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Emily Kato, Oral History Interview, 2022

Jayla Lee

Eastern Michigan University Archives, Oral Histories

Interview with Emily Kato (EK) conducted via Zoom on November 17, 2022 by EMU

undergraduate Jayla Lee (JL) for You Li's Journalism 313 course.

Transcribed by Jayla Lee

JL: Okay. So this is Jayla Lee's interview with Emily Kato Oral Histories. Interview Part two.

Okay. So. Hi, Emily. How are you doing today?

EK: I'm good. How are you, Jayla?

JL: I'm doing marvelous. Thank you for asking. Before we begin, I would just like you to

introduce yourself: your name, your age, your major and year.

EK: Sure. So my name's Emily. I am a junior, technically here at Eastern. My major is

journalism. My minor is political science. I am 21 years old and I currently work in

Information Technology.

JL: Okay. Thank you for that.

JL: Yeah, you're welcome. So the first question is, How would you describe yourself

pre-pandemic?

EK: That's actually a pretty good question. And it's going to take me maybe a second to think.

But pre-pandemic, I would say I was definitely very compared to how I am now, very directionless. And I think it was because I was so young, because when the pandemic started I was only 18. So I was pretty directionless, didn't really know what I wanted to do, was pretty insecure about myself as a person. But I feel like most teenagers are like that and a lot of that has changed as time has passed. But that's pretty much how I would describe myself.

JL: Do you think that your mental health was stronger or weaker before the pandemic or after?

EK: Definitely a lot weaker than where I'm at now. I'm a lot more resilient and. Excuse me. I've been doing therapy and stuff like that and that's really helped.

JL: I am so happy that you use the word resilient. I think that. That's a word or two that really describes. What I think is universal. I do not want to say a characteristic but a trait that you can say a trait that a lot of people have been using and I guess you could say from what you know. The, you know, the events that transpired. The pandemic the way I thought that. That goes into this question. What were the three bits between 2019 through 2022 that shaped your meaning in life? They can be good or bad.

EK: Okay. Um. I think one of the major ones was closer towards the beginning of lockdown. Such was losing a lot of my friends. Just a lot of disagreements on how to handle the pandemic and. I was just kind of over being treated terribly. And that's when I kind of started to. Build some resilience in that aspect because one of the trends in my life was

always being like the doormat for people. And so I just kind of that kind of helped me shape and realize what friends keep. But to look for, I look for people with that kind of line of thinking. As far as the second one, it would probably be. Moving away from my family and coming down to Ypsi for School, which I did back in August of 2021, because I didn't start at Eastern until fall of last year as I transferred in. So I think that definitely gave me more of a sense of independence and also dealing with a roommate who was not great. So definitely learning how to navigate that. And then kind of like where I'm at now within the past. I would say all it probably is longer than six months, but I'd say the past like 6 to 9 months or so have to deal with the loss of my grandfather, which means my dad's both his parents are no longer with us. And so that's created a lot of change. My parents inherited that house and so like, everything is changing in that house. And so I've had to deal with the mental hurdles of that. And then moving in and living on my own had to deal with living on my own and being by myself a lot, which I was an introvert. I love being by myself. But also like sometimes even if you're introvert, the loneliness does get you a little bit sometimes. And also just having to make difficult decisions with friends who you may have thought were good for you and you thought you picked the ones. And then I was just kind of like coming back to bite you. And so that's why I would say those three things would be.

JL: Well, I want to say I sympathize with you about your grandparents. I really am sorry about that. Thank you. And, you know, may your family be blessed. Whatever you believe in, you know, they cover you with no problem. Well, it seems that with, you know, the three situations that shaped you people. People have really shaped you in the last couple of years, which I think is so ironic because. We? We're supposed to be away

from people. Although we were physically distant from people, we came kind. I feel like we came closer together where we see, like, got to see the tension of relationships that you may not have seen.

EK: Mm hmm.

JL: And so. If you could think of a person for each stage of the pandemic, the beginning, the middle and today, that had an impact on you who would they be and why?

