I was young and I'm considering young before like 16. (Scoffs) I
42 always thought I was going to be a scientist, specifically a zoologist. So I wanted to like study
43 animals and stuff like that, because I really liked animals and I like nature. And that's what I
44 wanted to be until I realized I don't want to sit in the office and do science all the time.

45 Purley: Who were your favorite teachers?

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47 Donahue: Oh man, I had a lot of, I was really lucky I had a lot of great teachers, growing up,
48 umm, in elementary school. I would probably say my teacher. Mr. Graham, he actually he lives
49 pretty close to me, so I see him walking every once in a while. He was just very, very nice. And
50 a very, umm, like down to earth cool person and he taught us a lot about a lot of cool stuff. He
51 was also from Alaska and he liked Bob Dylan. Those are the only things that I remember about
52 him. And then in middle school, umm, was my teacher Miss Hartman. She always was like
53 really supportive. She ran, um, the like...How would we even call it back then? Like,
54 you're...Like honors classes for middle school, they had a different name then, but it was like
55 honors classes and we only had a couple, but we did one where we had to do National History
56 Day. And that was really great. I had a, I had a cool project and we almost won, but she was
57 always super supportive and then in high school. I had so many great teachers, but one of my,
58 one of my favorite teachers will always be Mr. Beck. He was my art teacher and I didn't have
59 him as a teacher until senior year, because I didn't really get that I was going to be an artist yet
60 until then. Umm, but he was always just really, really cool to talk to. And we were just talked
61 during class and like he's really interested.. interested in some like weird music and weird
62 movies and that's cool. And I, I liked him for that. And he's still a really, really cool guy.

63 Purley: What were your ambitions, when you graduated from high school?

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65 Donahue: Um, well, my ambitions when I graduated from high school. Oh boy, so I knew that I
66 was going to film school at an art school, so I really, at that point, I was like, I didn't know
67 what I wanted to do in film yet. I just knew that I probably wanted to write. And that was pretty
68 much it. I didn't really, because I didn't really have experience in any of the other places other
69 than what I did them for myself. So I didn't really understand what the different roles were
70 because I used, used to do like all of them. Um, so when I first got to

71 film school that kind of figured that out. But before school I was definitely just kind of like I'm
72 gonna make movies. That's it. That's all I knew

73 Purley: Who were some of your mentors growing up?

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75 Donahue: Oh man, um, I mean, my dad, but like, that's just kind of, you know, everybody's got a
76 parent that they really have a mentor. I think just because my dad and I are very similar people.
77 He was always a very big mentor for me and he was..not a filmmaker, but he was a journalist
78 for a long time. So like he does kind of get it at least a little bit. I mean, my mom was too, but
79 my dad and I are just more similar. Another one of my mentors was my great teacher, Mr
80 Martin. He was always, he was my other big high school teacher. And he was just always kind
81 of like he got that I wasn't, you know, like..going to go the normal route as like for high school,
82 high school and everything, because I was, I was smart. I did well in school. But he understood
83 that I wasn't probably going to go to some big school because I just wanted to do other stuff.
84 And that was cool, because a lot of other teachers, they were like disappointed that I wasn't
85 going into like science or history or something. But Mr Martin, even though he was a history
86 teacher. He was always there. I was also his..Like student assistant for two years. So I would
87 like help out in his classes, which usually meant I would just like sit in the back or sit in his
88 office, and do my own homework, because he didn't really asked me to do much. Occasionally,
89 I'd create a test or this one time, he had me, um, he had me sign them up for his like satellite
90 radio, because he needed to re-sign up for it. So he just told me to do it. That was funny. But
91 yeah, probably. Mr. Martin and my dad are big mentors, because I didn't really have a lot of
92 people for film stuff until I went to college.

93 Purley: What were your most memorable, What was your most memorable moment in high
94 school?

95 Donahue: Oh man, you know, I would...That's, that's a hard question. But I think it would
96 probably be when I deejayed this one event in high school. So, um, I don't even remember
97 what it was called because it changed names. It used to be the academic... *academic PEP*
98 *assembly*, but it changed names, so I don't even know what it's called. Now, and I didn't.
99 When I was in high school, either..But I somebody asked me to deejay because I had
100 deejayed for an event, earlier that year. And I was like, "sure." And they just said, "okay, all
101 you need is your computer and we'll give you a table." And I did that. And then a whole bunch
102 of my friends actually like came and sat around the deejay table with me. And we were just
103 like hanging out. And I was like, putting on songs for the entire gymnasium, like, you know, like
104 you're just hanging out with your buddies and it was a really good time and then, you know, I
105 just had a lot of people coming up and talking to

106 me and thinking that I was like, cool. And it made me feel like..I don't know, popular for the first
107 time in high school. I wasn't a very, like it wasn't that I was unpopular. I had a lot of friends, but
108 it just made me like...Feel cool that I had this whole table of people around me, and then we
109 did awards and I got my English Student of the Year award that same day, and I was, I was
110 pumped about that because it was from one of, like, my favorite teachers and I was just like,
111 oh, that's, that's sweet.

112 Purley: Let's transition to your college years. Why did you choose your major?

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114 Donahue: Well, it's kind of a, it's a combination of things. I always really liked movies. I grew up
115 on movies. I didn't really, I mean that there were a couple shows that I watched as a kid, but I
116 really grew up on movies. And a lot of weird movies too because my parents were, I don't
117 know, different they're also really old. No offense to my parents, but like they're older than a lot
118 of my friends' parents. So it's just like there's kind of a disconnect there. Um, and what really
119 brought me to film in the end was I liked photography. I'd gotten a camera probably when I
120 turned around 15 for like Christmas and my birthday. Because they're right next to each other
121 and I've gotten really into photography over the past few years before college, and I've always
122 been into writing. I was in like third grade..Or something. When they did this thing called
123 "Young authors" and basically you would write like a little tiny book and you'd bring it. And
124 you'd show it to all these other kids that wrote little books. And I did that for a couple years, and
125 I was just always talented at writing throughout school so I was like... well photography and
126 writing. If you put them together, you either get photo-journalism or film, and I thought film was
127 way cooler, so I did that.

128 Purley: Why did you decide to attend Columbia College Chicago?

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130 Donahue: Um, well, I had a whole bunch of schools that I put out applications for, but a lot of
131 them, I didn't really get into because I was applying to film school and I had no film..real
132 because..I didn't realize I was going to do film until I was probably 17 years old and film schools
133 don't like that. And I was going to try to go to Northwestern and it got waitlisted, so, um, but
134 Columbia actually sent me an email, probably around Christmas of the year before freshman
135 year, so my senior year of high school and they sent me an email saying, "hey, apply to our
136 school with this fast application." And I did that. I put in like the most basic information like my
137 name and eventually I got it like an email from them. Probably a week later saying you've been
138 accepted, and I was like oh my god it was the first school that I had actually gotten accepted to
139 which was really cool. Mostly just because it was early in the season it was probably still in
140 December. And I ended up touring here the next month in January, on my, on my break. And I
141 loved it. I loved all the facilities that we had. I

142 liked that it was right in downtown Chicago, that like video that they showed us of all the cool
143 film stuff in the film cage, and everything was super cool. Like, just everything down in the
144 media production center is amazing and I was like this place seems cool and it's also like this
145 is an art school. And it's right next to a giant art museum with another art school attached to it.
146 I was really interested in being in a community of artists as opposed to just like a regular
147 school that had an arts program.

148 Purley: What other programs at Columbia, do you have an interest in?

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150 Donahue: Um, So originally, I had had an interest in the stage combat program, which is kind
151 of loosely related to both the theater and film programs..Um, but once everything went online,
152 I've gotten to my first actual (Shouted) STAGE COMBAT CLASS! And it was really weird to do
153 online and I didn't really like it. So I, I decided to drop that class. And now I'd always kind of had
154 an interest in radio. My dad used to do radio. He was actually a radio show host and everything
155 for a while. And I thought that was really cool and I had done speaking stuff in high school like
156 forensics and I did radio speaking. So either radio or VoiceOver things that really interest me
157 especially just the voiceover minor because it's so... I can kind of use that for anything.

