

Chapel Hill Public Archive Pandemic Stories Project recording with Michelle C.

Narrator: Michelle C.

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Interviewer: Klaus Mayr

Klaus Mayr [00:02]: Alright. So today is Tuesday, May 17th, 2022, almost 07:00. And we are in the Chapel Hill History Lab in the Chapel Hill Public Library. And I will go ahead and let you introduce yourself and you can sort of describe yourself in whatever way you want to.

Michelle C [00:24]: My name is Michelle C.. I grew up in Chapel Hill and then I went to college at UNC. So I've been in Chapel Hill for a long time and now I'm working in Raleigh, but I still live in Chapel Hill.

Klaus [00:39]: Awesome. And so obviously I've got questions here to go through with you. But I do want to just ask before I jump into those, if you have any places that you want to start. This is kind of like a space that you can use to reflect on the last couple of years to share stories. So if there's anything that you want to start with, then you're welcome to do that.

Michelle 01:09 I think... there was one question that really stood out to me that was kind of like how did how did COVID affect the interpersonal relationships during the pandemic? And it really got me thinking a lot today because I feel like the thing with COVID was that a lot of people have different ideas about how to handle the pandemic, especially now when it's like people are mostly vaccinated, but not everyone is vaccinated. Like, kids aren't vaccinated, but the mask mandates are still lifting and travel is starting again. Anyways, I just was thinking about how I do things where I feel like people will look at it and be like, oh, that's like so selfish. Like, she shouldn't be doing that. And then I look at other people and I'm like, that's so selfish. You shouldn't be doing that. And I feel like that's really affected my interpersonal relationships a lot. I just kind of like to talk about it because I feel like it's hard to trust people. Not like 'trust', but you feel like very awkward talking about what you do with your life. That's just one interesting.

Klaus [02:19]: So you're saying that COVID has kind of affected your ability to trust people, you think?

Michelle [02:25]: Yeah, I just feel like I can't share everything I do with everyone. I don't feel comfortable telling people I travel to somewhere because I recognize that's a privilege. And it's also like, yeah, maybe it's not the best idea all the time, but like in my brain, I'm like, oh, well, I'm taking the precautions I can. And there are other factors other than COVID that are influencing this. In this past year, it's still like in the

US, quote, unquote, but it's like to Alaska and Puerto Rico, which are not mainland US. But at the same time, I went on those trips with my family, which I feel like it's very hard for us to do trips like that anymore, especially because I did start working and it's like very hard schedule wise. And then my brother is in college right now, so he's going to graduate soon. It's going to be even harder schedule wise to do stuff like that. And I was also like, oh, well, we got back to already, and my parents are okay with it. And they're the ones that was scared of getting COVID. Like, I was scared of them getting coveted. If they want to travel, then it's like, just go with them while they're still paying for it.

Klaus [03:33]: Are the interpersonal relationships that you feel like are being most effective, are they like close relationships or sort of just like acquaintances that you see around?

Michelle [03:46]: I feel like I'm not as close with some people anymore because, like I said, everyone has different expectations of what people should be doing during pandemic. I'll also say my friends who've gotten COVID or something. Right. Maybe like, when they leave quarantine a little earlier than I was expecting them to. I'm like, you shouldn't do that because you can still get other people, but then they're like, I mean, the CDC says it's okay. I'm like, oh, I guess the CDC does say it's okay, but I feel uncomfortable with it, but I'm not going to tell you I'm uncomfortable with it because people are going to do what they're going to do. It's just a matter of whether they tell you or not. I guess it kind of affects all my relationships, but if I'm really close to someone, they'll know what I'm doing and what I'm up to. I don't know if they have those same thoughts where it's like, I want to tell her, but I also feel like it's just a difference of expectation.