EK: Oh, good. Okay. Um, I'm not really sure about the beginning, because, I mean, I'd say maybe it might be my cousin Miranda. She's the one that helped me with that one initial friend group kind of fell apart when it came in the beginning of the pandemic. She really held me and she was like, you know, you don't gotta worry about them. You know, she kind of helped me through that. Um, I see the middle of the pandemic in kind of a negative way. My old roommate. Really? They were kind of just like the only person I had. And sometimes that happens and I feel like they knew that and they kind of took advantage of that. And especially when I moved out here, they were the only people I had. And when I started actually making friends, I could tell that they were taking it out on me and I didn't like it. As far as now, I have a new group of friends that I've been working with and like working on, making friends with and building relationships with. And they seemed to be really nice and they seem to be like people that I genuinely like to get along with. They seem like very supportive, loving people, and that's what I really like. And it doesn't seem so far because I believed in them for a little while, but it's so far

that it's not fake or anything like that. So I think I'm on a positive note again, which is nice.

JL: That's good. That's good because. No matter the journey. We gotta keep pushing. The sun is going to come out sooner or later.

EK; Oh, yeah?

JL: Yeah. When in the pandemic did you realize things weren't the same?

EK: What do you mean by you're not the same?

JL: The old way of life.

EK: Oh, sure. Yeah, I think, honestly, probably right away, like a second lockdown sort of happening. I was like, oh, you know, this is never going to go away. This is going to be something that we're going to have to deal with, especially with a lot of the retaliations towards, you know, measures to try, you know, with what little knowledge that we had to drive. People say, when I saw the resistance of that, as like, we're going to be stuck in this for a while, this isn't going anywhere. This is going to be something that we're always going to have to deal with because it's just going to as my thinking was, hopefully it'll just become like the common flu where it's not, you know, like, you know, hurting and killing as many people as it is right now, you know, back in 2020. But I was like, this is going to be something that is our way of life, our way of life is never going to be normal again, like things are going to be different from now on. So I think, like right away.

JL: Honestly. Saying. But this was before the pandemic, when what we really realize with the

pandemic was when Kobe Bryant died. I just felt like that was some stuff out of a movie.
Oh, let's write it.

EK: That was in 2020.

JL: You'd be like, What the hey, that stuff that you really see at the beginning when it was on TV and they're like, I'll make this great. I just got what they think now is so crazy. When you realized that things were going to be the same when we had our lockdown, how did the epiphany, how did that epiphany affect you?

EK: It was kind of like a negative thing for a long time. It felt very hopeless because, like I said, I was noticing how a lot of people were behaving, a lot of people were treating the pandemic, and that just kind of made me feel like, Oh, great, we're going to be stuck in this forever. And then, you know, there was news with the vaccine, but they were like, Oh, well, the vaccine is going to take a long time to do. It didn't come out until like March 20, 21 or February. I can't remember. And it was. Kind of like, are we ever going to get out of this? Are we going to have to be, like, stuck inside all the time because people don't want to take the proper precautions and because it's going to take forever for a vaccine to come out. It was just kind of like this cycle of dread until like time kept passing and more news kept coming out, if that makes sense.

JL: Yeah, I understand that completely. I'm just happy that they got rid of the clocks or the TV news outlets that told us how many people died.

EK: Oh, yeah. Yeah, that was really devastating to look at.

JL: Yeah. Like, I'm just happy that women. What things were you looking forward to that Colbert stopped?

EK: Well, I was, it's funny, like in a hilarious way, but any kind of excellence that'll weigh on my community college was that they were going to do an educational travel trip to Greece in summer of 2022. And my English professor at the time was one who was going to be leading it, and I had emailed her a week before lockdown had started. And this was like, you know, lovers, no whisperings in the air about lockdowns or anything. And I felt for, I think like that Thursday or Friday. And she said, okay, talk to me about it in class on Monday. That Monday, everything was shut down. There was no Monday on campus. Everything was shut down. And so I never got a chance to talk to her about it and never had to go on that trip badly. They ever started it back up again because like I said, it was supposed to be like fundraisers and stuff for it. And, you know, with uncertainty and everything, there were no traveling degrees this past summer. So that was disappointing.