158 Purley: How have you continued to pursue your dreams in college?

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160 Donahue: Wow. Well, I try to make my projects like...Feel like me, even though if the project is
161 supposed to have some, you know, these guidelines or whatever I want to still make it feel like
162 it's my voice because that's something that I always want to bring into anything that I make, is
163 my personal voice and style...And I guess just like getting here and like my dream was to be in
164 film school. I didn't really know what was going to come after that. I mean, I've..I wanted to
165 make movies and I've been making movies. So I guess I am already living the dream. At least
166 a little bit.

167 Purley: Describe what you usually do every day after classes.

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169 Donahue: After classes. Well, most of our... we're talking like now or before the
170 pandemic?

171 Purley: Both

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173 Donahue: Well, before the pandemic I, you know, walk home. Most of my..classes were in the
174 11th floor building, which is like four blocks from where I live. So I'd walk back. I'd usually eat
175 dinner, which is I make dinner because I have a kitchen in my apartment. So I always make
176 dinner for myself and sometimes my roommate now...I eat dinner. I might, I would probably just
177 go and hang out in my friend's apartment, my friend. That's not my

178 roommate, I would probably hang out there because we were just like go there, listen to music,
179 watch a movie, or whatever, with a whole bunch of other.. of our other friends. Now after
180 classes, depending on which ones. Sometimes I'll take a nap...And then I'll eat dinner, watch
181 something on TV, you know, maybe if Mads' watching TV or something, I'll watch something
182 with them in the main room....Or....That's pretty much it. That's kind of all I do. I mean, maybe
183 I'd sit and watch a different TV show in my own bedroom or watch YouTube or something...and
184 or do homework. I guess there's homework that fits in somewhere in there too.

185 Purley: What do you usually do over the weekends?
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187 Donahue: I'm over the weekends, I try. Well last semester I would, it would be pretty much the
188 same thing that I would do after classes, except we just do that all day. Maybe we'd go out in
189 the park or something. Read, go walk somewhere on weekends. Now, I try to get with my
190 friends usually virtually. Well, I mean, we can't really get together at all. Now, I mean, I used to
191 have a friend who lived in Chicago, but she moved out so, um, but yeah man. I'll probably just
192 like... we might play a video game or something, or will try to find some of our friends that will
193 play online, just so we can talk to people and I always talk to my parents. I always call my
194 parents on Sunday.

195 Purley: Now let's transition to talking about more of your life pre-pandemic in 2019 and
196 beginning of 2020. What activities were you involved in outside of school before this
197 pandemic?

198 Donahue: You know, not much. I tried to help on a few film sets I'm in, during the first
199 semester. But I was kind of just testing the waters in Columbia. I didn't really know quite what I
200 was going to be into so I didn't get into a lot...Um, I went to a lot of film or not film shows, while
201 I did go to a lot of them showing us to. I went to a lot of film shows and theater showings at the
202 school. A lot of, I had a couple theater major friends that still do. And I would go to their shows
203 whenever they were having one, or my two roommates last year were comedy majors, so I
204 would go and see comedy shows pretty frequently, usually every Friday.

205 Purley: Did you enjoy them?
206

207 Donahue: Oh yeah, well it wasn't usually them performing. No offense to them, but like to it
208 was usually just wherever.. whatever they wanted to see which was usually pretty good. We
209 went to a show at "The Annoyance" every week. That was free. So it wasn't necessarily that
210 good, but it was fun to just go to and like screw around with your friends, you know.

211 Purley: How was your relationship with your parents before this pandemic?

212 Donahue: Good. I mean, it was interesting because it was the first time, you know, I've been
213 away for a long period of time. I mean, now it's been longer, but like I hadn't seen them for so
214 long, because I never really, you know, I'd worked at summer camp but they were 45 minutes
215 away. They... It wasn't like they were that far. And my mom did work at summer camp for a
216 few years. My dad helped out so..And other than that I didn't really go anywhere for extended
217 periods of time, you know, there were like school trips or scouting trips or wherever, but like,
218 most of the time, I was around my parents, and we got along well. I mean, you know, before
219 that summer, before you go to college. It's always like a strained relationship with your
220 parents because you're like...I really just want to leave because I've never left my, like, I just
221 want to leave this dinky town and go somewhere else and then, once I got to college, we had
222 a pretty good relationship. Like I said, we called every week and they came up to visit for
223 parents' weekend, and I went home for Christmas. And we had a good time. And, you know,
224 we took a trip up north. During that time and then that was pretty much it. Then I went back, I
225 went back home, or I went back to school and then a couple months later, the pandemic hit,
226 so it was really not that much time. And we had a good relationship. I mean, we called every
227 week, we watched movies together, you know, we did stuff, we hung out. We did the whole
228 Christmas thing, you know, that's a lot. That's a lot for any family to do without, you know,
229 tearing each other's heads off. We did great. We had a good time.

230 Purley: When did you first become aware of the coronavirus?

231 Donahue: Oh man, I think I remember learning about it back in like January, I think it was.
232 Yeah. It was while I was still home. It was while I was still home with my parents. And you
233 know, we talked about it a little bit and we're like, oh, you know, we'll see how it goes. We'll
234 just... we'll be fine. It wasn't really like a topic of conversation. Really, it was like...how you
235 bring up that there was a fire downtown or something, you know, not like, you know, a global
236 pandemic and then I remember when it really hit. I was coming out of a theater show with my
237 friend, Amanda, and like so, as if it was a show. So we had all of our phones off. And when
238 we came out, there was like seven, so many pieces of news. That was the day that, um, that
239 Tom Hanks got coronavirus, um, with his wife in Australia. There were like a couple other,
240 there were like the first cases in our area and things like that. And really, like, oh my god, it's
241 real, it's like something that's actually happening. And that was when it really kicked in and
242 like, okay, maybe this is something that we really got to worry about.

243 Purley: What details did you first hear about the virus?

244 Donahue: I knew it's like, I knew it's like SARS, because it's actually a version of SARS,
245 which I don't really know much about. That's just like one thing that I remembered about it
246 and then it was like, respiratory, so it was attacking the lungs, and it was from China and
247 Wohan. And that was kind of it. We didn't really learn much about it until way later. I that was
248 kind of all the details we got.

249 Purley: How would you describe your mental health pre-pandemic?

250 Donahue: I was actually having a really good time because I was just hanging out with my
251 friends, you know, it was the winter time kind of ending. We were coming out of the long cold
252 winters that come through Chicago and we were having a good time, you know, it was just us
253 kind of hanging out, doing our normal thing. That 70 show style. I don't know, hanging out
254 down the street, except it's down the hall. Um, but I was kind of, I was doing, I was doing well.
255 School was going well. I hadn't really hit that like mid semester slump yet. I was excited
256 about a lot of my classes. I think I was, you know, doing some of the best I've ever done in
257 terms of mental health.

258 Purley: So moving into spring of 2020 when the shutdown and interruption happened
259 during March. How did the coronavirus interrupt your education?

260 Donahue: Well, I mean, for the first part, we had that like whole three week break. You
261 know, I was in my, I was headed to my movement in class when they're like "surprise. We're
262 going to not have class for the next three weeks." And we, it was really awkward going to
263 that class because nobody really wanted to be there. And then we left halfway through,
264 because there was actually like.. There was a problem with like a gas leak in the building. So
265 we left class early and that was my last in person class for the rest of that semester. And
266 then we took that big long break, which was awkward. It just felt weird not having class, but I
267 knew it was important to get stuff set up, and it gave me a chance to get back home and get
268 acquainted and, you know, see some of my friends and everything and then class started up
269 again and it was just awkward. Nobody really knew how the zoom thing went. And the
270 teachers were still figuring it out and students didn't really quite know how to respond and I
271 had one really big class with like 150 people. It was at 6:30 at night. So it was like I was just,
272 such a weird class to have on zoom and you know people trying to figure out how to run
273 videos and it was a mess. But, I mean, we got through it. I took, like a couple of my classes
274 as pass/fail, just because I didn't. It was just so much of a stressful time that I didn't want to
275 put all of my effort into getting a perfect grade in these classes. So I made those ones
276 pass/fail. And that's kind of it. I mean, I just felt really unmotivated. For some of my classes,
277 especially my movement class which is just so hard to do over zoom.

