

Densho Digital Repository
Japanese American Service Committee (JASC) and
Chicago Japanese American Historical Society (CJAHS)
Oral History Project Collection
Title: Lisa Doi Interview
Narrator: Lisa Doi
Interviewer: Anna Takada
Location: Chicago, Illinois
Date: September 6, 2019
Densho ID: ddr-chi-1-20-19

<Begin Segment 19>

- AT: 01:23:54 Yeah. Um, I just have a couple questions left. It's, yeah, let me pause, of Chicago today.
- LD: 01:24:07 I'm very excited by the Japanese American community in Chicago today. Um, right before I moved back to Chicago, I wrote this piece for work, which is going to sound really strange, but it was about, um, it was about how it was really uh, a sort of, I guess it was about how does a community die. And so it was about this sense that I had in returning to Chicago and sort of like what, what would be a good caretaker role in sort of like allowing, as Nisei die, like sort of allowing the Japanese American community to sort of die along with it. Um, and that's I guess how I felt right before I came back to Chicago. Um, and then I think I was just really lucky that the timing sort of worked well. You know, I think if I had, if I think if I had moved to Chicago in like 2005, it would've been a really different time to be a young person in the Japanese American community in Chicago. Um, that 2015 is about when Full Spectrum Features started. Um, I don't think Ann lived in Chicago much before 2015. Um, and so like a lot of things sort of came together at the right time. The right people were sort of engaging at the right time. And I think right now I feel really excited about the future of the Japanese American community in Chicago and sort of where a really vibrant group of younger folks are going to take the community.
- AT: 01:25:42 So you touched on it. My follow up question was what are your hopes, for the community of Chicago, for the future?
- LD: 01:25:51 Yeah. Um, I really hope that the community stays engaged. Um, I think, I really see the Kansha project is having activated a generation of young people. And so what happens if the Kansha project doesn't exist in perpetuity? Um, or how do we continue to do a good job of bringing in Shin-Nikkei or people who don't have a family history of incarceration. Um, what happens when

it becomes Go-sei who, who never knew anyone who was incarcerated, you know, how will they make meaning, um, of that history. And in particular, I, I hope that the political engagement of this community continues into the next administration and the next administration that there are so many fights that we still have to be a part of, um, that are also lessons that we draw from our own history. Um, and so that there, you know, there doesn't become a sense of complacency. Um, but mostly I'm just excited.

- AT: 01:26:57 Um, great. One thing that I like to ask, just all of the oral histories, um, as we wrap up is, um, if you could leave behind some kind of message or legacy, whether, and you can, like however you want to answer this question, whether it's like it's your kids or future generations or specifically within the community, but it doesn't have to be, if you could leave some kind of legacy behind, what would you want that to be?
- LD: 01:27:32 So also in Duncan Williams', "American Sutra", he talks about, um, the heart mountain sutra or the heart mountain stones. So for a long time, or in the 50s, a farmer or rancher dug up this oil drum filled with stones at heart mountain and on each stone was a single Japanese character. Um, and for decades, you know, no one really knew what these were. And relatively recently, um, I guess Buddhist scholars have determined that they were, um, single characters for a Sutra, a teaching of the Buddha. Um, and that there was a, uh, a Buddhist priest who'd been at Heart Mountain who likely made these stones and then buried them in the earth. And there's this teaching that in times that are inhospitable to Buddhism, you should take the teachings of the Buddha and you should bury them in the earth for future generations to find, um, when sort of, when the time is ready. Um, so to me, I think not just for future generations, but for myself and for future generations, um, there's uh, an awful lot of work that remains to be really attentive to these gaps in historical knowledge and how do we fill them in and sort of how do we make space for the time to be hospitable for these stories to be known. Um, so that I think is both my task and a task that I would pass on because I know I can't finish it.
- AT: 01:29:07 Thank you so much for sharing.
- LD: 01:29:10 Thank you.
- AT: 01:29:11 Before we completely, Oh, do you have something?
- M: 01:29:13 No, no. I'm just wondering if you're going to ask if she had any-

AT: 01:29:17 Before we wrap up, is there anything that you'd want to add or that we might've missed in this conversation? For the record?

LD: 01:29:25 Yeah, I guess just one really small thing. So one other thing that happened to my family when they, when they came to Chicago is that my great grandfather got remarried. So he, the woman who he married was also at Rohwer. We don't really know if they met in Rohwer and then came to Chicago together or if they met in Chicago. Um, but by the time they got to Chicago, my grandmother had like, I think three or four step-siblings as well. So they ended up having a very large blended family. That's it.

AT: 01:29:56 Yeah. Thank you.

M: 01:29:57 Thank you.

AT: 01:29:57 Thank you.

LD: 01:29:58 Thank you. Yeah. Thanks. Thanks for asking me.

<End Segment 19> - Copyright © 2019 Japanese American Service Committee (JASC) and Chicago Japanese American Historical Society (CJAHS). All Rights Reserved.