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Alison Hong Interview (Transcription)

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Transcription of The Interview with Alison Hong

- Where are you staying for this remote spring term? If you're comfortable sharing, why did you decide on this location?

I'm currently staying on campus, I'm going to leave during the mid-term break for California. Then I'll stay with my parents' friends. The situation had been disrupted, so I didn't know what to do, so I decided to make a petition to stay on campus and I got approved. After a few weeks, I felt that I don't wanna stay here anymore, because the OCS program which was supposed to happen during the spring term got cancelled. I was expecting to leave and change the environment, so I asked my parents' friends to see if I could stay with them, and they said "Yes." I think I'll just try to change the environment and will see what's gonna happen.

- How have your academic and personal plans been affected by this move to online classes?

First, my Off Campus Study program got cancelled, and I've been struggling with getting into classes because I missed the registration deadline. But it worked out fine and I'm now taking all the classes I wanted to take. But because I'm a humanities student, I think that online classes are not ideal, I mean it's not ideal for everyone... discussions and office hours are not gonna happen in person. And I just feel like it's just a bummer, and my personal plan... I feel like in terms of progressing towards the degree or requirements, I'm not affected severely, but I'm not studying things I want to study just because of the format. For example, for my Cinema and Media studies production class, we can't use the equipment and the computer lab, and I have to edit on my computer, so I can't use the Premeire Pro which I was hoping to get more comfortable with. Although they accommodate the editing application for free, my computer is not strong enough, so...

- How has your removal from a normal Carleton life impacted your educational experience and ability to do coursework?

It's kind of related to the previous question..... Okay, I have just something to say about office hours. I feel like I'm not going to office hours as often as I used to, because... office hours happen online, and I just feel like... although I can technically talk to professors, it's just not very personal and I just don't feel comfortable about that.

- What new habits or practices have you developed to help make this transition more familiar and comfortable?

I started trying to do meditation and exercise, because I have more free time and free space actually, because my roommates moved out and I have a triple room right now. Because we can't really do any activities and there are not that many things happening around the campus so I actually have more free time. And also I don't have to run from classes to classes. So I started to do exercise and do some spiritual meditation to calm myself down. I think it's working very well, and it's nice to have a sort of break, but not like literally taking a gap year. It feels like a kind of a break because of the universal scrunch thing and I just don't feel as stressed out as usual. So I have time to explore something I've never explored before during the academic term.

I think, "to make this transition more familiar and comfortable..." i don't know.... Because all the public buildings like the library are closed, and the academic buildings are not open during the weekends. So I also gradually learned to be able to focus and study in my dorm room. Because I usually don't do that, because I would just fall asleep.

Oh, also, usually during the weekend, because everyone is like on board, and usually the kitchen is not ideal because a lot of people are living there, but now most students are off campus, so we don't really have many people who use the kitchen and we can cook more easier than during the academic term. Also we have more free time, so it's really nice to spend time with friends and we literally spend two hours cooking. And I don't think it's possible in a regular academic schedule. It's really soothing and it makes me feel better about myself because I prepare the food and we spend a lot of time doing it together and it's like a really nice break.

- Our key theme for this set of interviews is feelings of displacement among Carleton students. In what ways do you feel displaced right now? (Ex: physical distance from family or friends/being in a new place/not knowing your place at a home you haven't been to in a long time/other).
 - (Optional) What have been the hardest aspects of this experience?

Yeah, it feels so weird, because everyone left the campus and like most international students live here but because we don't know when we're gonna be able to go home and I've heard people booking six or seven tickets just in case and most of them got cancelled, and there's also Visa thing we don't know about and everything is very unsure. Because usually we book a ticket before hand and we know when to expect to go home and see our family. And everything is very unsure, so when I'm doing the zoom classes, most american students are at home and they have the homey background and when we are discussing in a group, it would be like "oh sorry my mom is chopping something, so sorry for the background noise" and I just feel like oh I hope that I would be able to be sorry about that too, but I don't even know when I'll be able to see my parents again. So it definitely makes me feel displaced.

