

Taylor Forth

Creative Writing

Personal Narrative

24 March 2021

## Lollapalooza

As the warm Chicago sun beat down on my body in the mid-afternoon, I knew I had chosen the appropriate, yet scandalous outfit. I had on my new yellow jean shorts, a comfy blacked laced bra, and my white air force ones. Something definitely out of my comfort zone, but this was how everyone was dressed. I was walking the streets, heading towards Grant Park, home of the four-day music festival, Lollapalooza. I felt tan and confident, as it was the first day of August, so I had an entire summer to darken my skin tone. My hair was in two long french braids and I was covered in gold glitter. I remember looking down at the beaded bracelet my friend had just given me that said: “fuck off”. Next to it was my colorful and nonremovable Lolla wristband, which got me into the park.

My parents were terrified for me to attend Lolla that year because 2019 was very eventful with shootings and bombings across the United States. A place full of 400,000 people for four days straight seemed disturbingly like the ideal place for such a tragedy; however, I wanted to go. I wanted to get out of my comfort zone and be with my friends in a different environment. I wanted to enjoy life. I wanted to be shoved into a hotel room with 12 other people!

After our 12 block walk from our hotel, we finally entered the park around 3 o'clock. There were seven different stages playing music anywhere from hip-hop to techno to country to rap to alternative rock. I witnessed all types of people that day: the highly intoxicated (even though it was only three in the afternoon), the stoners, the crack heads, the homeless, and the

people who were wearing fewer clothes than I was. The first artist we wanted to see was Hozier, so we mosied our way down to the T-Mobile Stage. We made our way through the crowd to get “good seats” by sliding in between people. The trick is you lie and say your friends are up closer waiting for you, so people let you by. Other times you have to give a little shove. I can not stress this enough when I say that every inch of your body was touching someone else, that is how closely packed you are, almost like sardines. Thankfully, I am 6 feet tall, so I was able to have some breathing room and see the stage. Unfortunately, for my friends that were 5’5” or shorter, all they saw was the back of some frat boy’s jersey and the recycled hot air of someone else's exhale.

My night ended with watching The Chainsmokers by myself because my friends wanted to see The Strokes on a different stage. It probably wasn't smart leaving them, but it all worked out in the end. I got to listen to my all-time favorite song *Somebody*, followed by *Don't Let Me Down*, *Call You Mine*, *Who Do You Love*, *Paris*, and *Something Just Like This*. The Chainsmokers performed on the main stage, so they held a firework show to close the night down, and instantly the impressive Chicago skyline was filled with red sparks. That was only day one.

For day two, I decided to spice up my outfit again; I was feeling bolder after seeing what all the other girls were wearing the day before. I had my new bright red jean shorts on, a white cropped v-neck tank top, and again, my white air force ones. I wore those shoes because they were durable and could handle me standing and walking for hours on end. Half my hair was up in two little space buns, while the rest was down and wavy from the braids the day before. Once again, my chest was covered in gold glitter. I had also put a black star stamp on my upper right cheek.

My friends and I didn't like the music line-up for day two, so we decided to go a little later than usual. I think everyone had the same plan because the line to scan in was enormous. I witnessed men and women pee in the street because the line wasn't moving and you can't lose your spot. That was something I never thought I would have to see. Once we finally got inside, we started our late afternoon watching 21 Savage, which turned into mosh pit after mosh pit. After that, we went to see NF. I was probably eight people away from the stage. I ended my night attending Childish Gambino; however, I thought his show was lacking, because he did not have a good live performing voice. At this point, I found out that one of my friends, Jazlyn, got a little too intoxicated during 21 Savage and left the group without anyone noticing. She wouldn't answer her phone and we had no clue where she was. When we returned to the hotel, we contemplated calling the police. Right when we were about to, she walked into our room. Sadly, her phone got stolen and she ended up at the medical tents and spent her whole afternoon there getting treated. We all decided from then on we would stay in at least pairs of two.

It was now day three of Lollapalooza and I was having the time of my life. I wore black jean shorts, a rouge-colored bra, and the staple shoe, my air force ones. Half of my hair was pulled back into a small ponytail, while the rest laid over my neck curled. Day three was definitely the hottest day, leading to continual sweating throughout the day. We started off watching 6lack perform on the Bud Light stage. I got to listen to *Let Her Go*, *Loaded Gun*, *Switch*, *Imported*, *Seasons*, and *OTW*. Right after its completion, we ran over to watch Lil Wayne at the T-Mobile stage, which was on the other side of the park, so that was quite the trek. Lastly, we finished the night watching RL Grime at Perry's stage, which was the EDM stage. I was in a mosh pit for an hour straight, constantly being moved and pushed around as the crowd danced to the music. I clung onto my black over-the-shoulder purse to ensure that no one would try to steal

it. By the end, my legs were covered in dirt, my top had changed to a darker color from all the sweating I had done that day, and my white air forces were no longer white.

On day four, I wore my new Levi jean shorts, a black cropped tank top and matching black choker necklace, and my no longer white, air force ones. I had my hair in a ponytail with bubble braids. Again, this wasn't my typical style, but I was starting to like dressing up more. The line to get in was extremely short in comparison to the previous days. We quickly entered and headed towards the Bud Light Stage to get a good spot for Louis the Child. During their show, there was an airplane that flew above us and drew a crown in the sky and wrote "smile" and "Louis". The last performance we got to see was Flume. Beach balls were thrown into the crowd and I was able to hit one up. On the walk back to the hotel, the streets were absolutely packed with people with some streets being blocked off. Street Performers were playing on the drums, trying to make money as the crowds of people passed by. Inside, it made me sad a little because I knew this adventure was closing down.

Looking back on this experience, especially with COVID right now, I would give anything to be back at Grant Park listening to that music, even if it meant I was getting shoved around for an hour. It's funny to think that fewer clothes would equal more confidence and more comfort, but that's what it did for me. Those outfits weren't something I could casually wear to class or to the grocery store; they allowed me to express myself in a new way. Lollapalooza got me out of my comfort zone, allowing me to be free and determine my own actions. It taught me to enjoy life and that splurging on yourself in order to have a good time isn't always a bad thing.