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Mashnoon Ibtesum Interview (Transcription)

Mashnoon Ibtesum
Carleton College

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Clara: I'm here with Mash

Mash: Im Mash Ibtesum, He/his pronouns, Class of 2021, computer science/ studio art double major. I'm from New York City and currently quarantined in Dinkytown, MN, not Minneapolis.

Clara: If you're comfortable sharing, why did you decide on Minneapolis Dinkytown?

Mash: Oh yeah, it's a really nice apartment, the person decided to pay half the rent so I was like, Why not? It's really cheap.

Clara: And you're from New York Originally?

Mash: Yeah. It's also really close to my work. Yeah I'm from New York originally.

Clara: So why did you not go back home?

Mash: New York is probably the worst place in the country you can be right now. That and I also have a summer internship up here (Minneapolis). I'm also working out if I can come back and also I don't want to burden my parents because my grandparents are there right now. They're in their late 70's so there's more of a chance of infecting them. So overall, it made more sense to stay here.

Clara: And you were not living here (Minneapolis) the entire time right?

Mash: No, I moved here 4 days ago. Earlier I was quarantining with my roommate in Rochester, MN.

Clara: Interesting, How was that?

Mash: It was kind of a blast, we hiked a lot, cooked a bunch and he had 2 dogs. That was kind of cute. That's about it. It was overall a good experience.

Clara: So how have your academic and personal plans been affected by the transition to online classes?

Mash: Not much. I had to drop one class, I was initially going to take advanced sculpture. The professor is still hosting that class but it was mayhem to take it online. I was going to miss out on a lot of the experience I was going to get from taking that class. I ended up taking this essay film class so I'm not really bummed out about it. That class is also really cool. Other than that, nothing much has changed. All my classes are synchronous and they work pretty well online. Obviously I'm missing the campus life but academically, it's been overall fine. Career wise, I was really fortunate that my internship didn't get cancelled. So I'll be working remotely for the first half of summer, best case (scenario). Worst case (scenario), I'll be remote the whole time. The quarantine made it possible to work on that internship (Video cuts out)

Mash: The removal (from other people)? Obviously it affects you negatively but I feel like I'm not feeling the full effect of it. For the first half of the quarantine, for the first half of the term, I lived with my roommate and now I live with one of my other close friends and a third friend is planning on living with us in a month. I'm not totally detached from the Carleton experience because my friends are with me, we do talk about how we miss going to Sayles or just partying. Yesterday, we were next to the Dinkytown campus (U of M) and they graduated yesterday and we were talking about how depressing it was to see people walking around in cap and gown and not having to do much.

Clara: What new habits/practices have you developed to make the transition online easier?

Mash: Nothing really, I feel like all my classes worked online pretty well. We are still discussing a lot. It's been pretty good here. Are we talking about academic habits or habits in general?

Clara: Just lifestyle in general, especially when you were living with Jacob (Mash's roommate).

Mash: Not much really, I still have a structure, I still go to class everyday. I know a lot of people are taking asynchronous classes where they don't have that structure and can work whenever they want. I'm glad that all my classes are synchronous. Other than academic stuff, aggressively cooking helps me stay sane

Clara: The main theme of this interview is displacement so how do you feel displaced? This can be physical distance from friends and family or just doing the term in a new location.

Mash: In a normal term, I wouldn't have seen my family anyway but its also a fact that even if I wanted to, I can't. I think that's something on my mind and bothers me alot but I haven't seen my family in six months and I probably wouldn't until November. That's kind of a long period. Also taking classes a location that is not Carleton is kind of jarring. You're kind of stuck with the worst part of the Carleton experience which is the academics but dont have the social experience.

Clara: Do you have any regrets about not going home? Or guilt? I don't know if that's the right word.

Mash: I feel like I do. I don't know, it's kind of a mixed bag. On one hand, I feel good not going home because New York got hit the most but I kind of wish I was there supporting my family. Especially if any of them got infected, I would like to be there. But at the same time I'm kind of glad I'm not there for myself because it is higher risk and I don't think I would function academically that well if I was home and also for my family increasing their chances of exposure. I have mixed feelings about it and I don't know if I'd necessarily regret it but there are times when I wonder what if I actually went back.

Clara: What do you think has been the most difficult part of this experience for you?

Mash: I am not fearful for myself in general. For the first half of the quarantine, I was in Rochester, MN which has the Mayo Clinic and they had a couple hundred cases only in that county and my friend's dad works at the clinic as a doctor. In a way, I felt as safe as I was ever going to be but at the same time, I feared for the safety of my family because the country they are in is probably one of the worst in the country in terms of infection and there's a fear of that in the back of my mind but at the same time they were privileged enough for my mom to not stop working and my dad has been transitioning from one job to another so he has a bit until he goes back to work and they are limiting their exposure so I'm not worried about them.

Clara: What is one positive that has come from this experience for you?

Mash: There's a few, I have made some really cool art so I'm excited about that. Also, the quarantine allows me to actually do my summer internship which I wouldn't be able to do if we were on campus and cooking a lot.

Clara: Best memory from the last month?

Mash: I liked last week, I was leaving my roommates place in Rochester. We invited one of my friends over for a bonfire. We just drank and made some s'mores, walked around in the woods for a bit at night. It was a nice send off.

Clara: So out of everything during this quarantine and experience, what is the most important thing to be preserved in public memory?

Mash: How people persevere through a time of confusion and uncertainty. How people persevere through a time like this. You should preserve peoples struggles but also their little victories and moments of joy and how holistic a human experience this is.

Clara: Thank you so much for the interview.