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Title: Lisa Doi Interview
Narrator: Lisa Doi
Interviewer: Anna Takada
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- AT: 00:47:42 Um, given, given, you know, some of, uh, your, your perspectives and takeaways from, from that project. Um, you know, there's a lot of, uh, strong points that you just made from the, I guess from a more like emotional side, um, rather than objective. Like, given that that's some of the takeaways that you've had from the project. Uh, and I know that you've done like extensive re- research as well. Like how as a fourth generation Japanese American, and I will, I'll throw in there, living in today's, you know, current political climate, like how, how, how does that make you feel or what are, you know, if it's okay to ask, you know, what some of the emotional responses are like, um, you know, what, what are your thoughts on that?
- LD: 00:48:51 Yeah. So in terms of making sense of this as a Yonsei, I think a few different, maybe emotional responses. So when I participated in, in Kansha, I think it was really interesting because I was pretty much the exact age that my grandparents were when they went to camp. And so I felt this really strong relationship to them. And, and they had both passed away by the time I did Kansha. So I had never really talked to them about their experience. And suddenly I had all these questions that I wish I could have asked them and I, and I didn't. Um, but I also was really upset and I was really angry that I beat out what I perceived as sort of this passive city amongst Nisei. And you know, I had this really clear vision in my mind of what activism looks like and why hadn't they, you know, protested and done all this stuff. And I think, um, where I'm at now is that I really have had to push myself to re-see what activism looks like or what resistance looks like.
- LD: 00:50:01 And so in spite of the WRA wanting people in Chicago to deeply assimilate into the community, the fact that I had a Buddhist temple that I could go to and the fact that I was raised with a strong sense of ethnic community and pride in that community, to me that is a very political action. Um, that took a lot of work

on the part of my great grandparents, grandparents and parents to keep a community, certainly community that's different than what would have looked like had there not been internment. Um, but a really strong community nonetheless. And so to see much smaller acts of resistance as very politicized, I think is something that I've been pushing myself to do in the past, I don't know, four or five years. Um, and at the same time, I also think that there are ways in which, um, Japanese Americans are kept from that history.

LD: 00:51:00 So I was just reading a book, um, this summer about, it was called "Writing to Redress". And it was about all these like small letter writing campaigns that Issei women took up in camp. And it nearly every camp, there was a time when Issei women got together to petition for something, whether that was hot water, or because you know, you couldn't wash your baby's diapers if you didn't have really hot water. Um, and the various, you know, they'd write to the directors of the camps, they'd write to the president, they'd write to the Spanish embassy because Spain was serving as the intermediary country between the US and Japan during the war. And so all these ways that these women were really exercising their voice, um, and sort of like that it took so long for me to find this out. You know, I think all the time we're learning new aspects of this history. So I think that was part of it. Um, okay. Yeah. There's something else I was gonna say, but I forgot it. Sorry.

AT: 00:51:59 That's okay. Um, you know, we can, when it comes back, um, well and that, that, um, kind of what you're saying about, um, not having access to, to this history. Um, that brings me to some of my next questions, which is about your personal experience in learning about the incarceration experience. Um, I want to know, um, I guess this is a couple parts question, but like did you hear about it at home, like through your family and learning about your family's experiences and did you learn about it in school? And I guess I'll extend that from like your entire education. Can you just like tell me what it was like for you to like learn about internment and, and your family's history within it?

LD: 00:52:53 I think the question of when did I learn about internment is always hard for me to answer because I can't quite pinpoint like a single moment. Um, I must have learned about it at home. When I was very young, my mom was, was doing oral histories for the regenerations project at the Japanese American National Museum. And I have a strong memory of going to one of those tapings with her. And these were like 18 hour, you know, multi-part interviews, very in depth with a very small number people.

Um, and so that happened probably when I was seven, six or seven. Um, I also have been told that once, um, when, when I was little, we used to go when visiting my grandparents in Southern California, we used to go up to Mammoth and on the way to Mammoth you drive past Manzanar, and I don't remember this, but one time we stopped and my grandmother started talking to these like other people in the parking lot. And this was before, this was before it was in a national park site. And this was really before there was anything there. Um, and sort of started talking to these strangers about her experience in camp.

LD: 00:54:01 Um, so there were all these moments that I was sort of present for, where I sort of picked up stuff and then, you know, I was taken to probably every Day of Remembrance that I was alive for, um, but I don't think there was a moment where anyone really sat me down and was like, you should read "Farewell to Manzanar" or let me tell you our family's history. Um, I think my mom and I both approached this very cerebrally and, and at a very distance distanced emotionally. Um, so, you know, I don't think there was sort of this like sentimental moment in which she tried to explain it to me. Um, in terms of learning at school, I also don't have a strong memory of learning about incarceration history at school. I think I read Farewell to Manzanar in elementary school and then we also read, um, a book in high school about Japanese-Canadians.

LD: 00:54:58 Um, and so I think it wasn't really until I took this class, my senior year of college that I got any formal academic training that I really remember. And that was really exhaustive. It was, you know, we read all of the major texts that have been produced in the 1940s to today about, um, internment. So it was kind of a crash course in the greatest hits.

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