

Interview with Dylan Peters

Anna Jones, Interviewer

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Macalester College

St. Paul (interviewer) and Baltimore (interviewee), via Zoom

[00:02]

AJ: So to start, could you just state your name, where you're from age, and what you're up to right now.

DP: Yeah, so my name is Dylan Peters, I'm from Minnetonka, Minnesota. Currently, I'm finishing my undergrad in Baltimore, Maryland. Graduating in May and then staying out here to work full time.

[00:29]

AJ: Great. Um, so the first question I want to ask you is just where have you been geographically throughout the pandemic? So just walk me through, you know, as detailed as you want to be with that.

DP: This is—I'm gonna be your fucking, I'm gonna be your outlier in this. So, for the—for the beginning of the pandemic, for the most part, yeah I was in lockdown with everyone else. Pretty hunkered down but come, June, I said, peace out, and went on a pretty far reaching road trip. So we went up, leaving from Minneapolis, up through North Dakota, Montana, shots for

Washington and Idaho and then down along the Pacific Coast Highway to California stayed there for a couple weeks and then back up through I think Arizona, Colorado, Wyoming, and South Dakota.

So that was my, that was pretty much June and part of—a little bit of July. And then I was in Minnesota from July to August, and then in late August, I moved to London, and then was in London, from August until—August till November, and then from November to January I was in Minneapolis or in Minneapolis suburbs, and then went back to Baltimore in January, and then that's where I've been ever since. And just to kind of circle back to that beginning, I was in Baltimore in March of 2020, and then came back and when the pandemic hit.

AJ: Back to Minnesota?

DP: Mm-hmm

[2:16]

AJ: And then, the next thing I want to ask is going through those different locations, who were you with?

DP: So, for the road trip component, I was with one close friend of mine the entire time so it was just her and I doing the road trip. But we stayed with various family and friends on the road trip. So I want to say like, we probably visited at least like 10 different—10 different groups of people on the way.

Like, this is gonna go on the fucking internet and people are going to be like he's a super spreader. Oh My God, should I include that I went to these weddings too?

[3:14]

AJ: Yeah. [laughing]

DP: You're like, give me this data, so on that road trip, I was with a friend. For the majority of quarantine I lived with my mom, just her and I, and then visited with the various friends. In London, I was living with a friend from college, so her and I were living together, but then I would also see her family a lot and that was pretty much it—definitely a much smaller community in the UK. And then coming back, living in Baltimore, I live with two other roommates, and then, you know, we'll see, we'll see various friends here and there.

I went to one wedding in—I think July, and that was actually fine, no one got COVID at the wedding. It was a really good time, no one really—people had masks at the ceremony but at the reception in masks were kind of a thing of—a thing of the spring. And then, I didn't go to my step-brother's wedding in September, which turned out to be a super spreader event. And now I'm going to my other step-brother's wedding in a month.

AJ: These dang step-brothers.

DP: Dude. It's so fucking crazy.

AJ: They keep getting married.

[4:33]

DP: She [step-brother's fiancée] posted something today and it was just—it was like, graphic, you know, it hasn't really hit me fully yet, what this means and this picture really sent me there.

AJ: Yeah, when is that wedding?

DP: May 29th.

[4:50]

AJ: Yeah. Dang, coming up. Okay, um, when you think back to March what were the most dramatic changes that have like—right following?

DP: Well my physical location, I mean that was the most apparent. I remember driving back and thinking that they were going to close the borders. It was fucking creepy. I'm like, I'm gonna be vulgar. I think yeah I mean, for me, the first thing was obviously like the physicality—the physical component was super jarring, because that was right before spring break too so we had a bunch of plans and all of those got cancelled and then trying to decide if I was going to leave my stuff at school versus coming back home. And then just taking the risk and taking the chance of like, okay we're not going to go back so I'm going to put all my stuff in my car and leave.

