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5-12-2020

Celia Ringrose - Written Story

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Recommended Citation

Ringrose, Celia and Posner, Clara, "Celia Ringrose - Written Story" (2020). *Covid-19 Archive: Documents*. 80.

https://digitalcommons.carleton.edu/covid19archive_documents/80

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I now go for hour-long walks daily just to get out of the house. Apparently walks are supposed to clear the head, but I don't think I've ever taken one that does that. Any time I walk without a podcast distracting me, my head fills with unpleasant thoughts. I'm anxious every time I'm outside that someone I'm not out to will recognize me.

I got catcalled for the first time on one of my walks. Home sweet home, I guess. I was too caught up in the excitement that I had passed as something other than male to be offended. That's what trans validation looks like around here. There's no way in Hell it would've happened at Carleton, though.

Nothing lets me know I'm unwelcome here like the Trump merch my neighbors proudly display on their cars. I find it hard to believe that the Trump supporters across the street are "nice people," as my mom says. Two "nice" friends my age are getting married later this summer. The blend of ultraconservative cis- and heteronormative culture in this town is suffocating. I read the local newspaper's Opinion section daily as a form of cynical self-harm.

The plan for the Spring 2020 term was to study in Paris. I remember feeling very nervous about spending so much time alone without the support groups at Carleton. When the Paris trip was cancelled, I was relieved that I would at least be able to spend more time with them. I remember an hours-long emotional breakdown in Benton house with a large group of friends the night before leaving. About half of those friends were seniors.

Classes feel almost meaningless. Since I registered after Winter Term finished, my parents hovered over me, heavily suggesting courses I didn't want to take. Well, now that I'm halfway through the classes, I'm finding it very hard to care about them. I'm told that's a symptom of depression. Hopefully it goes away once all this is over.

My dad doesn't quite 'get' what I'm going through as far as transitioning, and it doesn't seem like he's trying to either. Every conversation I have with him drifts towards the importance of focusing on academics above all else, including personal development. He doesn't listen when I say that doing schoolwork this term feels meaningless without participating in the campus community. He enjoys complaining about the local college's administration.

My mom's better, but she's too caught up in her work to really offer any meaningful support, not that she's experienced in supporting me through any type of personal discoveries. At least she's open to talking about social issues sometimes. She's told me that it's rough to see me suffering from body image problems. Well, it's even worse when I have to live with them knowing there's literally nothing I can do about it in my current situation. There might not ever be.

I'm not comfortable wearing anything other than a T-shirt and jeans around either of my parents (let alone in public), nor am I comfortable singing or practicing my speaking voice around them. As of writing this, I haven't told them that I changed my name. The memory of them clumsily navigating new pronouns is too recent, and I don't want to have to be around them 24/7 when they find out. Looks like I'm going to have to, though.

I'm not out to a good portion of my friends from high school, not that I could spend any meaningful time with them nowadays. I've kept in touch with close friends from Carleton using voice chat, but it doesn't fulfill the same function. There are tons of people I know from talking after classes or passing in the hall or eating dinner with. Those experiences simply cannot be duplicated online. It's not the same as being there. Nowhere close.