Klaus [04:43]: Yeah, absolutely. Well, I hope that some of this will come up throughout the interview, definitely, since it's something that's important to you, let's be thinking about your relationships and how they've been impacted, because I think a lot of these questions are going to in some way bring that into it. Right. One question that I kind of want to start with is just because I feel like it helps to kind of get you in the mindset of your personal experience of COVID is if you can sort of describe the different stages of the COVID pandemic as you experienced them, and that can be sort of in whatever way you want to define the stages. Right?

Michelle [05:34]: Yeah. So I guess the earliest on is like 2019 when the first outbreak was happening in China. So I'm Chinese, and that means that it does kind of affect the way I heard about the pandemic and how it came into my life. I mean like, at that time, it was like, oh, it's a thing, but it's not really affecting me. And it's now a worldwide pandemic, like, to the stage it is now. But I did have a friend who was like, I remember she was trying to get masks to China. And I was like, wow, that's really cool. But then she was taking it really seriously. I was like, okay. I'm like a little scared because she's taking it so seriously. And then we had a couple, like, Chinese New Year performances or Lunar New Year performances that got canceled, especially the ones that had guests from China that was like, okay, these are things that are

local that are getting canceled. But the guests were international, so I don't know if that's affecting me. And then I was a student in 2020, so spring break got extended. You're like, okay this is fun, but we're going to go back to school in two weeks. And then it got close to that end of the extension. And people were like, no, we shouldn't go back because COVID is so bad. And then I was like, maybe it is bad. And my dad's like, you should just start wearing the mask everywhere you go. I'm like, okay, this is very weird, very different. And then we moved home from our apartment. I was like, okay, this is like, serious. And then I guess 2020 was just like staying inside all the time. I feel like a lot of the stuff I'm going to say is I definitely recognize that I was in a place of privilege saying this and having this experience. Because just quick side note, both of my mom worked from home before COVID. Anyways, she does travel for work, but she still can do a lot of stuff from home. And then my dad can also do his work from home. So their jobs weren't really impacted by that. Obviously, if you have to go to office or you have to go to a restaurant or you do more manual labor, like, that's not something... that's a very different impact that COVID had where no one could go outside. Anyways, back to 2020. My parents were, like, really scared of COVID, so they ordered all our groceries. I didn't even go to a grocery store for the first couple of months. And then gradually I started going to my partner's house. So it was like two households kind of thing. Unfortunately, that's where I got COVID. In the fall of 2020, my senses weren't that bad, but theirs were really bad. So it was kind of scary at the time because my partner's dad is like a little older, but he was fine. He made it. Another thing: privilege. That's not what happened to everyone who got COVID. There are definitely a lot of losses, and that really affected my friends who lost their parents and stuff. And then going into 2021, there's kind of a lot of thinking, okay, will we be going back to normal now? But then we didn't really go back to normal even though the vaccines came out, because, like, a lot of misinformation surrounding the vaccines. I think 2021 was just a little frustrating because it felt like everyone was waiting for the vaccines and then the vaccines came and then it didn't do anything. Yeah, 2021 was just frustrating. But we still stay inside for the most part. I graduated in 2021 and then I felt like a lot of frustration because of my job search thing. But I also don't know if it would have been that much different if it wasn't a pandemic. I just felt like I wanted to blame the pandemic at the time. So I worked at a restaurant, which I kind of like was thinking about what I was answering, thinking about the other questions as well. So that one, obviously you have to go into work every day and there's interacting with a lot of different people. I did feel a bit uncomfortable with it at first because again, I live with my parents who are older and... they're not, like old old, but they are older and I think my mom's technically Immunocompromised, but then they were okay with it. So I just like to wore a mask all the time at work. But yeah, I think that's kind of interesting too because I could see people, like, still wanting to eat, but they were like, do you have outdoor seating? Can I eat further away from other people? But I worked at a smaller restaurant, so it wasn't like we could do much to distance people. I think they used to be half capacity, but then they were 100% by the time I started working there. And then after that it became 2022. And like I said, within this past year, I did go like traveling a couple of times. Both of those were like, wear my mask unless I'm outdoors, like only with my family or something. But it's also different because some