Um. For me that was definitely the most apparent change but also just the embodied experience of being a student—like the embodiment of my life, and everything that I had been working towards and building was like immediately displaced, like so many other people, but I think in that context, I lost like all sense of what was real and what wasn't because of that. And it was really liberating, in a sense, because a lot of the things that held me back in the life that I was living beforehand, didn't exist, and they weren't validated in my immediate surroundings. So, in this, I feel like I had a really interesting quarantine. I obviously had the moments of, you know what the hell's going on where are we what's happening but I also felt like immense respite being able to just sit and pause and kind of do the things that I wanted to do.

It was, it was a little bit more relaxing for me. It was a little, it was a needed break.

[7:16]

AJ: Yeah. Can you say a little bit more about—you know, you said it was liberating and some of the stuff that was kind of holding you back, or you know you were kind of getting stuck in was gone. Can you talk a little bit more about that?

DP: Yeah so for me, I think I was, I had just come back off a really good break in the winter of 20—At the start of 2020, I had a really good winter break and I was coming back to school and I was coming to some conclusions that I was really ready to be done with, going to college. I did not want to continue doing the like, you know, nine to ten pm grind every single day of just going through it and not really having an insight into what I wanted to do. But also, I think—I think being in a different place from where I grew up I got sucked into a lot of—I was very—I

was very, on track to hit a lot of things that I didn't want to do. So like working for a career that I think subconsciously understood that wouldn't make me happy. And being stuck in those cycles of okay you know I have to put on this performance for other people. I have to appear as though I'm meeting, you know these requisites of what it's like to be a quintessential college student, I have to, you know, be doing all these different things that deep down I was starting to realize that they weren't beneficial for me and they didn't make me happy so, being completely pulled out of that in that context and then you know finding yourself in the space for one, it's not the same physical space whatsoever. And then two, the things that I really wanted to work on didn't really exist anymore. I completely detached from the responsibility of having to maintain that facade.

[9:17]

AJ: Yeah, I mean, that's just a really awesome perspective, I feel like literally talking about that, you know, maybe like be like, ooh, I maybe—maybe that happened to me too.

DP: I think that totally happened to you, girl. I think you had a moment of like we're living, you know.

[9:36]

AJ: Yeah, No, I agree, um, would you say, so thinking about that. Do you think like the pandemic helped you figure out what you wanted to do more? Or did it help you realize that it's okay not to know?

DP: I think both of those things at the same time. I think one of the biggest gifts of this whole situation—the largest silver lining was the time it afforded, it put a huge pause button so you

know, I think one of the biggest issues with—for young people today is there's no time for us to integrate our experiences and process our memories. And see how those can actually update what we want to in our future and how we want to be living our lives. So I was really caught up with, you know, the day to day, very mundane tasks that didn't let you unplug from that, and we had been going, as a society, we've been going on that at least I had for my entire life, or at least you know, ending from high school and going into college.

So having that very punctual break where I didn't have to constantly compare myself to other people and be like, well, this person's, you know doing this internship or this person's traveling here like no one was doing that, you know, instead the things that defined us really had to come from what we were doing in that present moment. So that was really liberating because it let me explore what I wanted to do in a really safe environment. I kind of felt like I was back in high school, but without all the bullshit like social components of it and without all of the repressive restraints I had on myself, as well as what our culture had on us in high school. So, but also with none of the liabilities of having to be you know college student, and adult fending for yourself each day.

So in that sense, it number one, gave me time, it gave me a lot of time to think, gave me a lot of time to process. But also, you know, no one was doing what they wanted, or didn't want to do, everyone was just doing, they were just sitting, and so it really was a practice of, can I be comfortable in this space, can I be comfortable in the unknown? How am I going to take that with me, as you know, we go forward?

[12:06]

AJ: Yeah, totally. Um, I guess, this question is, is kind of related so like, specifically the question is, looking back on the year, what aspect of the year would be most surprising, or shocking to the you that already knew the pandemic was happening but like didn't know what what you were going to do with that time?

And then, like maybe attached to that, yeah, how has it helped you make this decision about what you're going to do post grad?

DP: Um, well I think—I think the most like punctuated shocking moment, and a very sharp acute blip of like, Oh, I did not whatsoever expect this was, I was supposed to be working as an RA in the fall at school, and they hadn't made a decision on whether or not we would be in person, if students were going to be going back all those things. So the week before I was supposed to leave they cancelled it. And so this had now been the second time when the housing I had, you know, set up for was pulled out from under me. So I had a week to decide, am I going to stay at home? Am I going to go and try to find the sublease out in Baltimore? Is that even worth it? Or am I going to do something completely different, am I even going to go back to school for the semester?