JL: What are some things that you are looking forward to that stopped? That covid stopped?

EK: Yeah. So, yeah, that Greece trip honestly was like one of the things that I wanted to do a bunch of traveling all over the state during the summertime. But, you know, with everything being closed and, you know, uncertainty about all that, I kind of put that to a halt, too. So that's my answer.

JL: Yeah. I would be so upset, especially when you got this plan to, like, just travel and it's all

ready. And then you get locked up in. So since we got locked down in our homes. Sick. Being in lockdown for two years had quite an impact on the world. So what were some habits that grew from going through the pandemic? **EK:** [00:14:45] Um. I definitely became more of, like, a hermit. I've always been, like, the person to, like, just be, like, holed up in my room and things, whatever. No questions asked. And I think it only got, like, the worse, but I just really liked my time a lot more during the pandemic. And that's like what caused some contention with my roommate, like I lived with last year because she just couldn't wrap your head around how much time alone I like to have. And she would try to pin her anxious attachment style onto me. And I was and I talked to my therapist about this, too. And it's just like my therapist was saying that this isn't something that you have to worry about or take care of because that's not your responsibility. They recognize that they have an anxious attachment style and they're trying to make it your problem, which is not the case. And so me having a long time really causes contention with that person. But I think that's like when the only things that really the pandemic did was just make me realize how important me time is and how important, um, setting up boundaries with people is.

JL: Sorry. With so many. Changes, whether it was from the outside world and its people to yourself. What are some things that never changed about you so before the pandemic to keep it to now. Like what are some things that you stayed true to?

EK: Yeah. I think it definitely like I said earlier, the whole hermit thing, like I like to be on my own. I like to be on my computer doing mindless stuff. I love listening to music and playing video games. That has never changed. Like I've always loved baking and I baked

a lot during the pandemic because like a lot of things, like you couldn't buy, like you couldn't really buy bread. So a lot of people were baking bread because you could get like this by sport, you couldn't actually get bread. And so I was just baking bread and other stuff just to keep my mind busy. And I've always loved baking and that's something I still do whenever I have time. Like actually if I had time later today, I might make banana bread. But yeah, that's definitely kind of like a time hobby for me about staying the same pre and post pandemic.

JL: And our final question. Miss Emily. So what are three discoveries that you have made about yourself? Other people and society as a whole? And when I say three discoveries, I mean one. In each category.

EK: Sure. About myself. I've talked about this in previous questions, too. It's just realizing how much I need my time and how much I need to be better about putting up boundaries with people. As far as other people in my life. I think I learned that I need to sometimes be a bit more a bit less charitable, if that makes sense, because I have always been someone who is very open minded about what other people are going through. But sometimes I get to be so charitable to the point where it causes problems for myself and I end up getting walked all over. So sometimes I just need to be a bit less charitable, which maybe sounds bad, but I feel like the context I put it in makes more sense in society as a whole during the pandemic. Towards the latter part of the pandemic. And before I moved on here, I was working in retail and I learned how cold and callous a lot of people in society are and that they just do not do not care about anyone other than themselves. And

that was definitely like something I was aware of. It was also a rough wake up call to experience, especially working in retail.

JL: Yeah. Yeah, I, i, i can see it. I especially about suicide. But I think. But, hey, I guess that's people, huh? Oh, yeah. Well, thank you, Emily. Thank you so much for taking the time out to talk with me. Hope you have a great holiday season. I really do. Especially if I don't get to talk to you after.

EK: Sure. Thank you. You as well. I hope you have a good time and you're able to hang out with family and, um, you know, spend time with those you love the most.

JL: Okay. Thank you.

EK: You're very welcome. Have a good night.

JL: You too.

EK: Thanks. Bye.