people just take their mask off as soon as they get off the plane or something. And then I started my new job, which I said was in Raleigh. It's also in person and they lifted the mask mandate in Wake County before they lifted in Orange County, I think like a week or two before and that was like, very weird cause like, I don't really feel comfortable, but I'm going to be honest, it's like kind of awkward to like just to wear my mask at work actually because we have like beer Thursday or something. I actually do go to these events where I talk to my coworkers and we are not... we're eating and drinking. We can't really have a mask on for that. Yeah. And I got COVID again. First time I got COVID. Like I said, I wasn't even going to the grocery store, so I felt like kind of frustrated with that one because I was like, I did everything I could and I wasn't interacting with people. But then this time it was my fault, like, I was like dang. But the way my parents took it were very different from the first time because the first time I was quarantined in my room for basically all of November 2020, I did not leave my room. I was the only one using the bathroom. And at this time they're, like, quarantine for a week, and then just make sure you wear your mask outside of the house for the second week. I'm like, okay, I'll just do that and stay in my room when I can. But I still went to work because my office was like, oh, like, if you're feeling okay, you should just come to work. I'm like, okay, I'll go to work because I just started this job. And then I think that's basically here. That was like a month or two ago. It was pretty recent.

Klaus [13:04]: Were there any differences in the way that your first COVID experience was different from your second COVID experience?

Michelle [13:17]: Yeah. So the symptoms weren't really different. I'll say that. I mean, Luckily I wasn't serious... Not serious... It is serious. I did not have bad symptoms, like, the first time... I think the first time was a little scary because I lost my sense of smell, and I wasn't sure when it would come back, which it has. I don't remember how long it took. And then this time was not really that scary, honestly, because it was just a headache and I didn't even cough that much. I kind of just started coughing after it got better. But that being said, again, I feel very lucky and very fortunate that I'm healthy. And then, as I said, it was kind of different the way I quarantined after and then how much longer it took to go back to seeing other people.

Klaus [14:15]: So I guess the first time was pretty early on...

Michelle [14:18]: Yeah that too. I was vaccinated this time, so it was a little less scary. But like I said, the first time, I didn't know I was sick, actually, the first time I caught it because I just had different symptoms on every single day. So I didn't know it was like I was sick. I just thought, because I had a headache, I was like I was spending too much time on Zoom, and then I felt like I had a sunburn. I was like, oh, it's so hot in the house. And then just like, I thought it was congested, but then that was actually me losing my sense of smell.

Klaus [14:51]: That's so interesting. So can you talk about what you did for fun during the pandemic?

Michelle [14:56]: Yeah. So I played a lot of games with my friends that's actually one of the hobbies I picked up during the pandemic was playing games. I wish it was a more productive hobby, but it's still fun and I still do it. So not really regret. But yeah, I think early on I was doing Zoom calls with people, and we do things like CodeNames or... it also relates to one of the other questions. I just don't remember which one. I actually tried doing, like, HIT, like, the high intensity interval training, like the cardio, which I was thinking about it, I was like, I would have never done that beforehand because I would have to go to a gym, and I would not get to the gym. I just don't have the motivation to do that. But I think because they were, like, hosting the class online and there's nothing else to do. I was like, oh, yeah, I'll just go and it was horrible, but it was fun. And then we did some yoga and a lot of Among Us in later 2020. I also spent a lot of time outside with my dog. Just, like, chilling. Like I'll go to get coffee or something.

Klaus [16:12]: Yeah. Has the way that you spend your days changed a lot? How did, like, a regular day in, say, May 2020 look compared to a day in May 2022?

Michelle [16:31]: I really miss spending time outside and doing work. I feel like... right now because because I go to the office... it kind of feels like back to normal. And I didn't really have an office job before hand. But I don't imagine it's much different. But I think other than that, it's not too different. I guess I still hang out with people now, like, for dinner or something, which I didn't do in May 2020. But when I go home, it's kind of the same because I just eat dinner with my family, and then we just do our own things. And I do the same thing when I get back from work, I like, eat dinner with my family and then just go to my room or do something.