And so it really was a leap of faith, it was a—it was a very spontaneous decision to take up a friend's offer and move to London. And that had been something that was somewhat on my mind, that had been floating around in the discussions between us but never really something we seriously looked into. And then, when that happened it was almost like the pandemic repeating itself, you know, that—that very quick rift and what is real and what's not and that timeline jump. I feel like this whole—this whole last, what is it 15 months now, has just been jumping timelines,

it's just oh, all of a sudden we're juncturing into this, you know it's—. I don't know if that answered your question.

[14:24]

AJ: No, definitely. Um, so, just to walk through that a little bit more so you got the RA position taken away kind of like—how long after that were you in London?

DP: Um, maybe, maybe like 10 days.

AJ: That's, that's crazy.

DP: Yeah, it was. It was really quick. It was really, really quick. It was the fast decision. It was the soonest I've ever booked a flight.

AJ: How did traveling work internationally right now?

DP: Traveling was super easy it was I mean, so I drove to Chicago, and then from Chicago flew, so—no one was at the airport, at least in the international terminal, the plane—. And this was something that was really interesting to me, is on both flights there was like 30 people, and the flights could take like 500. So, at that point, there's no profitable angle to it, we're just, you know, burning a shit ton of fuel per capita. So that was the thing that I was really intrigued by on that flight is like, okay, these governments are bailing out the airline industry. What does that

mean—like for what? So I can go to the other side, obviously I was benefiting off of it but at the same time I, that's another—that's another layer of it that's so confusing. Does that justify? If only 30 people are demanding, does it still justify its existence?

[16:01]

AJ: Yeah. Have you done any more research into that topic?

DP: No, but in terms of the—the ease of travel—. For me, very easy getting into the UK. In fact there were no. There were no major issues they didn't even—they had me fill out some documentation about COVID and where I was going to self quarantine, but never—I was never asked to show any of that documentation, and I was never checked up on to see whether or not I was in quarantine, so there was very limited public health control over that process.

AJ: Did you go with your American passport or did you use—?

DP: Yeah, yeah, US.

AJ: Crazy I would have had to use your—. [New Zealander Passport]

DP: I know, but so that was the difference between England and Europe. I know, I was flying, I had met some guy who was going to—ultimately ending up in Austria, and he had like a packet of fucking documents, like letters that he had to have his girlfriend, I guess—I guess Austria had

just passed or the UK—or the EU had just passed some law saying that like significant others could come back if they were sponsored from the United States. And so he had to have scores of paperwork.

AJ: Yeah yeah I know, I met a girl this fall from France and she was dating someone in the US and it sounded insanely complicated for them to see each other.

Well, that's maybe why the UK isn't doing so well with COVID.

DP: No, the UK does not give a fuck about COVID.

[17:55]

AJ: Um, okay. On a lighter note, what are some hobbies that you've picked up—?

DP: Skating. Ska-ting. Just got done with roller skating. Um, yeah, that was the major hobby that I picked up. I got a keyboard. So that's been fun. Just making some tri-tone melody, I'm like [Keyboard sounds]. What else? I did a lot more art, just like random paintings, geometrical designs, stuff like that. Those are the hobbies I picked up, I guess.

[18:41]

AJ: Sure. Um, yeah talk a little bit more about skating, what, what got you into it?

DP: Yeah. Um, so I've always loved ice skating and I'd always wanted to try it, like dancing on roller skates, but never really had the time to do it and then all of a sudden a whole shit ton of time opened up.

Oh and yoga. That was the, uh, I can't believe I forgot about yoga. Yoga, I'm like YOGA. Yeah, so I—roller skating was just a really—a really beautiful, like, kind of conjuncture of physical activity but expression. And so, I let out a lot of energy when I skate not only like exercising my body but just screaming to whatever EDM and like moving, you know I feel, I feel like that's a huge—no one is really releasing at this time everyone's in their little boxes typing. Like my shoulders—my shoulders get scrunched, when I type for so long, and then I'll notice it and I'll freak the fuck out, so that's been a huge thing helping me not become a robot.

