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<Begin Segment 5>

AT: 24:47 And so when you came to Chicago, I mean, how we met was through Japanese American community programs, things like that. So can you, can you talk a little bit about your experience coming to Chicago? And, I mean, I imagine you, you tapped in at some point, so can you describe what that was like?

AW: 25:14 Yeah, it was really, um, yeah, it was really interesting. I, I definitely was like seeking something, you know, and I felt a lot of like, both really wanting it and also like, you know, knowing that I'm like an outsider to this particular like community that has this long history of having resettled here right after World War II and, and really having like built, you know, like, especially like, because of all the sort of exclusion from things like housing or like social services or like certain kinds of resources right after World War II like, um, yeah, I was really struck by how people had really built their own institutions here and like that, like the JASC was started as like a social service organization for that reason. And that like, you know, like there were like Japanese American, like, you know, sports leagues and, um, just that like the community had sort of organized itself in this particular way because like, they had to, um, and that, yeah. And that, like, you know, that that's sort of the origins of the community here. And so I think like, I felt definitely this sense of like, like, oh, like, you know, like people who are Yonsei here actually have a sense of connection, to like this history, not only on the personal like family level of like, oh, like this is a thing that happened to my grandparents, but on a bigger like community level, which like I had never really experienced that before. Um, and umm I think too, I was struck by like...I don't know. Yeah, I think it's just like, because I didn't have close Nikkei friends for most of my life, the way that I kind of thought about the Interment was sort of like, oh, you know, like it wasn't that big of a deal. Like it's not like these were like death camps, you know, it's not like, and so yeah, like I kinda, I kinda had just

taken on this narrative that it was like, that it wasn't that significant. Um, and I think, yeah, like, it was important for me to like be around other, like, people who are Yonsei who like did see it as really significant and who did really care about like this history and like had thought a lot about like how it had impacted their families. Um, and yeah, and that was just like, yeah, I mean it felt like I was like gaining some perspective or gaining some piece of like my personal history that I didn't even have access to through my own family. Um, because of how they like talked or didn't talk about it. Um, and yeah, and I think like I've been definitely thinking a lot about how, like, how quickly like targets change in like white supremacy and racism in this country. And like, I think Japanese Americans are such an interesting example of that because you know, like we went from being like incarcerated in mass during World War II, to being like lifted up as like, you know, thee like sort of token example of, you know, upward mobility and like assimilation and like. Right? And that has had like really, you know, like in terms of like the material reality, it's like, yeah, like that has been the experience of a lot of like Japanese Americans. Um, and I think, I think it's just like, it's telling like how, I don't know, like...I think, well, I guess there's a couple of things. One is that I, I think that that still has like a lot of like sort of like emotional and like spiritual and psychic cost to like the fracturing of like community and identity and like how like I was actually talking to someone I know recently who, um, whose family was resettled to Chicago after World War II and they grew up in like a really small town somewhere on the East Coast, but in like a rural small town in the East Coast where, and it was like, it was specifically because like her grandmother had been sitting in some community meeting in Chicago at some point and they were basically like, look like we shouldn't, like, we should try to disperse because if we're all here together, like we're a target. And so that was why like her family ended up in this like tiny town on the East Coast, like completely like isolated from anyway, Japanese American community. Um, and so yeah, like it's just like interesting to be in this community of like people who like did stay and who liked did kind of preserve this community when, you know, so much of the consequences of the impact of World War II was that like, you know, that there used to be these really like strong thriving Japanese American communities on the West Coast and they were like really like broken up and um, and like, yeah, like fractured as a result, of the War.

AT:

30:52

And when did you come to Chicago and first start connecting with the Japanese American community here?

AW:

30:59

Um, it was in 2015. Yeah, I moved here in the summer of 2015. So it was about two years ago and I didn't. Yeah, I mean I went to a couple of things when I first moved here. I think I went to like one of the festivals at the JASC or something and I felt like both this deep sense of like, whoa, like I really wanted it. Like I really, I felt really like moved to be in a space where there was such a strong sense of community around being like Japanese American or like being Nikkei and at the same time, and like this like intergenerational community and like, you know, just all this stuff that I had never had. And at the same time, like I felt this deep sense of like, like these people all like grew up here, you know, like it just, I really felt like an outsider to the community but like really wanted to have some kind of community around it. Um, but I mean it was really through, I think like I started going to some of the events with Next Generation Nikkei, which is like a group of um, uh, you know, like primarily like Yonsei, and like younger generation Nikkei people. And, um, I think, yeah, I was really struck by the work that was being done through the JAACL with the Kanja project of like, bringing like, you know, young like Japanese Americans to do a pilgrimage to the camps and to like learn some of the history. Um, and, um, and it seemed like a lot of community had been built among our generation through doing that kind of work. Um, and then, yeah, and then I met also like Kenji there who works with the JAACL who, um, was helping to organize like some kind of summit for people to talk about. Like, you know, our relationship as Japanese Americans or like as Asian Americans to kind of, um, like movements for Black lives and how to be in solidarity with, um, with like Black Lives Matter. And so I think just like seeing people like making connections to how, like, knowing our history is like an important part of like identity and community. Like, as Yonsei. And then like connecting that to, um, the kind of, you know, like what racism looks like now in the US and like what, you know, what movements we want to be like in support of or aligned with and like what are like our role is and, in like supporting that. Um, I think yeah, like that was really what, you know, like that felt really important to me and I wanted to like be in community with people who were thinking about that.

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