Klaus [17:19]: Have you ever looked back at pictures or... I don't know if you're a journaler... or any sort of any memorabilia from earlier in the pandemic, what does it feel like to look back at things like that?

Michelle [17:38]: So actually, I've been journaling consistently since 2015, but I really didn't feel like I had much to write in 2020 because there was nothing new. It was just kind of like, oh, I stayed home again today and I did work and I played with my dog. But I was kind of really sad at the beginning because I definitely considered myself an extrovert. And it was really hard not seeing people constantly, also because I feel like I low key still have some insecurity about it, like from middle school and high school that's just never gone away. I feel like people don't want to reach out to me, and then people didn't reach out to me. I was like, it's true! But everyone's dealing with their own stuff. I'm not holding it against anyone. So I kind of, like, think about that. But I also think about how nice it was to just not respond to people. I really liked that. I didn't realize how tiring it was to just always be in touch. I'll always be doing

this and being going somewhere and doing stuff. And I kind of got a little bit more comfortable with being alone, I still don't like it, but I can do it better now than I could before. I'm trying to think what else. Again, I really like spending time outside. I wish I could do that more now.

Klaus [19:13]: Yeah. What do you think you'll remember most vividly from the past two years?

Michelle [19:19]: Probably. I think I've kind of, like, not established my relationships, but I definitely got in friends that I feel a lot closer to now from the pandemic, and I hope we still are still very close friends in the future. But I'll probably remember, like, that, like, just having late night Discord calls or FaceTiming each other or whatnot.

Klaus [19:52]: And do you think that that came from... did you start feeling that early on when you started to play games with them? Or was there... when did you start to feel that those relationships were becoming more established?

Michelle [20:08]: Part of it is games because we just spent a lot of time playing games. But then the other part was like, oh, them wanting to meet out whenever we can after things get a little better. And like I said, I low-key have a complex about people reaching out to me. They did that a lot, and I think it really did mean a lot to me. I've had a couple of times where I'm really upset, and then I know I can call them and they're going to be there. I have called them, and that made me feel a lot closer.

Klaus [20:47] Yeah. How have you stayed in touch with loved ones?

Michelle [20:48]: So I did live with my family, so that was a very easy way to keep in touch because we lived together, so we just talk to each other. But I also use FaceTime and Discord. I technically used WeChat, but not really. It was just kind of like I'll check it a little more often now because that's what all my family members use. I don't really know what's going on half the time with those chats because they're like, all in Chinese and it takes too much brain energy to read them all. But, yeah, I'm trying to think what else I think just like FaceTime, Discord, and then, like, the Zoom calls, but those were kind of early on. I think after I graduated, I was like, I'm not using Zoom.

Klaus [21:33]: Is your extended family in China?

Michelle [21:38]: So they're in New York, mainly, and then I do have more in China. But they still text in Chinese.

Klaus [21:49]: Yeah, okay. Was your family trying to stay in touch with your extended family or once the Pandemic hit, did you all sort of just, like, kind of hunker down and mostly sort of hang out with each other? Because there's this obviously during the Pandemic there... it gets harder to travel. The way that we communicate with each other has changed a lot. Do you feel like your parents and the rest of your family, did you all feel like you had some inclination to stay in touch with those extended family members?

Michelle [22:40]: Yeah. So this is another thing where it's, like, kind of didn't change that much during the pandemic for me, just because we're the only ones in North Carolina. And then my mom's whole family is in New York and then my dad's family is in China. So we kind of always have to keep in touch digitally. We do sometimes travel to New York, maybe once or twice, once every one or two years, but we didn't. I guess we technically did because in 2021, my mom's mom passed away, so we all went for the funeral, and that was like a very bizarre experience... It wasn't bizarre, per se, but her whole side of the family is very scared about COVID and she's like the youngest, so they're all older than her. Older adults who are more susceptible. So that was nice, but it was also very awkward because I knew they were so uncomfortable with hanging out, but at the same time they wanted to get all together for the funeral. Yeah. And then in terms of my dad's side of the family, we don't really see them that often, but I'm pretty sure he calls his sisters a lot. They're not really great at English and I'm not very great at Cantonese, so I did call them like a couple of times, but not more than I normally do.

