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Title: Lisa Doi Interview
Narrator: Lisa Doi
Interviewer: Anna Takada
Location: Chicago, Illinois
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<Begin Segment 1>

Anna Takada: 00:00:00 This is an interview with Lisa Doi as part of the Japanese American Service Committee and Chicago Japanese American Historical Society Oral History Project. The interview is being conducted on September 6th 2019 at 9:20 AM at the Japanese American Service Committee in Chicago. Lisa Doi is being interviewed by Anna Takada of the Japanese American Service Committee. Um, so to start, can you just state your full name?

Lisa Doi: 00:00:31 Hi, my name is Lisa Doi.

AT: 00:00:33 And uh, where and when were you born?

LD: 00:00:36 I was born in Chicago, I guess, although I grew up in Evanston, August 23rd, 1991.

AT: 00:00:43 Oh, happy birthday.

LD: 00:00:45 [laughs] Thank you.

AT: 00:00:47 Um, you said '91?

LD: 00:00:48 '91.

AT: 00:00:49 Okay. Um, cool. And then, uh, can you tell me about where you, where and when your parents were born?

LD: 00:00:57 My mom was born also in Chicago in March of 1953 and my dad was born in San Diego, California in January of 1952.

AT: 00:01:09 Okay, cool. And, um, so like I mentioned, um, just for this oral history, we'll be, um, interested in hearing about your family's background and sort of their trajectory, um, pre-war and during the war. Um, so I guess, uh, with that, could you just tell me, um, what you know about, um, I guess it would be your mom's

family's background, where, who came to the states first and kind of that sort of, um, part of your family history?

- LD: 00:01:45 Yeah, so my paternal, or sorry, my maternal grandfather's family, uh, was originally from Hiroshima, Japan and I don't really know a lot about how, how or when they came to the United States. Um, I'm guessing in the late 1800s or early 1900s and they came to Stockton, California. I know my great grandfather was a barber and had a barbershop in Stockton. Um, I don't know if my great grandmother ever had a job. On my maternal grandmother's side, her family came from around Fukuoka in Japan and we've, well, we've visited both of their, you know, family homes in Japan. Um, but I know my great grandfather was from a very wealthy family and was the first born son, so he stood to gain a lot of money, but he, um, what I've heard about why he came to the United States with the, he was trying to dodge the draft for the Russo-Japanese war and, uh, so he came to the United States for a little bit, sort of gambled away all his money and his father made him a deal that was like, we'll pay off your debts, but in exchange you give up your rights to inherit, sort of, all this wealth. So he took the deal. Um, so I also have heard that they originally were in Portland and sort of working on like a fruit orchard or had a fruit orchards and he lost that as well. And so they sort of slowly made their way to Southern California and ended up in the, in the LA area.
- AT: 00:03:24 Um, do you have any idea, um, how his family had acquired wealth or?
- LD: 00:03:32 I've heard that they were a Samurai family, so I don't really know exactly what that means or why you would get wealth from that. But we've seen their house from like the 1400s. It's this absolutely beautiful, historic Japanese home. And I also know that on the estate are these very rare trees. And so on occasion in recent history, they've cut down trees to sell.
- AT: 00:03:57 Wow. Um, okay, so that was, um, can you clarify, sorry if-
- LD: 00:04:07 That was my mom's, mom's dad.
- AT: 00:04:10 Okay. Um, so he made his way down to Southern California. Um, and then, um, do you have any sense of like what time that would put us at?
- LD: 00:04:26 Um, so I think, so at that point he had kids and so my grandmother is the second youngest of five kids. Um, so she

was, uh, she was born in Portland, um, and she was born in the, I think 1926, so I would guess that was the mid 1930s is when they went from Portland to LA.

AT: 00:04:48 Okay. Um, and then, yeah. Can you, if you're able to, can you kind of just keep going on like we're um, I guess maybe we can go like up until more time, like what either family was doing respectively.