[19:58]

AJ: Yeah, totally with keyboards like I feel like I have smaller shoulders than you so that doesn't really happen to me, but even a little, so I can imagine, broader shoulders like you have to really tuck them in to type.

DP: It's so bad.

AJ: Was skating—was that influenced by anyone, or not really because you already had the interest in ice skating?

DP: Not really, um, there is a whole TikTok fad going around too, so I think just seeing it a lot more on social media, kind of, I don't think that was definitely not the major impetus but definitely played a little role and me like subconsciously being like, "Oh, I should—I should skate." But also, I feel like skating it, that's, that's one of the things that gets me in a flow state. Skiing and skating those two, my God when I get going, I'm just like in a different plane of existence, so.

And the skating rinks were closed obviously. Also it was summer.

[21:07]

AJ: Gosh you're making me want to buy roller skates.

DP: You have to buy fucking roller skates, it is the most liberating sense of like—you just glide.

[21:24]

AJ: Okay I will. I feel like this question really doesn't pertain to you, just based on knowing you but, um, is there anything that makes you anxious about restrictions easing up, and I feel like this is kind of worded weirdly so I'm going to explain it more. Are you nervous about social interactions, like class in person? Shoot, you don't have that, maybe graduating as the world opens up, is anything, making you nervous or like literally not at all?

DP: I'm very skeptical of this whole reopening campaign that's going on, I'm like, I'm still very not on that wavelength. I wouldn't say it—I'd say I'm skeptical. The only thing that makes me kind of tremble a little bit is staying in the US. Sometimes I think, like, would it be better to move to a country where this stuff isn't really an issue like New Zealand? You know, like I'm right now I'm kind of—I've committed to—did I tell you about this? So I'm gonna stay full time at this—.

So, that's like a year-two year long commitment, which is great. I'm really excited to be working there but it does, this is the—this, I think ties back to this will be, this will be a good tie back to some of your earlier questions. It's like the things that I really focused on and learned in like hard quarantine, before the start of the school year, really before I came back here, those goals that I had set for myself, and those aspirations that I had are definitely still what I'm trying to achieve. However, they're slowly being, you know, diminished incrementally by being back in this environment. And so, I don't know if my—my reintroduction to this space, this physical space before COVID, right, that I existed—because when I came back here there was definitely like a juncture period it felt like time, that gap of time didn't exist, and it felt like I was jostled back or jolted back into a lot of the same systems and dynamics and like trauma cycles from that place that never really got to be worked on. And so a lot of the process of moving back was like, okay, identifying what things were unhealthy in this space that I can improve upon. What things do I want to now focus my energy and attention into? What opportunities do I have that and have always had but never took advantage of? And so, I guess the only thing that gets me somewhat preoccupied is not staying true to some of the things that I had planned for myself beforehand.

So that's one component but also just the—. I don't think this opening up thing—I just want to go to a club, you know, I just want to dance on the fucking floor and get just fucked up,

and not worry about it. I just bought these floodlights from my apartment, I'm like, I'm gonna host—I haven't hosted a single party this semester now I'm like, I'm going to do it. I'm gonna have these huge colored lights and stuff.

[24:53]

AJ: Fun. That'll be awesome. Yeah, I feel like I've been thinking about—that's a really good point like the thing that everybody liked about COVID is it like, gives us a chance to slow down, people were cooking, people were meditating, you know, and, yeah, especially as things open up you're going to have like almost like that—that internal anxiety to get back out there. Where it's like, everything that you enjoyed about slowing down is almost, you know—.

DP: Yeah, it's a weird tug of war. It's—it's kind of upsetting. And I feel like there's not really, I'm still trying to find that equilibrium, I'm still trying to—I'll go through these phases of being hyper-social and seeing people and not really paying attention to those wellness practices that I developed, and then completely plunging back into them in isolation. And I want to find a healthy—healthy in between.

[25:48]

AJ: Yeah, probably just being aware of it is really important to that though, so many people aren't.

