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Title: Lisa Doi Interview
Narrator: Lisa Doi
Interviewer: Anna Takada
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AT: 00:58:29 Um, why, why is that something that's important to you to, you know, to have done this work? And I know you mentioned it, it was recently and you know, as for an article, but like, um, you know, it's clear that your family, and granted, I know you, I know your mom, but like history in general is something that, you know, seems to be of great value to your family. So can you talk to me a little bit about, about that, why it's so important to you?

LD: Yeah, I, I, in terms of thinking about why this history is important to me, I think that's a really challenging question to answer. I, fee-, part of what I find really fascinating is the way that, that I will always sort of be at a distance from this history and inevitably that those people who are engaged in this history are sort of putting together scraps. Um, and I'm very captivated by these like gaps in the archive, these things that become impossible to know. So, so often the history of Japanese Americans gets told through the Nisei perspective because it's Nisei who we were able to gain oral history from. There often wasn't a language barrier. People could read, you know, the diaries of Nisei. Um, and also there are just ways in which, um, you know, the archive is unable to document things. So, um, I was just reading in Duncan Williams, "American Sutra" about Buddhist, um, Buddhists who joined the military and how dog tags you can only have as a marker on your religion. You can only be listed as Protestant, Catholic, Jewish or non religious. Um, and so as the quote from his book was, as a matter of expediency, Buddhists were listed as Protestant. So you have this whole military archive now that incorrectly has identified thousands of Nisei veterans as Protestants. And so you'll never be able to know how many Buddhists served in World War II or if you think about people who were renounced their US citizenship and then had it restored. Um, often those are form letters, um, because a few people had figured out sort of like the best way to make the renunciation and the best way to get

your citizenship restored. And so how will you ever know what people really felt? Um, so I think that there's like this deep power in this like intentional inability to sort of like make meaning from this archive. And I find that really compelling. Um, so I think that's part of it.

LD:

01:01:19

I think for me it's really important too recognize the ways that this particular political moment is and is not unique. Um, so sometimes I sort of get frustrated in the ways that, um, Japanese American history is sort of like used right now in the Trump administration to sort of rally against Donald Trump. And, and, um, I think that hides a lot of the ways that, that Donald Trump is not that far from his predecessors in terms of his actions. Um, so this notion of using, um, of separating parents and children as like a tremendous form of violence that, um, can be used against communities of color to me is something that's foundational to the United States. That that's a tool that we saw, um, in the genocide of native people in this country. It's a tool that we saw in slavery, um, to keep slaves compliant through the threat or not of selling away children. Um, it's something you saw in, in World War Two for Japanese Americans. Um, and it's something that you're seeing now and like those are really distinct moments in time, um, but it's sort of a through line that runs through it. So how, how is this different than any of those other moments and how is this presidency different than any of those other presidencies? And so I think that there's a element too, which I sort of, uh, am cautious about assuming that this moment is so different. And even if you are able to, you know, use the history of Japanese Americans, um, you're really acknowledging that this is, this is a path that the United States has walked down many, many times before.

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