LD: 00:05:05 Yeah. So I believe that that great-grandfather owned a Chinese restaurant where that's what he was doing in LA. He worked in a Chinese restaurant. Um, my great, I'm sorry, not my great grandmother. My grandmother went to LA City College for some period of time before the war started and I know my grandfather was at UC Berkeley and he was going into his senior year of college when the, or he was, I guess in the middle of his senior year of college when the war started. I don't really know much else about them. Um, one of my great uncles had joined the US army before the war started. Um, and so I've always been interested in sort of what happened to him. Was he allowed to stay in the military? Was he kicked out for a period of time before he was able to rejoin? Um, but that's, I think all I really know about any of my family before the war.

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AT: 00:06:00 Okay. Um, thank you. That's, I mean, that's, that's a lot of information to have. Um, um, okay, so your grandparents were, you said they were in school when the war broke out. Um, do you know what, you know, what sort of happened to them or, or what the timeline was as far as, um, you know, I guess the bombing of Pearl Harbor to like executive order and evacuation. Do you know what happened to both of their families?

LD: 00:06:34 So, after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, I know that my grandfather's father was arrested by the FBI. Um, he had been involved and as in my grandfather had been involved in martial arts. Um, I think it was Kendo, but they may have been involved in other martial arts. So sort of as a community leader, as a, as a teacher at whatever Dojo he was involved in. Um, my great grandfather was, was arrested. He was taken both to New Mexico and Crystal City. Um, my grandfather, I would describe him as a hustler, a as sort of a lifestyle. Um, I'm not entirely sure how he managed to do this, but he, so he was, uh, going into, or he was in the middle of his senior year at Berkeley when the

war started and he, um, transferred to Washington University in St Louis. So he went to assembly center. But he, before the NJSRC was established, he was part of a small number of students who got like special permission to go to go to college. So that's how he got out of assembly center. He never went to one of the WRA camps and then he came to the Midwest because of that.

- AT: 00:07:44 Um, can you define the acronym of NJSRC?
- LD: 00:07:49 NJSRC? Yeah. Uh, let me see if I can get it. Okay. So my grandfather was able to start college before the National Japanese American student Relocation Council was established. Ultimately they would be the group that would work with colleges to help students transfer or help students enroll. Um, but he was able to do that kind of transfer before they were formed. So it was maybe a group of 10 students who started Wash. U. With him around the same time.
- AT: 00:08:17 Okay. Um, and so that was, um-
- LD: 00:08:22 So it would have been early 1942.
- AT: 00:08:28 Okay. Um, and then for your grandmother's side, um, she was in school as well?
- LD: 00:08:41 Yeah. So my grandmother just stopped going to school when the war started. Um, she eventually became one of the, you know, Nisei who received a diploma from the California State system, um, in this ceremony of like all older Nisei in the mid-2000s. So it's very cute photos from, um, but she never went back to finish after that.

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- AT: 00:09:08 Um, which assembly center did your grandfather go to and his family?
- LD: 00:09:15 Which one? It's the one right by the, S, San Francisco airport. There's The P, um, and I'm totally blanking on it. It's a shopping mall now. I've driven past it,
- AT: 00:09:27 Oh, okay.

LD: 00:09:27 Um, and I don't remember, um.

AT: 00:09:31 I don't know it off hand.

LD: 00:09:33 Uh, that's gonna bother me.

AT: 00:09:35 The only one that I know with the P is the one that I can't pronounce.

LD: 00:09:39 Puyallup? Puyallup. I can't pronounce that one. Maybe it's not maybe but didn't start with a P, but uh, no. Okay. So my grandfather and his family were, were taken to Tanforan, which is near San Francisco. And my grandmother, um, and her family were taken to Santa Anita in Southern California. And then actually all their families went to Rohwer after that. But my grandfather didn't go with them, so they did not meet until they came to Chicago.

AT: 00:10:05 Because he was in, he was at Wash. U.? Okay. Um, let's see. So, um, you're grandma. Okay. So they were both, you know, they were young people at the time also with like the ability to like kind of play around with those weird flex work leave rules or, or indefinitely even and things like that. Um, well I guess, uh, first I, I want to ask, um, about the size of each family. Like, did they have, um, siblings or parents who are, you know, still in kind of the standard camps?

