

# New School Diaries



A collection of confessions  
from The New School student  
body about their lives during  
the COVID-19 pandemic.

**NSFP**



This delightful zine is dedicated to the New School students who stuck it out in this unfathomably strange time, continuing to pursue their education despite the frequent malaise in a world turned on its head.

But it is also dedicated to those who chose themselves, their family, their health or their sanity, knowing their progress in their degrees would wait for them, and that coming out of this alive was more important than anything.

- The New School Free Press Staff

## **\* Please be advised:**

This series may, at times, discuss depression and suicide.

If you or a loved one struggle with this, please contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at [1-800-273-8255](tel:1-800-273-8255).

## **Other resources include:**

**NYC Well :** text “WELL” to 65173  
OR call 1-888-NYC-WELL (692-9355)

**NAMI (Nation Alliance on Mental Illness) helpline :** call 1-800-950-NAMI OR in a crisis, text “NAMI” to 741741.

**SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) National Helpline :** 1-800-662-HELP(4357)

In this time of great distance and change, both physical and emotional, the experience of loss in one form or another seems woven into each of our unique experiences.

However, those who have endured times of great hardship before us often seem to recall the bright moments that made life worth living despite it all.

One thing we, as college students, have lost is the proximity of our fellow New Schoolers. It seems fair to say that The New School in particular offers its students refuge, a community of wildly unique yet similarly “weird” individuals. We at The New School Free Press were inspired by the online communities built by the likes of Humans of New York, Tiny Love Stories and CoronaVirus Confessions. Perhaps we can dig even deeper into how our unique experiences inform who we are, what we value and why we all ended up at The New School by exploring what has defined our COVID experiences.

So, The New School Free Press asked the student body:

**What has brought you the most joy OR been your biggest challenge during the pandemic?**

And they responded...

“ And although there will inevitably be bad days ahead, I know that I will push through — maybe a little bruised but never completely broken. ”

“ It’s been healing to have something to care for besides myself. ”

“ When I was finally forced to slow down and actually spend some time with myself I realized I needed to make some changes. ”

“ The thing about answering this question is that I’m not sure what COVID has done to me — is still doing to me. ”

“ I forget what normal is, I forget what real life was like, and that’s the scariest part. ”

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## Kaycie Lyn Matsukado

*Junior at The New School  
Studying Photography  
Currently living in Honolulu*

I am undoubtedly a better and stronger human being because of the pandemic.

To keep it short, the world put me through trials and tribulations that rivaled Hercules training to be a hero. It was incredibly emotionally taxing to see my great aunt endure abuse, my uncle to pass away, my five year relationship end, to say goodbye to my dog after she couldn't fight her cancer any longer, to have my purse stolen, and to lose my belongings because of a building fire and subsequent water damage. Saying goodbye to everything was simultaneously hard and easy, but I just wanted so badly for 2020 to end.

And it did. Through the pain of it all, I survived, and at the end of the day I don't want to focus on the horrible happenings as hellfire. I just want to

acknowledge the tremendous growth and love I created for myself. I did it.

I am strong.

And although there will inevitably be bad days ahead, I know that I will push through – maybe a little bruised but never completely broken.



# Layna Williams

*Junior at The New School  
Studying Journalism + Design  
Currently living in Los Angeles*

I moved to L.A. in August to be with my boyfriend after months of long distance because of COVID. It was a huge relief, but I don't have a lot of friends here besides him so it was pretty lonely— until November. On the weekend of my birthday, we adopted a stray dog named Joni.

She was very lethargic and unhealthy, but so sweet and gentle. We could tell she was just so worn out from life and needed love. Over the last few months, we've watched her grow into her personality, becoming quirky and funny as her health has improved. She's a great hiker and passenger for long drives. It's been healing to have something to care for besides myself. Having her has soothed my loneliness a lot, and I imagine hers too.



# Brooke Cullen

*Junior at The New School  
Studying Journalism + Design  
Currently living in Williamsburg*

COVID was a blessing in disguise. I was very accustomed to a fast paced lifestyle pre-COVID. When I was finally forced to slow down and actually spend some time with myself I realized I needed to make some changes. COVID forced me to reevaluate who I am and what I want from this world.