Um, okay, has the pandemic—like the shift that have happened with the pandemic, have they been easier or more difficult than you expected?

DP: A lot more—A lot more. Um. Well, that's the—that's a hard question because it's like, I don't know to what extent I expected a pandemic to look like, you know, um, but I guess in terms of like okay I've learned that I don't have housing anymore for example, right like are you talking about, okay—.

[26:41]

AJ: Sure, you can be more specific like if you were to think about your previous self, having to realize, you know, my housing is taken away, what am I going to do? Did you handle that better than you expected? Do you think it affected you more than you thought it would?

DP: Yeah. I think throughout, I think, was it's been really beneficial and what I'm really proud of this whole time is trusting my gut. And that's—that's the thing that beforehand, I don't think I really did as much and now I really focus on that intuitive component being like, “Okay does that feel right?” If I'm gonna make, you know, the next thing that comes up to me and you know the next bend in the—fork in the road or whatever happens, because there's going to be more with, you know, the next couple months, the next years or whatever.

Um, I've been increasingly being like, can I feel the right decision? So that's been good—I've been pleasantly surprised that I've been able to adapt that mindset and that evaluation that form of evaluating things, as time has gone on because, to a certain extent like a lot of these

decisions and a lot of things that go on with COVID, there's no logic in it, there's no rationality, you know it's very spontaneous it's very sporadic, and I feel like that needs to be met with a certain kind of similar energy, because so many people, and that's another thing about the difference between before COVID and now is like so many people had X year plans and all of those have been changed now, and I really don't know what percentage those plans would have even been fulfilled if COVID hadn't even happened, but I think that's just a lesson of life like things are always changing, focus on what's happening right now.

[28:33]

AJ: Yeah, like so many of you will be like “I would be in med. school right now” and you're like, but would you?

DP: Yeah, exactly.

AJ: Okay, we haven't really touched on this at all but—

DP: Quick, I just gotta go grab a charger. I'll be right back.

AJ: Okay, sounds good.

DP: My computer is going to die.

I literally, put my air pods away, then started walking back and got halfway here I'm like, I didn't grab a fucking charger.

AJ: Dammit. Come on man.

DP: I'm okay ready.

[29:59]

AJ: Okay, so the next thing I want to ask you about is your relationship with family and friends. So like, specifically, who have you gotten closer with and who has drifted away? And how have relationships changed because of COVID?

DP: Yeah, that's a huge—COVID let me shed so many unnecessary relationships, like so many that I didn't fucking want, need, care about, hated, just disappeared. And—and that wasn't necessarily an easy thing right? Like I think the hardest part was, recognizing that a lot of those relationships had to end, like ones that weren't serving me and it was me primarily doing all the work in and and so like a lot of outdated friendships that I had, really feeling this need to continue on with certain friendships from high school, especially, and like certain friendships from a past life I feel like COVID really cemented that transition and said like, okay, you are now a distinct person outside of that.

And, like I really let myself reevaluate a lot of those relationships, as if I were to meet those people that I had known and maybe grown apart from, meet them on these terms as a new

person and realize that like, if I were to meet them today I wouldn't feel compelled to maintain that relationship and I don't think that that's a bad thing, you know.

[31:39]

AJ: Yeah. Totally.

DP: And it also made me a lot more comfortable in seeking out new relationships, like, I think, in COVID I became a lot less picky about who I was seeing I was like, I just want to see people. I just want to have that experience—you know just any experience with another fucking human, meeting people just yeah, it's just meeting new people and like feeling that rush, I think that the senses were definitely heightened on—in experiences where you got to meet new people and hear new things because you know we were all cooped up with the same, same people for so long, which was good and it's in a lot of ways, but at the same time didn't really lend to new experiences.

Yeah, I—I feel like it was really beneficial for me to live with my mom for that amount of time. Even though there was a lot of like “holy shit I need to get out of my mom's house” energy, but at the same time it was like, “Oh, this is—I'm recognizing trauma that you passed on to me from an unresolved issue in your life. Because I'm like, up front with it, I can now say that that's not mine and like off—so it was a lot of processing for myself it was a lot of processing for her. And a lot of really healthy boundaries were starting to begin to like form. So I think in that sense it was, it was really beneficial for me to like having a quick, okay, this is what's going on. I don't need to participate in these things anymore, this is what I want that relationship to look like.