278 Purley: Describe your transition to remote learning.

279 Donahue. It was interesting. Yeah, like it, I didn't quite know what to think of it like, you know,
280 the time you first join a zoom meeting is so kind of impending because you're not quite sure
281 how it's going to turn out, and I had a class like 9am on Monday mornings. It was so
282 awkward because I had been used to doing at least video calls because I did them for where
283 I worked at the time. We did video calls like several times a week, but doing it for a class just
284 felt so different, and especially where that class was a lot of lecture. It just felt weird to not be
285 able to like talk. And then of course there were technical difficulties and.. It's just, I love the in
286 classroom dynamics so much. I love to be able to like raise my hand and talk with other
287 students and have a real conversation and get a discussion going. And you just really can't
288 do that in the same way online, there's, you know, delay with the speakers and people don't
289 really want to talk. And people just don't. It feels awkward because you don't want to cut
290 anybody off and then yeah, you

291 just end up kind of only responding to the teacher and not really talking to anybody else, and
292 that was like it just messed me up. I didn't quite feel like I had the same excitement to go to
293 class when I would be if it was a class, full of people, especially my friends.

294 Purley: How did the announcement that college will close impact your living situation?

295 Donahue: So that week that it ended up happening that they told us that we were going to
296 move out or not move out. That we were going to have no class for three weeks. I talked
297 with my parents and they just said, "Okay, we'll come down and pick you up and we'll move
298 you out. Move out you and Matt," who's my now roommate, but we live, we live close to
299 each other. So we figured we could all just take the same, we could just both ride up
300 because we were just taking our clothes and stuff because we figured we'd be back at least
301 at some point. Um, so yeah, we went. We drove back home. And that was pretty much it.
302 Like I was back home for the next five months or so, however long it was.

303 Purley: What precautions have your parents taken to stay safe from COVID-19?

304 Donahue: Oh my, my parents are pretty safe. I mean, they were and they were even really
305 safe before my area got hit really hard. They're getting hit, hit very, very hard right now. My
306 mom is like..like several of her co-workers are out sick. And they live in, like a, they work in
307 like a tiny office of maybe 10 people and there's like two people out sick, so it's pretty crazy. I
308 mean, they've taken everything online. But my, my parents are very safe, my dad and my
309 mom. They both work online and they have since the beginning of the pandemic. I mean, my
310 mom had to go to a couple board meetings in person, but they were all in masks and far
311 away from everybody else. And. They've been really safe like my mom will go to the store
312 and she'll have her mask and everything on. Um, she washes her mask. Every time she
313 uses it, and she'll like even she'll even take a shower and wash all of your clothes after she
314 comes back from the store because that's kind of the only place that she goes. And yeah, we
315 just had our masks on at all times. I mean, not like when at home but there was a time when
316 they thought that my dad was sick. They didn't think it was COVID he was just sick, but we're
317 like, well, we should point in any way. So we had him go in one part of the house and then,
318 me and my mom stay in the other part. He just stayed in their bedroom and my mom stayed
319 downstairs, um, but yeah, they were really, really safe.

320 Purley: How often did you pay attention to the news, since this pandemic started?

321 Donahue: I, you know, I've always been a very news conscious person. I always have news
322 alerts on my phone, but I try to do more than that, like if there's a story that I think is
323 interesting or hear about something else or some other avenue like social media. I will look
324 into it further. And when I was at home when I was, you know, during the, during the
325 lockdown and everything. I would watch the news, almost every day because my parents,
326 watch the news during dinner. And my parents will just cook dinner for everybody, which
327 was, you know, me at them, but we would, they would have the news running and it would
328 be both the local news and ABC news that with whatever David Mere every night. So we
329 watched it all the time. I wouldn't always be there just because

330 I was, you know, doing one thing or another. I had class but I, whenever I was eating dinner
 331 with them. I would watch the news, which was almost all the time.

332 Purley: What are some coping skills you use to deal with anxiety from the virus?

333 Donahue: Um, you know, over the summer I actually got really into online gaming with to my
 334 good friends from here, Columbia. I mean, it wasn't really about the game that we were
 335 playing it was just like to be the ability to talk with people and since it was only like two of us
 336 sometimes or herbs like three of us sometimes four of us. It was just a nice way to like relax
 337 it would always be at the end of the day after I had been doing classes or whatever and we
 338 just stay up and play online video games for a couple hours and just it was nice to talk to
 339 people and i mean i would occasionally get to see some of my other friends but that was
 340 really what got me through it, at least for part of it was this ability to like de stress at the end
 341 of the day and just, you know, play dumb video games with your friends, I guess, and do stuff
 342 like that and listen to music while you do it and have a good time.

343 Purley: Now let's dive a little bit more into the relocation part. Where did you relocate to?

344 Donahue: Um, so I moved from my apartment here in Chicago back home to La
 345 Crosse, Wisconsin. More specifically, French Island, Wisconsin.

346 Purley: How is learning in person, different from learning virtually?

347 Donahue: It's really that, that dynamic of not being able to have that full discussion, like you
 348 would always be able to and everything just seems to move slower on zoom. You're always
 349 waiting for something or waiting for something else to happen and it's so awkward and
 350 especially when people are presenting over zoom, especially when it's like students. I have a
 351 couple classes where like each student will have to show their project or whatever. And I
 352 don't know, it's so hard to focus on just everybody giving their project and it feels like people
 353 would be paying much more attention if it was in the classroom and then you just kind of feel
 354 bad because like you feel like, oh, maybe I'm not being paid attention to, or I'm not getting all
 355 my full attention to the other people in class. And then you feel bad for the teachers, you
 356 know, because you know that you know everybody's looking at their phones or doing
 357 whatever once you become like that one second too boring. Everybody's just doing
 358 something else. And there's not really a way to avoid that and it's just kind of inevitable,
 359 which is it just makes it tough. It makes everything tough.

360 Purley: How did your protocol change during lockdown?

361 Donahue: I mean, yeah, it was, everything was different. I mean the the school housing
 362 entirely had to change like that you could only see certain people and I'm like, certain
 363 buildings were changed at different times where they'd be open and somebody amenities in
 364 this building were closed like, we have to like living spaces that are public that everybody
 365 can go to and those were closed off. And just everything like even moving out you could
 366 only have people in for a certain amount of time. And then, yeah,

367 back home, everything was different. You had to wear your mask to the store. There are
368 people, they would like. There were security guards outside. Most of our stores and we don't
369 live in like an area where that's normal, either for like big stores or small stores.
370 Regardless, it's like it was a security guard at every store. Making sure people were wearing
371 their masks, or at least like a greeter that could, especially in the beginning it kind of slowed
372 down now. But, and then there were whole like bar regulations. And my hometown is a big
373 bar town. So that was a big deal that they couldn't go to the bars.
374 They closed all of them. And people really mad.

375 Purley: How does social interactions change for you when students went under
376 lockdown?

377 Donahue: It was so different, because I could only, I mean I moved home pretty early in the,
378 in the semester. So I really couldn't see any of those other friends and I really didn't see a lot
379 of my friends. I mean, I think I saw a couple of them like right when we came home. Because
380 I knew that I was safe and I had quarantined after I had come home and there was nothing in
381 our entire county yet and so we were at least stay for a little while and I saw them a couple
382 times and then I saw him into the summer but like interaction with students was hard. I only
383 saw Matt a couple times in person, because he lived so close, but everything else was just
384 online and through emails and texts and things like that you couldn't really have that like nice
385 conversation with the person sitting next to you after class or whatever, you know, I had a lot
386 of friends and a lot of my classes that I didn't really get to spend enough time with which was
387 pretty sad. I mean, I had some connections that I think would have been more fruitful and I
388 would have stayed better connected to those people had I been able to spend the fall
389 semester with them.

390 Purley: Now let's dive more into.. to describe what you have been doing under
391 quarantine.

392 Donahue: I'm, you know, I'm just trying to do the best that I can. I try. Whenever I go up for
393 groceries. I try to only go out every once in a while like less than once a week to go out and
394 get food. Always wear my mask. I, you know, got my hand sanitizer and everything and I
395 haven't really been seeing anyone else. I see Matt, I see my friend, Michelle, that's kind of it.
396 I don't really see anybody else occasionally. I used to see my friend, Amanda, but she
397 looked by herself. So it's just kind of, if I was quarantining with just me and Matt and Amanda
398 was quarantining by herself. It was kind of, you know, that was always safe at least. But I
399 don't, I don't really get to, you know, see everybody like I usually do, and I just stay in for the
400 most part, I know a lot of the times last year, I would go out, I'd go around and walk places or
401 go out to eat a lot more than I do this year. It just kind of feels like you know you just stay in
402 your apartment, my, my roommate Matt told me today. I paid, you know, all this money for my
403 apartment. I might as well use it at this point because we're just kind of stuck in there and we
404 spend, we are getting our money's worth. By spending time in the apartment, that's for sure.