I walked away from some friendships that were no longer serving a positive purpose in my life. I fell in love and left him behind to move back to New York and go back to school. I feel it's safe to say that one thing COVID has taught me is that life moves on, no matter what is happening in the world around you.

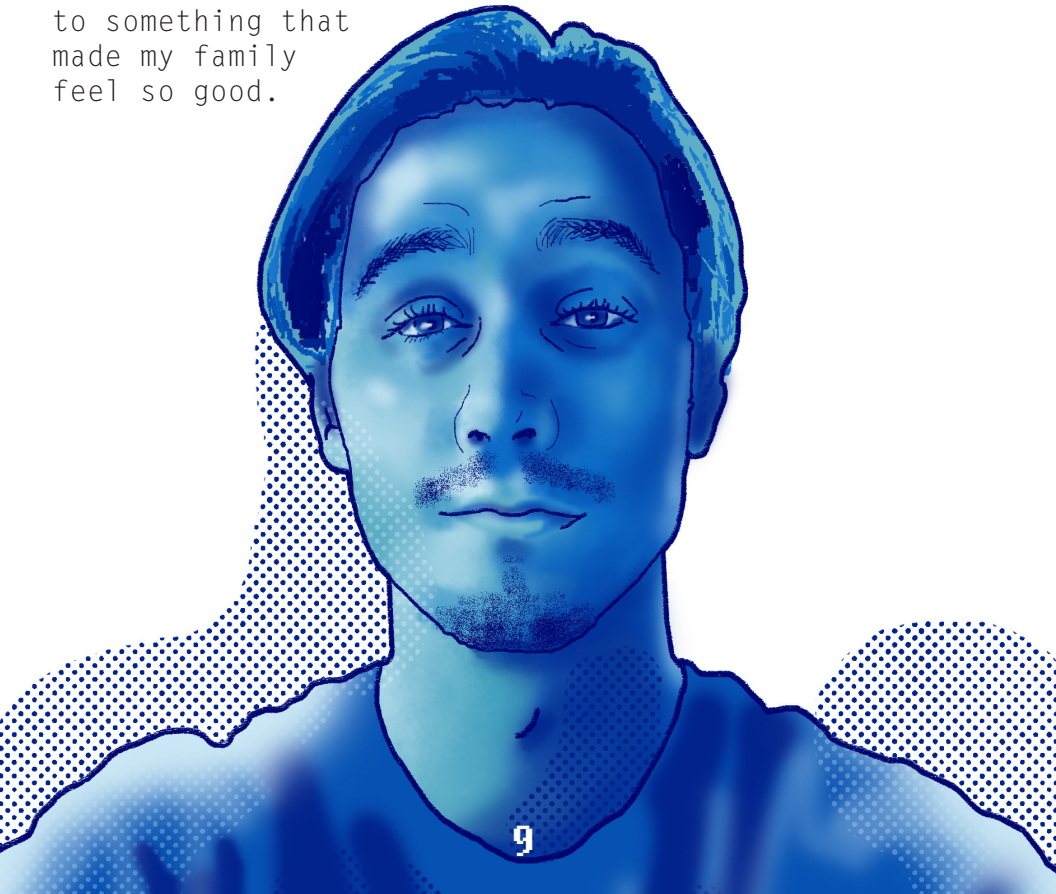




# Jacob Reed Stolzenfels

*Junior at The New School  
Studying Theater  
Currently living in Honolulu*

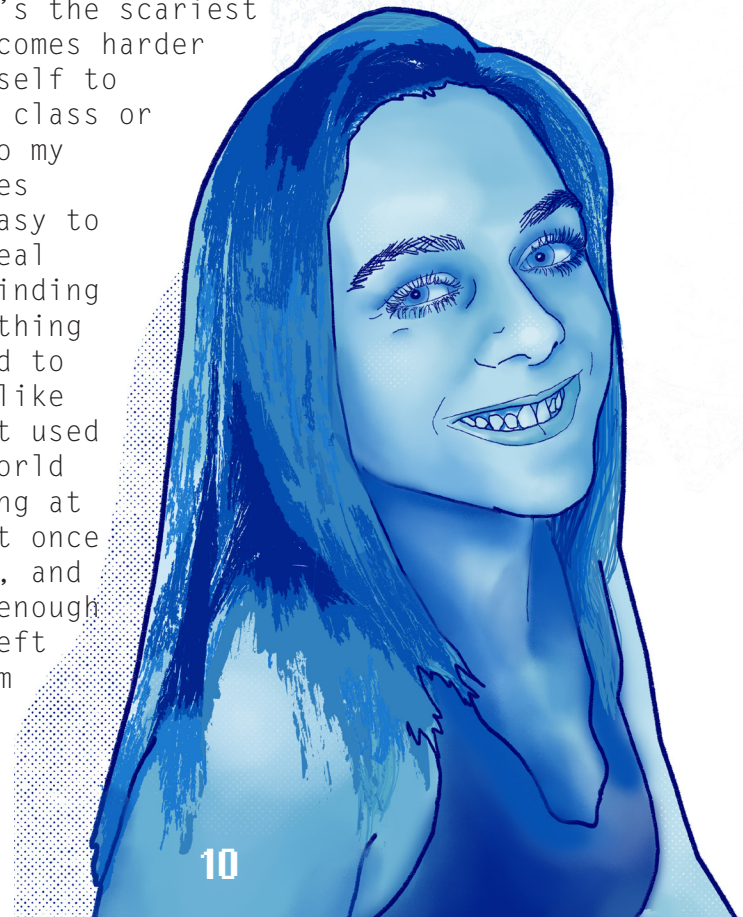
My biggest achievement during COVID was helping my family move into their new home. For almost two years, my family of five had been living in a small, two bedroom apartment as we were looking for a house that would suit our needs. My family loves one another, but I could see the stress that the situation caused my parents. Once they found their perfect house, I was very thankful for the opportunity to help them pack up their entire lives and move everything in - which included our horses, ducks, and dogs. In any other situation, I would have missed this enormous move because of my studies in New York. It made me happy to feel like I contributed to something that made my family feel so good.



# Jenna Ryan

*Junior at The New School  
Studying Journalism + Design  
Currently living in NYC*

The biggest challenge that this unprecedented pandemic has brought me is the neverending search for motivation and meaning. Each day that the pandemic continues into the next, I find myself further away from the answers, the cure that I'm looking for. It's becoming increasingly hard, as I'm sure it has for many other students around the globe, to come up with an answer as to why what I'm doing now is important or why I should even continue. Why am I waking up everyday to sit in class on my laptop when the future is so uncertain and less guaranteed than ever before? I forget what normal is, I forget what real life was like, and that's the scariest part. As it becomes harder to motivate myself to participate in class or put effort into my work, it becomes increasingly easy to give up. The real challenge is finding something, anything to look forward to when it seems like everything that used to bring the world joy is crumbling at the roots. What once was is no more, and there are not enough distractions left to keep me from my thoughts.



# Olivia Paxton

*Junior at The New School  
Studying Creative Writing  
Currently living in Williamsburg*

The thing about answering this question is that I'm not sure what COVID has done to me - is still doing to me. As to which end of this experience has been good and which bad, I am mostly clear. However, how far those ends stretch and in which directions, I am still uncovering.

What I know for certain is that my life is feeling more profound. Moving to Idaho from Brooklyn has brought me my greatest joy and challenge. The fiber of my being now feels more malleable. Through that change in my own texture, I have allowed my once sturdy structure to be deconstructed. In time my personal barometer will be able to measure how many positives and how many negatives make up my experience of this pandemic.