Klaus [24:09]: When your grandmother died, did you feel like being in the midst of the pandemic, did that affect the way that your family grieved in any way?

Michelle [24:25]: It's kind of weird because I feel like at that point we were starting to get vaccines and stuff, so it felt a little safer to do it in the way they had imagined. But I think if COVID wasn't quite a thing, we would have tried to stay together longer and just be there for each other physically more. I just think that just didn't happen because we're like, let's get in and out.

Klaus [25:00]: Yeah. Can you talk some about how your mental and emotional health has been affected by the pandemic? And I know we've touched on it a little bit in regards to how your interpersonal relationships and how that's played into. But are there any other ways?

Michelle [25:24]: I feel like I got to think a little bit on this. I definitely feel... give me 1 second, I'm going to read my notes.

Klaus [25:40]: Of course you can pull up your notes whenever you want to feel free. Don't feel awkward about it.

Michelle [25:46]: I put some stuff about my physical healthy. Low key, it kind of, like, killed my self esteem. But I feel like this is a kind of combination of factors of not being around people to feel validated and loved and whatnot. And also with me having trouble getting a job, not having internship experience on me again, probably would have happened without the pandemic, but I don't know. I did feel like, kind of glad, though, that I already was trying to do stuff without worrying too much about the future, just because in high school I did theater. My parents didn't like that because you already play violin. Why do you do theater? I was like, this is fun for me. And then I was like, oh, I can add a political science major now that I have all this time in the summer doing nothing. It's kind of a mix. Like, it lowered my self esteem a lot. But I also felt really happy I was doing stuff that I was thinking about before, but then always felt like there was not enough time or not enough mental energy to do it.

Klaus [27:04]: Yeah. Can you talk about that more about the things that you feel like you got to try out because of the pandemic?

Michelle [27:10]: Yeah, so, my second major. That was fun. And then I think also again, the HIT class. Oh, I got back into doing tennis, which I hadn't played since high school. I started playing again, like, in 2020, and I was like, yeah, this was really fun. I'm really glad I got to revisit this. I'm trying to think what else? Like I said, journal, but I usually just write, like, journal entries because I'm, like, not, like, lazy, but I'm just trying to do something every day. So sometimes you just don't have that much time. You just write something down really fast. I'm but yeah, I made some actual spreads, and that was really fun. So they're, like, nice to look at now.

Klaus [28:03]: Great. If you have any of those that you want to share and including your page, you should share them with us. Because along with the interviews, we can always include pictures or anything like that.

Michelle [28:16] I'd be more than happy to send some.

Klaus [28:20]: Do you feel like your motivation to do these things, like the HIT classes or adding on the major... was it easy to get that motivation, or do you feel like you were motivated to do these kinds of things, like, as soon as you entered into quarantine, or was there a time when that motivation wasn't coming as easily?

Michelle [28:45] I think for the second major, it was pretty easy for me to decide because I didn't have any summer plans, and so nothing got canceled. And also it was like something I was entertaining before, maybe like a summer or two before 2020. But then I was like, oh, it's just, like, so much work, like, adding all these classes, and then I don't know if I can handle it. But I will say for, like, some other stuff, like the

journaling and, like, playing tennis, that was definitely me getting kind of bored staying at home. Which is, that's fine. That's a perfectly fine motivation. It's just it wasn't like I was super driven to get in shape or anything.

Klaus [29:32]: Yeah. How do you think living in Chapel Hill affected your experience of the pandemic?