405 Purley: How has the coronavirus changed your regular habits?

406 Donahue: I feel like my sleep schedule is just really different. Now, because I don't have that
407 like normal interaction time with people anymore and I don't feel the need, like this also
408 maybe just because I'm in an apartment with fewer people last year, or this year rather. I'm
409 just like, I don't run on a schedule. That's normal. Like I'll sleep into noon, almost every day.
410 Like I sleep in pretty late. And I'll stay up late. I'll just do whatever because it's like, I know
411 that I don't really have a reason to get up like there's not really a place to go. And it's not like
412 I have to get ready for anything. I have to roll out of bed and go over to my desk and that's
413 pretty much it. It's like completely changed my routine and I don't feel like also, I don't know, I
414 feel like I don't have to get ready. In the same way, because I'm just getting ready to look at a
415 screen I'm not getting ready. Like I was actually going out to like see real people and I
416 wouldn't really get ready for one in person class, either because it was like after I'd already
417 had two classes for the day that were online. I just yet, kind of, basically all I do is sit at
418 home. That's really my new routine.

419 Purley: What were the things that you disliked about quarantine?

420 Donahue: Just really not being able to see my friends. I like thrive off of that kind of social
421 energy. I'm not a very extroverted person but I like being in a situation where I can just like
422 sit back and relax, and have a good laugh, and have a good time with my friends. No matter
423 what we're doing. I think that's just something that we all really missed during the
424 quarantine. And that's something that I've really disliked. I also just don't like how going
425 everywhere has to be like, you have to be so prepared now. You can't just like say, hey, do
426 you want to go meet me somewhere. I'm going to go do this thing you have to like plan
427 things and a lot of things just aren't even open anymore and it has to be such like a planned
428 out endeavor. You can't just be spontaneous. There's not a lot of spontaneity anymore.

429 Purley: What did you like about staying indoors all the time during quarantine?

430 Donahue: I do like, that I can just hang out a lot of the time, and it can be really cozy. Like
431 when I was at home, I could just spend a lot of time in bed. I didn't really feel the need, like I
432 had to go out somewhere. Or even here I can spend time in my bed and just can I kind of
433 hang out. Or I can just, there's no shame in having a blanket on my legs during class and
434 being like, nice and warm and cozy. I can just kind of be really relaxed and chilled all the
435 time. And I'm under the rocks and a chill person. So it feels good to just kind of let out even
436 when I have to like be in class. Some classes, I'll just take in bed. I'll be like laying down with
437 my camera off like, like this half asleep and hopefully they just don't call me.

438 Purley: How do you plan to navigate in your industry during these difficult times?

439 Donahue: Oh, man. It's so hard. I've been like waiting on trying to talk to this guy. That I was
440 supposed to get an internship with. And it was like, okay, we'll talk when the pandemic slows
441 down. And that hasn't happened yet. So we haven't talked in a while, I should send that guy
442 an email, but like, yeah, it's so hard to navigate because so many things are in person and
443 even through class. It's so hard, because we're supposed to

444 film. I was supposed to shoot two films this semester. And I've shot one. Why I didn't shoot
445 any of it? I just collected footage from other people. And like asked people around to do some
446 filming for me because I couldn't get any of the things that I wanted, because I wasn't home.
447 And then the other one is like, I'm not even doing anything I have to like hop on a zoom call
448 and tell them how things should be set up and then leave because I can't go there in person
449 to like design everything. And then my other class. I'm just filming it like this weekend. I'm
450 filming a film with me and my roommate and those are the only characters that appear like in
451 person. And I'll we also have to do all the camera work and audio work and lighting all
452 ourselves. And then I have two people that are appearing like on screen like on ones that
453 zoom video and ones, just like in the news in the background. So it's like you have to shake,
454 shake, you have to like shift your whole thinking in like how you even want to approach
455 anything in film now because I mean, yeah, the like huge multi billion dollar sets are going to
456 just have all their actors and crew quarantine for two weeks and have them tested every 12
457 minutes but like when you're working in college. This is kind of all you got, and like the
458 school has a lot of requirements to that you can't even film with real people unless you're like
459 all masked up and distanced which is just impossible and like you can't go to other people's
460 places because that's against all the like COVID regulations here and at school, too. So it's
461 like you either have to do with people that you live with your like, significant other. Or family
462 and usually unless those are all the same, like you're all in one place, they still won't allow it.
463 So it's, it's pretty tight and it's pretty tough to navigate this whole thing in the film industry.

464 Purley: How has quarantine affected your mental health?

465 Donahue: It's been a lot. I'm doing better now than I was a couple months ago, like over the
466 summer probably in June when it was like we have like things were spiking all over the
467 country and then everything happened with Black Lives Matter. And that was just really
468 stressful for everybody in the country. And then, you know, it was just a very, very stressful
469 time and I really hadn't gotten out much. I was kind of locked in and just kind of caught in this
470 really tough cycle. It was after school ended, but I didn't really feel like I had anything to do
471 and I was just spending all the time around my parents. And it was just kind of driving me
472 nuts. But eventually, like I just kind of made it out of it. I figured out, I figured out different
473 ways to do things, you know, I would try to just get out of the house and talk to my other
474 friends that I knew were kept safe and my one friend has a boat. So he was coming safe and
475 we would just go out on the boat. And that was like something to do. And just like trying to
476 hang out with friends in a safe way and going like hiking and being outside was really, really
477 helpful. But at that point in quarantine like during probably late May, early June. I just didn't
478 really know what to do. Anytime I just kind of felt like stuck, and I didn't have an inspiration,
479 either. That was the worst part like as an artist. I wanted to like be able to do things and be
480 able to like make things, but I just felt stuck. And thankfully, things are a lot better now.

481 Purley: Who experienced these changes with you?

482 Donahue: You know, I mean, I've gone through it with a lot of my friends, either the ones
483 from Columbia because they know the Columbia experience or the ones from back home,
484 who just, you know, live there and realized how things were going there and how they are
485 now and which is crazy. But I think it was my parents that really went through a lot of it with
486 me as well, but in a different way because it affected them in a very different way because
487 you know they're adults. I mean, I'm an adult, too, but they had their lives together a little bit
488 more, and it's a little less uncertain for them. They get to do all their work online. My dad
489 does all of his work from home, he can do. Everything because all of his job can be done
490 from home because his co-workers are in a different state. So like, it doesn't really matter for
491 him and my mom can do all of her work from home. Anyways, occasionally, she has to like
492 drive around, but that's not like a big deal. So it didn't really affect them as much and they
493 walk all the time, they will go on walks like several times a day. And you know, I think it was
494 really just my friends that kind of went through the same thing. There were a couple, my
495 friends, Annie and Sophia. And when that we just really didn't want to be around our parents
496 because their parents were home all the time now. And, um, Annie, eventually, she moved
497 out. She moved to Minneapolis, or, I guess, St. Paul, and then put when and Sophia were
498 like me. They were stuck at home and when and Sophia. It was their senior summer so like
499 this time when you're supposed to be like having a blast doing whatever and you're like
500 waiting so long to get out of your house. They were just stuck in their house all the time and I
501 think we kind of really bonded through that we had a lot of, you know, we would video chat
502 every once in a while, we had an art night where we all just got together and made some art.
503 And that was, that was good because it wasn't like my art artist friends and that was nice to
504 kind of get that. I don't know, get that same energy that I would kind of get at Columbia, just
505 in a little bit of a different way.