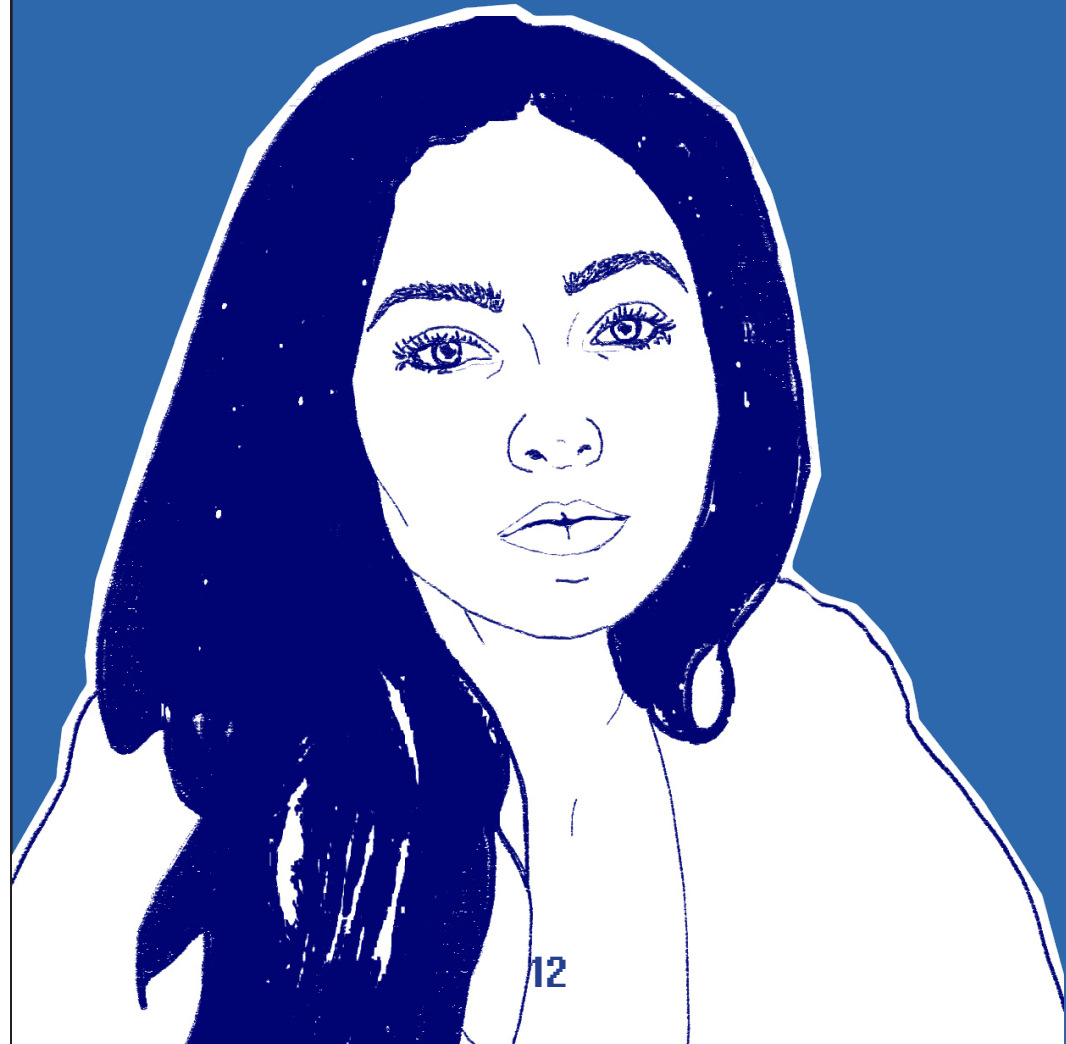
But whatever the ratio - I know I will be profoundly changed by having left the corner of Havemeyer and South Third.



# Rie Boice

*Junior at The New School  
Studying Journalism + Design  
Currently living in Sun Valley, Idaho*

Rie is an editor and reporter for the New School Free Press. She began the New School Diaries series and designed and edited this zine!



# Rebecca Mesonjnik

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Studying Journalism + Design  
Currently living in NYC*

Rebecca is the art editor and a reporter for the New School Free Press. She illustrated the New School Diaries series!



To experience this series in it's full glory, check it out on the New School Free Press Tik Tok and Instagram.



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