Michelle [29:38]: Oh, yeah. So I think this is interesting because I'm both a resident of Chapel Hill, but at the time, I was also a student, so the minor thing that impacted that... It was that I had to go get tested every week because they were tracking the COVID cases for students. But because I still live in Chapel Hill, even though I didn't live near this campus, I thought I'd go to campus. And I remember I was just so frustrated about this because it was like, on one hand, I did not go outside. This is, like, forcing me to go somewhere with a lot of people who like, two, I felt like we're really risky because I was hearing about all these parties people were still having in, like, 2020. Well, maybe not. Okay. I can't really remember, but I think, yeah, the 2020 to 2021 school year. I remember the fall. There were so many issues with frats having parties and whatnot. And I was like, I do not want to be close to them, and it's just very frustrating. So that's the thing. Yeah. Again, I feel like people were being very selfish and not considerate, and it's definitely different from people who have to go or go out and do stuff. A lot of those students did not have to go out and do anything. But that being said, I also know there are a lot of mental health concerns at UNC, like, with students feeling isolated, and especially people who are freshmen who didn't really have their high school experiences, and then now they feel like they didn't have their freshman year experiences. I understand that. I wouldn't personally want to be responsible for someone else getting COVID. I feel like that did impact my perspective on the pandemic. Like, just having to deal with that.

Klaus [31:32]: Absolutely. How do you think that the pandemic affected your relationship to your faith or spirituality?

Michelle [31:40]: Okay. I think this is kind of N/A for me. I don't really practice anything. Nothing changed.

Klaus [31:49]: Yeah. Cool. Has your feeling about risk changed at all over the course of the pandemic?

Michelle [31:57]: Yeah. So I didn't go out at all in the beginning, and I was like, oh my god, we have to, like, wipe... Not only did we order our groceries, we wiped down all the groceries. One person has the gloves and holds all the grocery bags, and the person with dirty hands can't touch the stuff with the clean... So we had to rewipe everything. We don't do that anymore. I don't really know how much that helped, but whatever makes you feel better, that's fine. But I'm trying to think what else? Like I said, my job, like, Wake County lifted the mask mandate. But that being said, I still don't feel comfortable going every single place without it. But there's some stuff that's like, okay, if you go to a restaurant, it doesn't

really help anyone to keep the mask on. Like, I'll still do it if I go to the bathroom or something. But if you're at your table, you're spending most of your time there without your mask to eat. So it's kind of like just trying to limit going out, but if you're already there. Yeah, maybe someone else has different thoughts on there. I'm trying to think what other situations changed. Yeah. Like hanging out with people. I was supposed to hang out with someone next week or something, and then they got COVID and they were like, "I think I'm good now," and I said, "I don't think you're good yet." I just got it. But it's not like me I'm worried about. It's kind of like anyone else. But that's also weird because I know people who are recovering or something. They're already hanging out with other people. Does that change anything? Yeah, I kind of limit the going out, but are they going to hang out with someone else instead of me or something? It's really frustrating, but I feel like there are a lot of situations where I'm like, I have to kind of just analyze what's the best thing I can do, even though it's like this pandemic is really a group effort, but at the same time, it's like... it's kind of like telling people to recycle. I feel like it's like this situation where it's like, oh, it's like the plastic straws, but it's not the plastic straws. It's like the whole, like, there's so many other things going on that's causing the environment to die or people to get COVID or the COVID to mutate or whatnot.

Klaus [34:29]: Yeah, that makes a lot of sense. Is there anything that you wish you had done differently earlier in the pandemic?

Michelle [34:32]: I don't think earlier, no. I think we definitely was on the side of erring on over caution. Currently, yeah, I'm a little frustrated. I got COVID... because I think that was definitely, like a bad decision on my end. But, yeah, again, I don't really know what to... because I'm also scared of feeling like I should be over cautious because I don't know. I feel like this transitional period is really hard for me because I don't know whether we're actually ready to transition because it's like you have all these your jobs, your counties, like CDC, and everyone just wanting to be done. But then I feel like you keep seeing a lot of articles about people who feel left behind, because if you can't get the vaccine, then I'm like, okay, but at what point can we kind of move? I don't really mind wearing a mask or anything. I just don't really know how much in the scheme of things. That being said, if I'm going to see someone who's immunocompromised, I'll definitely take precautions like the two weeks before or something, but I don't know if I would want to see them anyway because I don't want to give anything to them.