506 Purley: Let's talk more about summer of 2020. How is this summer different from the one
507 earlier ones?

508 Donahue: Oh man, everything was different. I feel like, you know, the summers before I'd be
509 spending like every single day hanging out with my friends are like, doing something new or
510 interesting or dumb, like usual. You know, we'd go out and go hanging out in the woods and
511 we go out on the boat. Or we go like to the beach or something and we go hiking right like.
512 Or we just sit in somebody's basement, play video games for hours. You know, we like,
513 would do things all the time and just go to people's houses, you know, play darts. Do
514 whatever and then this summer was just like everything was gone. It was nothing, nothing at
515 all was the same. I mean, we still did those things on rare occasion, but we just couldn't
516 because you know so many different things were happening and it was. Yeah, it didn't, it
517 didn't feel the same. I mean, I still got out. But when you got out. It was like a treat. It was like
518 an occasion you would look forward to those few days where you got to go out and then
519 towards the end, I did get some semi-normal back. I mean, it was still crazy but I went with
520 my friends, Garrett and Maya, up to my cabin, she has a cabin up north. Up north in
521 Wisconsin. And we went there for a while. It was almost a week. It was like it was probably at
522 least five days, maybe, maybe it was a week. I don't even know anymore. Um, but that was a
523 really

524 good time. We just went up there and hung out and we got to go out on the lake and go go
525 fishing. And while I didn't finish. But I went swimming and like out on the kayak at night. It
526 was just really beautiful, they kind of get out into nature after being stuck home. Because this
527 place is really, really out the middle of nowhere like dirt roads in the middle of the forest. Kind
528 of like you don't have neighbors that aren't like a mile away. Kind of stuff like that. I mean,
529 there were a couple houses down on the cabin, but for the most part, nobody was there. So it
530 was really, really nice to be out there and you get to hear the loons at night. And loons if
531 you've never heard them are the greatest sound to hear at like three in the morning. There
532 are people that will disagree with me on that specifically our friend who showed up with us,
533 who had never heard them before, and was sleeping in the like living room and got freaked
534 out by the sound of balloons, but I think they're really, really cool. And then after that I went
535 on a trip out west with my parents to like a couple national parks, so that was cool. But again,
536 you had to like we had masks there and everything like we were trying to make sure we
537 would only stay in like places by ourselves and we would have our masks on. If you're in
538 busy areas which is tough when you're up in the mountains and hiking. That's crazy. But like
539 that was at least a way to get out. It was a way to get away from you know the cycle that we
540 all kind of got stuck in

541 Purley: How have you responded to the Black Lives Matter movement?

542 Donahue: I was, you know, it was really hard for me at first because it was not hard for me to
543 identify with it because I was like this is something that I'm very passionate about and I've
544 been passionate about since, you know, years before and this has been a long time coming.
545 This larger kind of growth of the movement. It was just hard for me to see that nothing was
546 getting done again like we were doing so much and working so hard. I, personally, I went up
547 to St. Paul, Minnesota, with my friend and he lives there. And I went for about a week and
548 like marched and protested with all all this huge group of people every single day in like the
549 super hot sun and it was like, it was powerful to be a part of something, but it was also just
550 so heartbreaking to hear a lot of the stories that you know. It's sad when like it's a story
551 you've never heard before. But you already know the ending that like this is going to end up
552 poorly somebody's going to lose their son or their daughter. Or their brother or their friend
553 and it's like this just keeps happening. And we try to do stuff about it. And then we get, you
554 know, punished for it. And we try to make a difference and nothing is getting done. And
555 we're getting called radical for, you know, wanting what's best for everybody. And that was, it
556 was really tough for me at first it was just like it especially before I went in protest personally.
557 I just felt so like helpless. You know I can. You can share as many posters, you want to
558 Instagram and you can donate however much money, but it's not going to really get anything
559 done until you've got boots on the ground, you know, you're not going to. You got to really
560 go out there and do it yourself until you really feel like you're actually making a difference.

561 Purley: What do you think is the proper or best way to protest?

562 Donahue: You know, I think you have to, you have to actively disturb the institution that
563 you're trying to bother right like. So I used to work for Green Peace, which is like a big
564 grassroots environmental organization and they're notorious for like doing these big shows of
565 protest. Where they'll actively get involved and get in the way and be like a thorn in the side
566 of the industry that they're trying to bother. So, for example, like the, there's a giant port in
567 Texas. We're like all of the oil gets shipped out from the US and like hundreds of oil tankers
568 are passing through your day. And basically what these people did is they went off the bridge
569 and they like repelled off the bridge on a rope and they hung down so that Tall Ships couldn't
570 go through and they like stop shooting for an entire day. And that's like something that's, I
571 mean, you can't do those things all the time. And those people definitely went to jail for a
572 small amount of time Greenpeace has good lawyers. But like you have to really get in the
573 way and be there in person. I feel you have to do things that are going to really make a
574 difference. You can sign as many petitions as you want. Or organized local meetings or
575 groupings or standing around in a public park but until you really disturb the thing that you're
576 trying to protest, it's not going to make a difference for them, you can stand in the park. Any
577 day you can stand apart for with 2000 people, but unless you're actively getting in the way of
578 what they're doing and making them either lose money or lose productivity. You're really not
579 going to make a difference to them, even if it is the government and you have to like it to
580 threaten their voting bloc, which you have to get so many people involved that it's not always
581 worth it to go that way. Unless you got a lot of money, but then it's not really protest, it is it
582 that it's lobbying and that's apparently legal.

583 Purley: What are your media news sources?

584 Donahue: Well, I use my phone and my phone has a... It has a news app, but that news app
585 is like brought in through several different news sources. It's usually like ABC, AP
586 occasionally, Reuters, BBC occasionally and CNN will pop in there, but that's pretty rare. So
587 those are usually where I or sometimes they'll get a Washington Post or New York Times in
588 there too. Depending on the source. So that's, those are kind of my news sources and then
589 of course, you know, I see things on like social media, so like Snapchat and Twitter and
590 Instagram. But like that's not really where I get the information from. That's more of just like
591 how I will be aware of something faster.

592 Purley: How did you feel when you first heard about all the riots citizens held against the
593 police throughout June and July?

594 Donahue: You know, It was really tough for me. I felt, I mean, I was drawn to it in a way I felt
595 that, you know, maybe certain things got out of hand. But I knew because I have a common
596 sense to know that it's not the people that are trying to make a change that are going to end
597 up messing things up. They're not the people that are just going to randomly bash windows.
598 People are going to make change. You're going to actively get involved in the process. Is
599 there a pressing to them and even to the point where people were rioting Target. I felt that
600 was not the worst thing in the world. Because in the end, Target donates so much money to
601 the Minnesota police or the Minneapolis, St. Paul, police department. Like Target is
602 headquartered in Minneapolis and they give a ton of

603 money to the police and Target was also doing a whole bunch of things to not help respond
604 to protesters. So that was something that I didn't really even feel that about and then
605 everything that media coverage was this writing, writing, writing. And I went there and you
606 know there were a couple there was like one gas station that ended up being burned down in
607 like a random neighborhood. Everything was boarded up but it was just boarded up like it
608 wasn't actively broken into all those stores were still a lot of them were still active during the
609 day they would close early. And then even things right, the epicenter of where it happened.
610 Most of those weren't even close. There were a couple buildings that were blocked like
611 boarded up for like maybe a blocker like two blocks like one block in either direction from the
612 cup foods where George Floyd was murdered like, that was only that was really the only stuff
613 that was blocked off and all that stuff was barricaded by the police. Anyway, that was like the
614 area that they were giving them just to be protests. So it really didn't. It was being really,
615 really overblown by the media and I saw that, personally. And that's just always so hard to
616 see because it's like people are going to get this wrong in their heads and it's going to taint
617 their entire idea of this entire movement. Again, that happened, that same thing happened in
618 2016 so it was really hard. It was really hard to see that. And it was like, and it was just tough
619 to see communities that were really torn up about it as well. I mean, Minneapolis was struck
620 really hard and a lot of people just didn't really know what to do. And they were scared, they
621 didn't realize they didn't know if, you know that there is going to be a whole police state. I was
622 there when the National Guard was there. There are people with guns on the streets. And
623 that's scary, like they're just sitting there behind a barbed wire fence with guns. And just like a
624 random street in Minnesota, right, like, that's crazy and they'd be driving around in their big
625 trucks with a whole bunch of people in the back, and there'd be helicopters flying around and
626 stuff. It almost felt like a weird war zone. And it was, it was scary. But I don't know. It was, it
627 tore up a lot of people and it made a lot of people feel really uncomfortable, but that's what it
628 was supposed to do. You got to make people uncomfortable before they change stuff.