[33:20]

AJ: Yeah, totally. Um, what about like, obviously your relationship with your dad hasn't changed that much due to the pandemic but like you said—you've already mentioned to me like phone calls with him. But yeah, how was that weird like to call him while he's in—is he in New Zealand right now or Australia?

DP: Australia. Um, it's just kind of a bummer because with that relationship there's not really changed—I mean that we always telecommunicate so it's not that—that part hasn't changed but in the sense that, realizing okay I haven't seen him in over a year now. And with starting a new job, like, okay, maybe after COVID travel restrictions, you know, if they could ease up I could see him but even then COVID kind of stops the possibility of me getting to go down there for a decent chunk of time to actually see people and kind of feel normal before I start this job. So like this you know this full time job commitments, and then COVID are just overlapped in like the worst possible way.

So, in that sense it's been kind of disappointing because you ask yourself like, okay, well, if I'm trying to get to that country I have to commit a large amount of time to being there. And for the longest time I've been telling him like listen, college, in and of—college in and of itself is like difficult to find enough time to like not be working or doing school or stuff like that to be able to go down there but even more so like after college, you know you're working. At least I decided to do what I know—I was thinking of traveling for a bit. But I didn't want to jump headfirst into that right away.

[35:18]

AJ: Also right now is like such a hard time to do that when like sure the US is getting vaccinated, but no one else is and, you know, it's something that might be better a few years down the line.

DP: Yeah, I just didn't want to—this is another gut feeling like I remember being done with school and I was like, I—the last thing I want to do is be tied down to like a nine to five and be like a workhorse. But this job will let me, again have time to just kind of breathe, sustain myself, feel around, and then come up with a plan as to what I want to do instead of being like “Ah I'm done with school I'm just going to go fuck around ,you know, do something that I really haven't thought much about or why—like I really, I think, a huge thing with COVID is building those intentions like the intention is very very necessary when starting these new things.

AJ: Sure, so even though it's like a job that feels like jumping into “Job World,” like taking this job gives you the opportunity to still focus on some of the good things, good practice.

DP: Yeah. I think it's just a step, like I see—I see the college as like this weird graph where, you know, or even the start of high school for a lot of people for me definitely like you get on that roller coaster you know and you go up you go up and then the peak of college happens somewhere sophomore, junior year right and that—and then you start going down and like I feel like I've met that top part, and I'm now starting to come down on it but I don't want to go from

here to like here immediately. [large dropping hand motions] You know I want to have that gradual decline.

[37:06]

AJ: What do you mean, in terms of stress or in terms of like being done with education?

DP: No just—just busy like for me college is just like required every fucking waking moment of my—you know like, all of my energy is poured into it. And so, in that space, I don't have time to necessarily create what's next in an efficient, or even realistic way. It's a lot of quick decisions, like I'm gonna quickly go along with this. But those decisions are huge. If you plan on, you know, traveling to different countries and potentially stopping a career path ,so yeah I mean like, I want to just be like “Oh I'm—I'm getting my degree and then packing my bag and then getting on the first plane to some random spot” because what I'm going to show up and everyone's going to be in their house quarantine, you know.

[38:08]

AJ: Yeah, totally. What does pandemic graduation look like?

DP: Honestly, I don't—don't really care about the whole ceremony, ours is in person but it's only for students. So it's going to be kind of—and we can't walk. So we just go to the stadium, and we

sit outside socially distanced. And I guess they have the President speak, we don't even know who our speaker is yet, which I'm kind of annoyed about.

AJ: They probably don't have one picked yet.

DP: Right, I'm like, anyways, um, yeah, but my whole family's coming, which will be really fun.

AJ: Yeah, that will be really fun. So who's coming, Mom, grandparents?

DP: Grandparents and then my cousin Sonia for sure. And then potentially my cousin Jack and his girlfriend. But they're up in Pennsylvania so they're really close.

[39:16]

AJ: Right, they could just drive down. Oh, okay. I know you've been like, pretty positive through this whole thing, so there's that but what was the worst day—you don't have to be, you know, like, if you—also if you don't want to share you can be more vague or whatever—.