LD: 00:10:49 So my grandmother had four siblings and two parents who went to camp. Well, she had four siblings. One of them was in the U.S. Army before the war started. And I don't believe he went to assembly center or camp with them. Um, but his fiance did, or his girlfriend did. Um, so she went with three of her siblings and her two parents. My grandfather had two siblings and I just learned that, that his parents very late in life had another baby. Um, so they had a baby who was born and died in 1942. Um, my mom said it was before they went to assembly center. Um, but they would have been in their forties when they had this baby, which I thought was interesting. Um, so he, his father was taken by the FBI, so he went to a Department of Justice Camp. So my grandfather went to assembly center with, um, his sister, his brother and his mom. And actually he went with, uh, the Chikaraishi family as well. That, uh, both of those, the heads of both of those households were both taken by the, uh, FBI. The Chikaraishis had already lost their mom. And so even though they were all in their late teens and early 20s, what I've heard is that my great grandmother acted as the head of household for her children as well as the Chikaraishi children.

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- AT: 00:12:16 Wow. Um, alright. And then, so from, from Tanforan and Santa Anita, um, the two families both went to Rohwer, you said, um, and do you have a sense of how long they might've been in Rohwer?
- LD: 00:12:42 I've recently looked at their final accountability rosters, but I can't off the top of my head. Remember how long they were in Rohwer. I know that my great grandmother died in Rohwer. She went into Rohwer already having, I think stomach cancer and she died, I believe it was September of 1943 and I know, or may have been late August of 1943 and by that time I know my grandmother and one of my great uncles had already received clearance to come to Chicago. Um, so I believe my great uncle received clearance from May or June of that year, and then my grandmother in July or August of 1943. And so I, I just think about how hard it must have been to leave your mother knowing that this was probably the last time you were going to see her, but sort of making that choice to try to go to Chicago and sort of start a life outside of camp.
- AT: 00:13:46 Um, and just to clarify, was this year your grandmother's or your?
- LD: 00:13:53 My grandmother's mother.
- AT: 00:13:55 Grandmother's. Okay. Yeah. Um, and um, and then as far as your, your grandfather's family side, um, so he had the two siblings, the one and, and his mom. Yeah. Um, so do you have any sense of how long they were in Rohwer?
- LD: 00:14:19 I don't know how long my grandfather's family was in Rohwer. I do know that my grandfather's brother joined him in St Louis and that from St Louis, the two of them came to Chicago and then his mother, father and sister also came to Chicago.

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- AT: 00:14:38 Okay. Um, and then before getting into some of the, um, whatever, and, you know, so many details, this is awesome. Um,

but before, um, uh, uh, like hearing more about Chicago, I'm wondering if, um, as far as like family stories or just kind of like family knowledge of, of your own history, are there any particular stories or memories, you know, obviously not your own personal memories, but, um, stories that have been passed down about, um, either like assembly center or camp life or maybe just even evacuation in general. Like what, what are some of the, what's some of the, um, the stories that have been handed down to you, if any?

LD: 00:15:31

Yeah. You know, I, not a lot of stories have been handed down to me about what day to day life in camp was like. My grandmother was diagnosed with Alzheimer's when I was in elementary school. And so I always, or if I were to describe this, I would say that we passed each other cognitively. By the time I could have asked her and understood her stories, she no longer could tell them to me. But I've recently heard a few stories, um, from my mom, one of which is that she, um, my grandmother evidently was a very feisty child. And so much so that at one point her parents thought about sending her to Japan, um, to sort of reform her, I guess, or like keep her in line or, or she was just too much for them to handle maybe. Um, and uh, so sort of in that similar vein, I've heard that she was just really angry when she went to camp. Um, that she was just very, very upset about the whole situation and not just like a sad, kind of upset of defiant and angry kind of upset. Um, and it's interesting because I don't feel like I knew her as that kind of a person. Um, my mom also said that she, her mom told her that on the day that her, this is a lot of moms. So my mom told me that when my grandmother, on the day that my great grandmother died, my grandmother woke up in the middle of the night and sort of like had this premonition that she sort of knew that her mom had passed away even though her mom was still in Arkansas and she was in Chicago.