629 Purley: What was your response to the killing of George Floyd?

630 Donahue: I was so upset. I remember reading the article on this was, of course, just after
631 Briana Taylor as well. I mean, it was Enema Abrie, that was all so close together. Within a
632 few months in I was just torn up. I remember, I think, was in the back of my parents car we
633 were driving somewhere. And the alert came up on my phone about it, like right away. I'm
634 right, pretty much when it was hitting the news for the first time, before any protests or
635 anything. And it was just so sad. It was just so, so terribly sad. And you know, it's just kind of,
636 it's weird because it's like, it'll come up again and again and again. And it's still every single
637 time, will make me feel like, make my heart sink, a little bit. You know, like it just you just feel
638 off for the rest of the day. It's like, damn it, you know, something so like unnecessary. None
639 of this had to happen. And then, you know, I'm glad that it's making more of a push. For the
640 Black Lives Matter movement and I'm glad. More people are getting involved. I'm just scared
641 of it being the same thing as 2016 we're a whole bunch of people are gonna say. Oh yeah, I
642 was there. I did all this and then they're going to go home and then they're not going to do
643 anything again

644 and everybody's going to forget about it. We already pretty much have here so protest going
645 on in every major city which is weekly, if not daily, but know that they're not going to cover it
646 anymore. It's not interesting.

647 Purley: Let's talk more about Fall of 2020. Why did you decide to return to college
648 during this pandemic?

649 Donahue: Well, I definitely know what I would do with myself if I didn't, I didn't have a job
650 back home and I didn't really want to get one. Just because it was me. The job market was
651 already pretty strapped in La Crosse and I couldn't get a job where I wanted, which was at
652 the news station. They just, they just weren't hiring anybody else because of the pandemic.
653 So it was, it was really hard. But I had or, you know, I had already signed up for classes and
654 everything. And I really wanted to be back here in Chicago. For my classes because I, you
655 know, I thought that, you know, maybe that some of them would be able to open up even in, I
656 mean, a couple months before school when I really made that decision that I was going to go
657 back. I thought things, you know, maybe would open up by the time we got through the
658 semester and they really didn't. We were open for a little while and I mean I had my one in
659 person class. But I really just wanted to be back in this community, even if I couldn't actively
660 participate in it. This much, you know, I wanted to get away from home because it's so long
661 to be stuck with your parents for that long. You know, it's hard to be stuck with anybody for
662 that long. And just to be back in Chicago, where I knew I was going to be with one of my best
663 friends and I was going to be living in a place that was active and interesting and especially
664 after everything that was happening with summer with the protest, I wanted to be here. I
665 wanted to be active in a larger community, which was hard to do from La Crosse.

666 Purley: How did you feel about your first day of the school year?

667 Donahue: You know, it was interesting. I, I think I only had one class and it was, it was the
668 first day. It was Tuesday. And that was when I woke up and it was like 9am or 8:30 or
669 something weird, I think, was 8:30 and it was my stage combat class that I had before. I
670 dropped it. And it was just so awkward because we're trying to do all these like stage
671 combat. It's like theater things and getting, like getting active and it just felt so awkward. It
672 felt like, I was like rehearsing with like a, like an exercise video, but they were real. And it
673 was just super strange and I didn't really know what to think of it, at that point. Yeah, it was
674 awkward. And then I think I took a nap afterwards or something because there was like an
675 830 in the morning class and I was like, I better just take a nap now.

676 Purley: How are you doing in your classes this semester?

677 Donahue: I'm doing all right, you know, there's some, you know, things where it'll just be like,
678 I don't know if I want to put my full effort into this right now because I just..It's so much. It's
679 sometimes, it's not just that it's a lot of homework, but just everything sometimes everything
680 just seems to happen at once. But I'm doing, overall, pretty well. I know that a lot of teachers
681 are changing things and maybe trying to make it

682 more applicable to an online setting. And I think I've, I've done all right with it. I'm definitely
683 doing better than I was at the end of last semester, just with everything that was going on
684 and it made it so hard to focus. I was going through a lot. So now I'm a lot better. And I feel
685 like I just have a better handle on things. I also just feel like I have so much free time
686 like..since I'm out of a job right now. I'm looking for one, but I'm out of a job right now. And if
687 it's just classes and like...Even though I have to do a lot of work for my classes I do have
688 time for them. It's just sometimes, the, the energy to do them doesn't come in the same way
689 that it would, because you just don't have that same cycle when you're in at home all the
690 time. There's like nothing to break the cycle on wanting of your, you know, like I'm going to
691 do homework at this time for this thing for them. It's like it just doesn't work out the same
692 way, and sometimes things fall through. But, I'm, I'm doing well. Like I'm, I'm getting like I
693 think almost all A's in my classes. So it's not like I'm doing poorly, it's just, I don't feel as
694 jazzed about doing homework as I would if I was like, actually, in real classes or especially
695 like projects and things toward it. I wish I could show them to like a real audience that's not
696 virtual.

697 Purley: What has been your experience with hybrid classes?

698 Donahue: So I have one and it's my writing class which it sounds interesting, that a writing
699 class would be in person. But this is one of Columbia's creative communities classes. So it's
700 really focusing on meeting in with different communities that are part of, whether that be your
701 fellow classmates' people that are in your major or just Chicago as a whole, or even places
702 where you're from, or I think people with shared interests. So it's like, It's good to be able to
703 meet with that class in person and talk to them. I mean, we are done meeting in person for
704 the rest of the semester, which is sad, but I, I had a positive experience with it. I mean, you
705 know, we all wear masks. There's a big thing of hand sanitizer whenever you come in and
706 when you leave and, Um, it's a big.... It's a big room and you know all the, all the little tests
707 are spread all six feet apart and there's big stickers on the floor and everything, where you
708 put your desk and then, you know, it just gives that life, you can have that live working with
709 other people. You know, that live collaboration that you just don't get when you do it online. I
710 mean, you can have a breakout, breakout room as much as you want. But it's not the same
711 as, you know, meeting up with several other people and saying, "Hey, this is how we're going
712 to do this documentary. This is how we're going to work on it. I'm going to film this. You're
713 going to shoot this. You're going to edit it. We're going to all come together, you can just do it
714 so much faster." And it's way less awkward and like it's you get to feel a real connection with
715 those people, which you can get to doing that online, but I feel like you already have to know
716 each other enough to like really get a good dynamic going. Or you have a long enough period
717 of time to like work up to a good dynamic. Otherwise, it just, it just doesn't work. And it feels
718 awkward and strained and be like superficial, which is just kind of dumb.

719 Purley: How are you and your professors communicating?

720 Donahue: Um, I mean we talked through zoom, you know, during class, but I don't really go
721 zoom with my teachers outside of class, unless it's like a meeting because

722 sometimes our classes. Instead of meeting with the entire class, they'll just say, okay, we'll
723 meet with each individual student to like see how you're coming on this project. And that's,
724 that's good. I like that. Um, but yeah, mostly through zoom and then just through emails. Um,
725 it is a little tough because like I don't always feel as comfortable just staying on and like
726 talking the extra couple seconds or whatever with my teacher. Which I would just do because
727 that's like just a good thing to do. Connections wise, you know, have that blessed said
728 comment about class, or just say thank you and leave, and, you know, maybe have a
729 comment on something that happened. It's just nice to do and it makes a good connection
730 with your teachers, but I feel awkward doing that now. I feel like, I don't like staying on
731 because usually the teacher has something else that they're doing, or like they've got
732 something else planned and I just hit the 'leave meeting' button as soon as they say, all right,
733 that's it, because I don't want to stare at a screen anymore. So it's mostly just emails and
734 then occasionally like a question and zoom. If that's, you know, where we are at the time.

735 Purley: Describe your current living situation.

736 Donahue: Well, I live here in my lovely Chicago South loop apartment. Um, it's the same
737 building I lived in last year, so I know it pretty well. And I actually have a friend. My friend,
738 Michelle, lives in the room that I lived in last year so it's nice, and I have a nice apartment
739 like I've got my own room. This is a bunk bed, but I don't sleep with anybody. They just had
740 to quarantine us all in one room. So this is a bunk bed, and I've got, like, you know, my
741 Christmas lights set up in my hand, my tapestry rather, and the second one. You know, like
742 my posters and everything and I get my own bathroom, which is really nice. And like my own
743 closet that's technically a walk-in closet, but not really. You just walk through it to go to the
744 bathroom. And like we have a washer and dryer, which is crazy. That's so cool. And you
745 don't even have to pay for it like it's in the unit. And then we have a full kitchen, which is
746 probably my favorite part, because I just like to cook. I have a, there's a pie, like in the oven
747 right now and it'll be for tomorrow's Thanksgiving, so I'll be cooking all of the things like
748 getting food by myself. In our little kitchen, so it's like I, I do really like living here. It's just a
749 lot more fun when you can really go and see other people at a time. They would be, and it
750 would be nice to be able to like bring guests in, because I have a lot of friends that don't live
751 here in Chicago and like to stay in Chicago, just because it's a nice place. And I can show
752 them around and we have big enough apartments that it's easy for someone to just sleep on
753 the couch, but we can't really do that this year.