DP: Like this is personal. [Joking]

AJ: Like, I don't know, people had shitty moments.

DP: I know, I know, it's a loaded question.

AJ: Or just a time period, like which felt like the most like you didn't have control or helpless or—.

DP: I don't know, I think there's been a lot of moments where the times I'm feeling the worst are also the times that I'm feeling like the most alive at the same time. Like, London was extremely isolating. That was super difficult going there and then having a very—can, is that super loud? [in reference to sirens in the background].

[40:27]

AJ: No, it's—the transcript is still working.

DP: Okay, being isolated because my—for context roommate was very distant going through her own COVID crisis. And so being there without knowing anyone, without having the opportunity to actually make connections. And for the most part, living alone, a lot, at least half of the time was like, super intense.

And it was something I've wanted, I—it was genuinely something that subconsciously, I wanted to do, like I had come off of this whole summer long of learning new things about myself, trying to work on things that I wanted to make better, but I really wanted to, like, apply those things I was really hungry for an experience that would like put me to the test in a lot of those ways. And that, going to London really did that, so it was like okay I felt like I was in a deprivation chamber of social interaction. And it was kind of—it was hard I mean there were

definitely days where I was like, “am I gonna even be able to fucking speak to people after this has happened” like you're just in your head, like I can't watch TV anymore. What, what am I going to do, like the only social interaction I've had in the last two weeks is with the fucking robot at self checkout you know.

So, that was, I think one of the hardest parts, just like the general isolation, but at the same time, like I'm really thankful that that happened, I learned a lot from it. Um, and I definitely had a strong sense of individuality, strength. I felt like I was very independent and that's something I crave.

[42:22]

AJ: Yeah, that's awesome. Um, and then, you know, what was the best day, or one of the best days?

DP: The best day...

AJ: It's also loaded, so you can just give one happy memory.

DP: I think so—I think some of the best parts of it, where I was really on a—on a high was in one on our road trip in Los Angeles, that was, that was like a really special moment. It just felt very detached from reality. And I really appreciated that, it felt like we were creating our, you know, our realities, every single day. With—without any obstacles or things like that so, I think just the creative, the creative energy of that trip was really special.

AJ: Yeah. Do you think it had to do with the city, or just like you and Zoe vibing?

DP: I think it was that, because we had spent a lot of time together already on that trip, so you know when you're with someone for a long time, you just kind of click in wavelength with them. And so we were speaking a language, our/like our own language, and then already there, you know, and it was like—it was just very plastic. It was very creative.

And LA was fun, I don't know if it was necessarily LA. I think it was because we had a homebase, like that was the longest time we were stationary. So we didn't have to worry about, okay where am I going to sleep tonight> Where are we going to put a car? Like things like that, which was nice, was a break on a break on a break.

[44: 39]

AJ: Yeah. Um, yeah do you think you and Zoe got closer, due to the pandemic or are you already—felt like you were already close before that?

DP: It's weird because our relationship—you know when you you know when you're like close friends with someone and you can't really put together when you started to get really—with even with us I'm like, I can kind of have a vague concept of like when we started to get really close, but it just kind of clicked at a certina point, and then you're just like “oh it's kind of always been like that.” So for us, I mean her and I have been close through weird times in our life. We've known eachother since we were twelve. But, only really catalyzed our relationships that we have

now towards the—towards the first couple years of college, it totally got us closer. Yeah, it's I mean obviously it made us a lot closer, but I think it—I think it made us remember—.

And that's another thing about the whole processing thing like don't have time to process what other people mean to you, how they fit into your life, what they satisfy for you, on an energetic level so I think that was really good for us, especially having a lot of shared life experiences to like kind of come together and be like, Oh, I have a very similar perspective that other people don't necessarily have about a lot of things.

[46:17]

AJ: Yeah, totally. Do you feel like you've had many interactions during COVID with people who maybe don't feel—like don't care about COVID as much or has that not really happened to you?

DP: Oh so many people.

AJ: How have you dealt with that type of stuff, or how has it affected your opinions as well?