And I think because I'm going to move to California and I'm also a little nervous about that because I've never lived with my parents' friends before, I'm not really sure what life would be like there. So I'm partially excited but partially really nervous. And it is just very weird to not really be sure where you're gonna be in the next months, because we usually have a plan and

we just alternate from campus to home or sometimes travel a little bit and it's all planned. And now it's like I don't have a sense of belonging anywhere.

I think the hardest part is not knowing anything, so we have to worry about everything. And you know it's like useless to just worry about it. But you sort of have to and you get constantly distracted because there are so many things to consider and because, I think, everyone's summer plan is disrupted, and me too, I'm very worried about that. And there are also applications of programs and then you've got accepted and the program got cancelled. And it's really hard to adapt to those adjustments in a short period of time and deal with those disappointments.

- What is something positive that has come out of this whole experience?(12:50)

I think that I learned better to deal with myself. Because during an academic year and during breaks I usually with my friends or with my family, I seldom have time to just be alone for a long time because I'm either in class or studying with my friends in the library or having dinner with my friends and when I'm back home I always with my parents and my high school friends. And it's very rare that I have a big chunk of time to spend just by myself and I have to entertain myself a little bit and study by myself for a little bit. So it feels very weird because first when I'm alone, the only thing that I can see was like "Oh, I'm just gonna watch a TV show or sleep, whatever" But now I have to deal with the fact that I have to not to do everything alone but spend a lot of time with myself and deal with this like detachment from social, or every kind of social activities.

I think quarantine helped me to calm down and find time to think about my life. I'm not thinking about quarantine everyday and I'm writing about it in my diary everyday or my journal, but it just makes me to have time to think it'S just like the world suddenly slows down and just everything is posed and this term I feel that the best thing is that we don't have to worry about the GPA which usually stressed me out. So I usually spend those times being stressed and anxious about the exam tomorrow and I don't really have time to think about my.. It's kind of stupid to say this, but my future, na dmy past, and you know, those kind of distant things. I'm usually worried about an exam tomorrow, papers due next week, and I really don't have time to think about my future. I think another thing is that before I went to the career center, I would talk with them like "Okay, I probably wanna do this, and probably wanna do that." I really don't have time to... and I'm basing my decision for my future just like on statistics, like "Okay, the average salary for blah degree, or i don't know... oh that thing is cool, so maybe I should do this" My parents don't have preference or opinions about jobs in the US or what I'm gonna do even after earning my bacheor's degree. I'm like really lost and I did really have time to think about or else I can think about this just getting a good grade. And when I think about what kind of job I want , I just based it on cold statistics. Yeah, but now I started thinking about what kind of person in what kind of life I want. And it's not just numbers. Yeah, that's good.

- What is something you think should be preserved in public memory about this time?

In general, I think, it is very important to remember what it's like not being able to go anywhere to meet with your friends or having all of your travel plans disrupted, like all the movie theaters are closed, museums closed, and every public space closed. I think it is important for people to remember what it feels like to live in such a situation that you have to be confined in a very small space and that would not be able to go out and people should be grateful for a lot of things we have taken for granted when we're living in a normal non-pandemic time. And only when those our privileges are eliminated, can we realize how valuable they are and how important they are for us. I think also because, I'm not sure what everybody else's case is, I think I'm also going to cherish the time that I can spend with my family and also with my friends because this pandemic is making it hard for me to communicate with my friends and spend time with my friends.

And another thing I think it's very crucial to remember is like, maybe it's like too broad, we're still, human beings are not still immune to everything. We still have a weakness when it comes to diseases. Because when I was watching those very old sci fi movies or reading those books, I started thinking like "oh our technology has developed so fast that those authors and filmmakers can't even imagine" but we're still vulnerable in other aspects. I think that technology has developed very fast that those authors and filmmakers cannot imagine what it's going to be like fifty years later. We have so many like computers, softwares, and AI, and it's just cravy, but for human beings and like health, or else immune systems, so we're developing so slowly and we may not even reach a point that we're gonna be like immune to everything and there will be still things that are gonna defeat us. Yeag, that's like a little too broad, but that's what I'm thinking at this moment.