754 Purley: Who do you talk to about your concerns?

755 Donahue: I guess it really depends on what my concerns are, you know. Occasionally, I'll,
756 you know, I've also just talked to my friends. Unless it's like a concern about some sort of
757 policy or some sort of question, you know, maybe then I'll go to my IRA. If it's like a, like a
758 COVID policy question or building policy question, or if it's a teacher, if it's like your class but
759 I mostly just talked to my friends, I try not to, you know, dump on members, vent on them or,
760 you know, too much, but I'm I feel like I have a better handle on just, even my mental health
761 and just how school is going. This year,

762 and this, like semester as opposed to like even the end of last semester and especially last
763 summer. I feel like I have a lot better handle on things. So I'm more comfortable just talking
764 about it being open with my friends, because, you know, we're all kind of going through the
765 same thing. So it's nice to be able to like share what's going on. Even with people that you
766 don't talk to that much because you at least know that we're all still in quarantine, and we're
767 all still in college. So kind of just everybody's kind of the same.

768 Purley: Let's talk more about the election of 2020. How do you feel about Trump being in
769 office?

770 Donahue: I will be completely honest, I don't like Donald Trump. I didn't like him in 2016. I
771 didn't like him in 2015 when he was running. I don't like him at all and I am glad to see him
772 go.

773 Purley: How did you cast your ballot?

774 Donahue: Um, so I cast my ballot through absentee so I figured that, um, Joe Biden was
775 going to win in Illinois. I just figured that was going to happen so I decided since I still have
776 permanent residents in La Crosse, semi in my hometown with my parents still a permanent
777 residence, so I could cast a ballot with my ID and everything, and yeah, I put it in the mail.
778 But I was actually worried about it because there had been some issues with absentee
779 ballots in Wisconsin. There were a couple that got lost and like mysteriously, there were a
780 whole bunch of them found in the highway. So I was really careful about it actually got a
781 separate envelope and put my ballot in there. So then I just mailed that envelope that just
782 looked like a normal letter back to my parents and they just dropped it off at Town Hall. My
783 mom works at Town Hall. So she just put it in there for me.

784 Purley: How do you feel about the results?

785 Donahue: You know, good I'm glad that Joe Biden won. That's something that I'm, I am
786 happy about. I think it was just, it was hard for me to see how much division is in the United
787 States. It's so visual when they show it on election day, you know, you just see all of these
788 counties coming in and how they're voting and just the percentages of people that are voting
789 for someone who is so like antithetical to who I am as a person. I think it felt, it just felt kind
790 of disconnected. I felt like I'm just, I have so, I feel like I have so little in common with people
791 that would vote for Donald Trump. It's not saying that I'm, I don't think that they're bad
792 people necessarily. It's just I feel like our values are so different, because they voted that
793 way. And it was really kind of, you know, an eye opener for how divided the United States is,
794 especially right now. It's some of the most divided it's been in a very long time and I don't like
795 Joe Biden. I like, I actively don't like him. I didn't like him. And you know, when he was
796 running. I didn't really like him when he was vice president, um, it's just, he's the best we got,
797 and that's kind of, you know, I wish it was somebody else there. But that's all we can do
798 now. I mean, even if it was Trump in office. I couldn't take Trump out of office and I won't be
799 able to take Joe Biden out of office. So whatever we got is what we got. And we got to just
800 do and hope that it ends up being better for our country.

801 Purley: How has the election affected your relationships with your family and friends?

802 Donahue: Um, you know, I had a lot of really good friends go into the, go into the election
803 and this election year, even I think I was really lucky because all of my friends have very
804 similar political views. I mean, some of them are different. But I think we all, at least
805 generally voted the same way. And the only differences that we have is like nit-picky things
806 or just some things that people just don't quite understand, because I know some of my
807 friends. It's like tough to understand, not saying that they're not exposed, but it's like, it's
808 hard to be exposed and up to date and informed on all these things when they don't affect
809 your everyday life. You know, you live in La Crosse, Wisconsin. It's kind of in the middle of
810 nowhere. But we all, you know, really got along, and a lot of my friends are very political in
811 like, kind of like how I am. So with those
812 people who were easy. We all just kind of, you know, griped about whatever was going on
813 and how the world was slowly falling in pieces but then we'd be like, you know, that's just how
814 it is. And we'd go on. It was definitely a stressful political year, especially over the summer.
815 But I grew closer with I mean not really closely with a lot of my friends, I think it was just like
816 we had a greater political understanding because this is our first election, they were voting in
817 for almost all of us. So we're kind of really fully becoming political because we know that it
818 really matters now. And for my, my family, you know, I don't talk to my family, all that often. At
819 least my extended family like I talked to my parents and I know that my parents are all,
820 they're not on the same page, um, politically, but like, we voted the same way. So I know that
821 like they're at least close, they're close enough for me. Of course there will be things that we
822 disagree on but that's just because, you know, I'm a college student in film school left us, so
823 I'm not, of course, I'm not going to get along with like my kind of moderate liberal parents. But
824 like we're all generally on the same half so like that at least works out. Um, and my family. I
825 feel like my family's all relatively in the same areas, my parents. Um, I know I at least from
826 like last Christmas. They didn't like Trump. So I at least know that much. So I don't know if
827 that inflict like if they change their vote, but and I don't know if they voted for him in 2016
828 either, but that's all my dad side of the family and we taught, you know, we see them every
829 once in a while, because they live close to office. They all live in, you know, like probably
830 within 45 minutes of La Crosse. Um, but as far as my mom's side of the family. We don't
831 really talk to any of them. I don't talk to all my uncles living down in Florida.
832 And I don't really talk to them that much. They're just like, they're a lot older, they're like
833 almost like my, most of them are my friends' grandparents' age because they're, they're all my
834 mom's older siblings and my mom is already old. So, there's not really a lot of connection
835 there. I don't really talk to their, their kids who are my cousins, because they're like in their
836 40s, so I don't have anything in common with them either. And, you know, since they live so
837 far away. We don't really talk that often or meet-up, so that it didn't really change anything
838 with them. I still don't really talk to him.

839 Purley: Time for some reflection. How do you feel after expressing all of that?

840 Donahue: It's a lot. I mean, there's a lot of things that I wouldn't say got clear just thinking
841 about them, but it just kind of made me think, "Man, I've gone through a lot" like there's been
842 so many things that have happened even just since like not even a year ago from when the
843 pandemic started, and even to that since I left high school. You know, I've done a lot, and
844 I've come a long way. And I just, like, there's been a lot of stuff that's happened and a lot of
845 events that will kind of. It'll be weird to think back on 2020. I mean, I've been thinking back on
846 it, because, you know, we're getting to the end of the year. It's like, "Man, this has been one
847 roller coaster of a year." And it'll make, you know, maybe next year will go by really fast.
848 That's what I'm thinking, at least the next year once, especially once things open up, I think
849 things are going to go by really fast.

850 Purley: How is this semester lived up to your expectations?

851 Donahue: I mean it's, it's pretty much what I thought it was going to be. I mean, given I've
852 changed a couple classes here and there, and I don't get to be in person as much as I
853 thought I would. But it's pretty much how I thought it was going to be. I mean, you know, my,
854 my one friend, Amanda, moved home, which was a little sad. But I know that's better for her
855 and she's going to come and visit before I've moved back home. So very, like, move back
856 home for Christmas break, that is, so like, that'll be nice but otherwise it's been pretty much
857 exactly what I thought it was going to be. I mean, I see my friend, Michelle, who lives in the
858 building. I see Matt, we hang out, you know, we go. Sometimes, I'll go walk out in the park or
859 if it's nice and there's not a lot of people out, and you go to the store and you get food, you
860 eat the food, you do homework. He does school.. kind of just do the same stuff. It's pretty
861 much what I expected.