DP: I feel like I'm a very interesting case of like COVID cause I totally, you know, I'm like, duh, COVID is a thing, like I have my vaccine. I did my stuff with COVID, but like to some people traveling period is like a sin, you know. So, I was exposed to a lot of people who did not give two shits about it, who I still have friends who are active, who like not necessarily will refuse to wear their mask, but like, if they don't have to wear it. Yeah, or not even—not necessarily the nose thing but like, like in your apartment building right when I'm in apartment buildings, that's

the one place like I really try to have it on because I'm like, people live here. You don't need this in your building, you don't need to ruffle those feathers and like one of my close friends, she'll she like won't wear a mask or she'll take it off like walking through a hallway or something and it's like, why just leave it on, but when I'm outside I don't, I don't really ever wear a mask outside, unless I need to by like my school or whatever.

But no, like this, this guy I was going out with in London. There was one night where he told me I'm like “this guy was with this guy in London.”

AJ: “I was going out with this guy in London, no big deal.”

DP: This guy named Kean. And one night before one of our dates he texted me and he was like—no, no, it was the morning of our one of our dates and he's like “oh sorry I just saw your text I was out last night” and I knew he had been going to these like illegal underground raves that they were having in the city. And I remember having this like dissonant moment because on one layer, I was like, ooh, there are definitely people with COVID at that rave, like there are 100% people, this is a huge what the fuck—.

But on the other hand I was like cripplingly alone, you know, and so, in that situation the yearning to be with another person won out and I ended up seeing him that night.

[49:16]

AJ: Well that's like the forefront of COVID right there is like, we like, you know, like physical risk, and like, mental risk.

DP: And I've—I've completely come to the conclusion that one—neither of them are more important than the other. But there have been so many situations where the mental risk is so much more than the physical. That, for me, I've assessed it as like, I need to act on that, you know, and I feel like a lot of people haven't just okay that's just a read it's just me I, I'm really like I've got to take care of the mind.

AJ: Yeah, no, definitely. My Computer also is about to die hard so I'm going to go grab a charger.

[50:22]

Alright, one moment. Gosh, I feel like, what did you say here I feel like I had a follow up. Yeah, um, do you think like, I think this about myself, maybe sometimes like, do you think your perspective would be different if you had gotten COVID or not really?

DP: Yeah I mean I—you had to think so like I think so. I don't know that's—that's some territory that's some weird energy that I'm like horrified of going down.

AJ: But it's—I mean it's kind of silly I mean—. But it is interesting like if humans can do something and there isn't a consequence we're like, oh, we're good, but it's like mental health is so important so like, it doesn't make sense to sit in a room and let yourself just deteriorate. When there are ways to be safe, and also—.

[51:52]

DP: Yeah. Um, well I can give you some examples. I'm like, my fucking step-brother who gave his ninety year old grandmother COVID at his wedding. I don't think they regret it. You know, I don't think they regret it. His brother after having witnessed that entire debacle is also choosing to have his wedding. So, I think for a lot of people, you know the mental, the heart is winning out, and I think I don't think that's necessarily like—I obviously have advocated for that to some extent, but I would never fucking comes to wedding, you know I would, I—I'm thinking of maybe having like 10 people come to my apartment who are all vaccinated, but not my ninety year old unvaccinated grandmother.

AJ: Yeah. My cousin was on homecoming court, and my—.

DP: Oh I saw that picture, I was dead, I was like oh my god Sam he's a senior!

AJ: He won!

DP: Yeah, he got it, but also like I did not—I think of Sam as like a fetus and he's graduating?

[53:11]

AJ: I know right. But it was funny because my grandpa hasn't left his nursing home since the pandemic began. And we've barely seen him, just started seeing him. And then she [my aunt] asked my mom if she would take him to the pepfest. And my mom was like no, he's not going to that.

DP: Is Izzy doing better?

AJ: Um, I think so. Except she got picked up from school day because she was feeling anxious, and then we asked questions and she was like, I just need a nap, it's like, okay girl.

I'm trying to think if there's any last things I feel like that's pretty great. Yeah.

DP: Yeah, I liked those questions.

[End of Interview, 54:08].