Klaus [35:55]: How about apart from COVID and avoiding exposure to COVID, if you were talking to yourself from earlier in the pandemic, is there anything like, sort of setting aside, like, levels of caution and things like that just in terms of how you live your life or anything like that. Is there anything that you wish you could say?

Michelle [36:22]: I would low-key kind of tell myself to take a little bit of risk, at least going out, like, I said I went outside a lot. That's kind of more like in my screen porch or something. But I feel like I could have taken a walk or something. I feel like being cooped up so much is just not good. And it did make me feel worse. That being said, I was very scared and my parents were very scared, so we did not take walks. But yeah, I don't regret it, but I do wish I snuck out or something.

Klaus [37:05]: What do you hope that future generations will remember about COVID?

Michelle [37:11]: That it got a lot worse because people were being a little selfish, but also that things don't always pan out the way you think they will. I know people make a lot of stuff in advance or whatnot, and they're like, I'm going to do this when I graduate and you wait for a time. You can do things. I feel like COVID is like a really prime example. You can't just wait for everything. You kind of have to make sure you're enjoying what you're doing in the moment. But yeah, also the selfish thing, we should take better care of each other and be more understanding and not just if I get COVID right now and I don't want to go into the office. People most likely be like, yeah, that's fine. I wish you could apply that, like this is the perfect chance to apply that to all sicknesses and mental health and having mental health, and like, yeah, like having mental health days and just I don't really think every workplace has really applied this. But I do see that there are more corporate offices who are keeping this in mind. That being said, I was thinking about this on the way here. I feel like it's a little awkward saying that, though, like having worked at the restaurant, because I feel like there's a lot of talk about, you know, you should do this for your employees and make sure they can have the time off. It's kind of awkward saying that because I feel like there's a lot of jobs where you can't work from home or something where it's like it would be really hard for people to ask for hours off, even for COVID. So I'm like, I kind of wish we also re examined those industries and had more like maybe consider PTO, even if it's like a wage, even if you're doing a wage, because I feel like it's just healthier that way and people are happier. People stay there longer. That's like both a generational, but also like a corporate issue.

Klaus [39:21]: Yeah. Yeah. Is there anything else... I mean, I guess the things that you've said so far touch on this a little bit, but is there anything else that you hope that we keep from the pandemic?

Michelle [39:32]: I think not having to always be in touch with other people, like, just making sure you have time for yourself. Even though I didn't love it, I think it's a good skill to have to be able to repair that. I didn't really think of or think of developing, because I think when growing up, what's most important is how you interact with other people, because your teachers don't want you to fight with other students or whatever, and they don't want you to be lonely, which is a very valid concern. But you could be alone without being lonely.

Klaus [40:17]: Absolutely. Well, I've got one more question here, but I know you've got some notes, so I want to make sure that if there's anything else that you want to talk about, anything that I didn't ask you that you wish I had, I want to let you bring those up as well. I'll let you do that, and then I'll ask the last question.

Michelle [40:45]: Got to speed read real fast.

Klaus [40:51]: Yeah, you can take your time.

Michelle [40:51]: It's okay. I said most of it. Okay. Let's see. So something I kind of wrote for myself was I did wish that COVID could have been a catalyst for change. And it really felt like that because it had, like, the whole BLM movement and then, like, Asian Greek life. Well, I'm in a sorority, too, so me being frustrated with frats, it felt like awkward. But we had our whole kind of, "Me Too" movement as well, and that had actual change. We actually developed some policies to help people report people who are in Greek life or people who are going to Greek parties so that we can actually address it. And that was kind of like an additional measure to tell people to go to Title Nine. But I really want to encourage people to go to Title Nine, but they're not the best, and they don't always support the victims or listen to them. Anyways, so, I really felt like, oh, we're doing all these great things, and these are going to change, like, stay. But then I feel like as soon as people felt comfortable going back, everyone really wanted to pull back to normal. But I'm like, no, we could use this to push forward into something new and something else. So that was a little unfortunate.