862 Purley: What should Columbia be doing differently?

863 Donahue: You know, they're doing a lot right now. And I know they're trying very hard.
864 Um, how the things that I feel like they should be doing differently are pretty
865 nit-picky, because it's so hard at this time. And I think a lot of my gripes were with what
866 happened last semester, because it was just kind of a mess for everybody. Um, I think
867 Columbia, I know there were some issues in some other buildings. So I don't really want to
868 talk on that, because that's not my personal thing. I just know that that's out there so I don't
869 know a lot about it, but my building has been very good. You know, we're getting food and if
870 anybody's quarantining they can get food. But otherwise, they've been doing a very good job.
871 There was one thing they're changing up and how you check into buildings, which is a little
872 weird. I thought the system that we already had worked pretty well, but I haven't checked out
873 the new system yet because it just rolled out like today. And I don't go in any buildings, so it
874 doesn't matter. But I just thought it was weird that they were changing it. But otherwise, you
875 know, I think they're trying to do their best, and they're trying to keep everybody safe. I think
876 you know there are some issues that come up in individual classes, but that's not something
877 that Columbia directly has to deal with. That's something that, you know, you should take up
878 your teacher, and if it doesn't work out, then you can go to the school about it, but that's not
879 something that's directly the school's fault.

880 Purley: What ways have you helped others get through this pandemic?

881 Donahue: I think, you know, it's just trying to not I hate to say check up on people, because
882 that makes it feel like they're sick, you know, that makes it feel like, you know, you're, you're
883 going to see your sick grandmother in the top room, and getting her a cup of tea is or
884 something, you know, like I just like keeping up with your friends and making sure that you
885 know they're doing well, man. You know, you still stay connected and in some kind of way. I
886 mean, I try to have video calls with some of my friends or, you know, we'll have to still hop
887 on and play video games together, and/or get a whole bunch of people together to play like
888 among us or something which has been fun. We've done that a couple times. And I feel like
889 just genuinely being there for people. There's a lot of hard stuff that people go through
890 anyway. I don't think, you know, and I try to be there for them when those things are
891 happening, happening, regardless of the pandemic. I don't, for me, it hasn't really changed
892 much. Because I try to do those things all the time with my friends to make sure that, you
893 know, they're doing all right and they're being well taken care of. So I think that's something
894 that hasn't really changed, but I try to be more conscious of it, especially during the
895 pandemic, because I would want, you know, I'd want people to do the same thing for me,
896 and I've been very thankful and grateful because of people I have.

897 Purley: How do you deal with feelings of depression?

898 Donahue: You know, it's, it's to get active and do something. I mean, doesn't necessarily
899 mean like I'm going to go, you know, run a mile. That's not who I am. I'm not that breed. I
900 don't like running or even jogging. I'm just getting out and doing something, you know, the
901 other day I went, I was like, "Hey, Michelle, they want to just walk around and like Millennium
902 Park for like a while." And like go look at the cool fall colors or whatever. And like, that was
903 just fun. You're just walking around and doing something, and looking at things that you
904 haven't seen before, or the other day, I went with Matt and we went to this spot. It's like
905 behind the theater. That's like this nice like terrace area with like some fake grass, and some
906 like reclining chairs and you can just hang out. And I don't know, just like trying to do
907 something and trying to talk with friends is usually what will help you get distracted. It won't
908 necessarily fix everything in your life. It won't give you this kind of like, you know, aha eureka
909 moment and solve everything. But it makes things nice for at least a little while, you know,
910 you can get active and joke around with your friends and have a dumb, fun time and, you
911 know, that's really what helps me get through.

912 Purley: What aspects of life did you take for granted before the virus?

913 Donahue: Oh man, just being able to like see people in person like at home, you know, we
914 would always, we would always either be at my house or my friend, Garrett's house or a
915 friend, Annie's house, and it was every single time, you know, you're hanging out in the
916 basement with your friends. And, you know, we were just hanging out. You know, we do
917 like watching some dumb movie or play a dumb video game or just hang out and like talk
918 and I really didn't get to do that like at all over the summer.

919 Like, I don't think we even did it once, um. There was one time there like one or two times
920 where, like, one friend would like, I would go to their house or they'd come to my house and
921 we'd like hang out, um, but like we just didn't get that. Like everybody's coming together and
922 we're like, we're going to have a bonfire or something. I mean, we did, but they were like
923 socially distanced and like, awkward because we didn't know if everybody was clean. I
924 mean, like we did a couple that were normal but it just, I missed out on that. And that's
925 something that I always, always, always look forward to whenever I go home and I just didn't
926 really get to do that, which was a major bummer.

927 Purley: What was the most significant change in your life due to the virus?

928 Donahue: I think it was just I don't go out enough. I like, I just don't get out to do things
929 because I just either I don't have the motivation, or I don't have the reason, you know, I
930 don't, I don't have people to go out and like see things with, you know, I can't go to shows
931 anymore. I can't go to comedy shows or films anymore. Like, I can't just go to the theater. I
932 can't just say, "Hey, you want to go do this random thing?" You know it. I just miss out on
933 that so much. And even when I was home, you know, you can't just hang out with your
934 friends at your favorite restaurant, you had to like go to the one restaurant that you like that
935 has outdoor seating and you had to wear a mask. Or like, you know, you can't, you just can't
936 do things the same way. And that's what I really missed out on.

937 Purley: How do you feel about future opportunities in your field of study?

938 Donahue: I know that they'll come back and they'll probably be different, but they'll come
939 back and I mean, I'm trying to get jobs online right now that are related to my, related to film.
940 I was going to try to be a reader. So you like read scripts for different like publishing places
941 and I'm like you'd think, um, that's something that I've been trying to do. But I think for at
942 least for right now, a lot of the film stuff is pretty lockdown tight, especially with cases really,
943 really peaking and rising again like they are right now.

944 Purley: What else would you like to add?

945 Donahue: Um, I don't really know if I have anything else to add, um, I guess just, like this has
946 been a really, really long time and I'm not, we're really not quite sure when it's going to end
947 quite yet. I know there's a vaccine that supposed to come out, but we don't really know when
948 it's going to come out, exactly. And who's going to get it. And it's going to be really
949 complicated. I think it's just important that we all, hopefully, at least, a lot of us thankfully
950 have found good ways to get through it. You know, whether that be hanging out with friends
951 online and virtually or socially distanced and really safe, and I think it's gonna make, you
952 know, once it's all over. It's going to be so special. And I think people are going to have a
953 really new perspective on everything that's just going to make people realize, you know, like
954 how important that social interaction is, you know, whether it's with your friends or with your
955 family, or even just your colleagues at work, or your peers in school. I think it's going to make
956 everybody have a new appreciation for that. And I think it's going to be a really, really
957 beautiful time when that does happen.

958 Purley: What advice or message would you like to give for future generations
959 watching you?

960 Donahue: You know, first off, I think we got to just, like, be prepared. I don't know if any of
961 these people that are watching it are going to be, you know, biologists or anything like that,
962 or you know, pandemic experts or whatever. If the Director of the CDC is watching this, pay
963 attention, just to be prepared with stuff beforehand, you know, we are struggling so much
964 right now because we don't have this like extra backlog of things that we could need like
965 vector ventilators, or just extra supplies for hospitals. We need to be, just being prepared is
966 something that's going to be so important for future generations and just trying to be present
967 with people and, you know, trying to always be adaptable to things aren't always going to
968 work out but with the people that really matter, you will always find a way to be with those
969 people in some way. And that's something that's like, you know, really kind of special about
970 the pandemic is people are really like it used to be easy. We could just, you know, go to
971 someone's house or we could just walk next door or see them outside or go to the park and
972 see them all the time. But now we've got to get creative and figure out how to do all these
973 different things in so many different ways. And it's like, it's inspiring to see that so many
974 people and humanity will still try to come together, and try to be a part of each other's lives,
975 and try to impact each other in such a great way despite all the obstacles that we have, and
976 you know it's not the same, but we're still really trying.

977 Purley: Thank you for your time, Chris and for everyone listening. Today is November 25,
978 2020. This is Christopher Donahoe from Chicago, Illinois. And that's all, folks. Thank you,
979 Chris.