And then... Oh, I used to also be very big on physical touch. Obviously, I'll respect people's boundaries, but it did make me a little sad if someone's like, oh, I'm not into hugs or not to handshakes or whatever. I was like okay, I know you don't feel bad about me personally, but I can't help but feel that you feel bad about me personally. So I'm really glad... Actually, that is a positive change from the pandemic. I definitely am more comfortable and more secure in myself without this physical reassurance. And then just one more time. I recognize a lot of my experience with COVID was not really, honestly, it didn't really negatively impact my wife that badly. And it's because I come from a household with income, like stable income, and then I also, like, am healthy enough to survive, COVID twice, which is good. And thankfully, I did not spread it to anyone. I'm pretty sure I didn't. No one came to me afterwards. If I did, I feel really bad. But yeah, part of me was like, I wish I could have done more. I felt really jealous of people who are going to study abroad still, like, in this past year or so. And I know because they went to Korea and Quarantined for two weeks. It's like, man, I wish I could have done that. But given the information I knew when I was at the opportunity to do that, I was like, no, it's fine for me to miss out on these experiences because I don't want to be someone who makes someone die from COVID or have a lifelong condition

from COVID. But it does like kind of suck. I wish I could have done all these things, but it's okay that I couldn't.

Klaus [44:27]: What was it like to... Because I guess you went to UNC.

Michelle [44:31]: Yeah. I did.

Klaus [44:31]: And you're still living in Chapel Hill...

Michelle [44:34]: Mhm.

Klaus [44:36]: And UNC just had their graduation this past couple of weeks. What was it like to be in Chapel Hill and to see all this happening? When obviously, as a 2021 graduate, you probably didn't get too much of that.

Michelle [44:51]: Yeah, we didn't get to do any of the traditions. I wasn't really looking forward to any of them, except for maybe the Bell Tower one where you write your name on the brick. I honestly liked my commencement more because it was, like, less people, so we weren't that close to each other. And it was also rainy that day, or it didn't rain yet, but it was cloudy. I feel like graduation is always really hot, so I'm like, glad I still got to go to that. But I did want to do my Department graduation, but I think it was just over Zoom when I did it, and I wish it wasn't because I remember going to someone else's and they had food. I was, like, kind of looking forward to that. And then I'm trying to think what else they did. I wish I could have had more family come. I did have some family come. They were very scared, too, but they still came. I am grateful for what I did have because it's still, like, more than, you know.

Klaus [46:00]: So are there any like books or movies or television or anything like that... entertainment that sort of sticks out to you as especially important to you from the last two years? Since the Pandemic began.

Michelle [46:20]: I kind of just watched cartoons. I don't think they've changed that much. I'm trying to think if I watched anything major.

Klaus [46:28]: Like, is there going to be anything that you think 30 years from now, you're going to look at and think like, oh, that's something that I was looking at during COVID.

Michelle [46:28]: I actually watched Avatar de Last Airbender for my first time during COVID. People really made fun of me because it was my first time watching it but I think that was just nice actually just

being able to watch through whole shows was really nice because it was like oh... like I watched all of Phineas and Ferb. Well, this is more recent I watched Out House on Disney Plus and like, I think Milan also came out but I did not like that movie. I remember it as the bad movie that came out during COVID. I can't think of any.

Klaus [47:28]: Well, that's all I've got. Thank you so much for doing this. Any final words? Anything else?

Michelle [47:34]: Thank you for having me.

Klaus [47:39]: All right, I'm going to stop.