LD: 00:17:15

And I also would say I'd never really imagined my grandmother is sort of a spiritual person. And so that was a really surprising story to sort of hear this very haunting tale of, of her having this sense that her, her own mother had passed away. Um, and then this is not a story that has been passed down, but in my, in my whole life of knowing my grandfather, he always sort of wore a very similar outfit every day. He always wore wingtip loafers and like dress slacks and a sweater and like a camel hair jacket. And so to me, which is kind of a retro kind of retro style, so I just have this very strong like imagination of him going to assembly center in Wingtip loafers and sort of like sinking into the mud. Um, and as much as he was a hustler, he was also like a very prideful person maybe to a f- in to the extent that that was even

a bad character feature. Um, and so what would it have done to someone who had like such a sense of self and such a sense of pride to sort of be put in this experience? Um, that to me is really it, I can sort of imagine the pain that he might have felt and I just see this like muck sinking around his shoes in my, in my imagination of it.

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- AT: 00:18:41 Um, okay. Just to get us back on track as far as trajectory and then, and then we'll, we'll dig into memory stuff. Um, so, um, so at a certain point, um, both your grandmothers and grandfathers families had ended up in Chicago. Um, uh, if you had to, if you know, great. And if you had to guess like dates that they were, the families had arrived and it sounds like it was a pretty typical thing where it's like one person came and then the rest of the family joined. Do you have a sense of that? Of when, when people were arriving to Chicago?
- LD: 00:19:38 So I think both my grandmother and grandfather were amongst the first in their families to come to Chicago. And I would guess that they both came in the summer or fall of 1943. Um, I know my grandfather eventually got it back to like, it, his, weird story. Um, so he, he attended Wash. U. as a student, but he also got a teaching position at Wash. U. teaching Japanese. Um, and so then he also came to the University of Chicago and taught Japanese, um, potentially as part of the military language school. But I've never been super clear on that. But he eventually got a job at the University of Chicago, so he moved to Hyde Park, um, with his brother. And I don't, my, for, my grandmother, it was her brother who first came to Chicago. I don't know why he came to Chicago or what he initially did, but they also moved to Hyde Park.
- AT: 00:20:38 Um, and, um, again, like back to like family narrative and like anything, um, that you heard growing up or, or maybe later on in life. Um, like what was, what was the narrative after moving to Hyde Park? Like what, um, yeah. Where did, where does the story continue as far as what you have as a fourth generation?
- LD: 00:21:16 Yeah, so after my family came to Chicago, my grandfather, um, somehow started working for a card making company and that's where he met my grandmother. He, I don't think he owned the card making company, but he was like in management there. And my grandmother worked sort of as just sort of a general

worker. I don't know if she was designing or packaging cards. Um, but that's where they met and they were both living on the south side. My grandmother's family ended up buying an apartment building, um, that they managed and they manage that into the 60s, maybe even into the 70s. Um, and.

AT: 00:21:58

Did they have a name for the apartment building?

LD: 00:22:01

I don't know if it had a name and I don't know if it was, you know, it was like a six flat or something. I don't think it was huge. You know, I think it was a few units. Um, and honestly, I don't know much until my mom was born. Um, in 1953, um, the apartment building was in Woodlawn. And when my mom was born, they lived in South Shore for a few years. Um, I know that my mom, when my mom was born, they lived very close to my grandmother's brother. Um, two of my grandmother's brothers lived in the same neighborhood. And so, um, when they were little, you know, the kids grew up together. Um, but then probably by 1957, my mom and her parents had moved into Hyde Park proper from South Shore. So they moved from about 72nd street to 57th street.

AT: 00:23:01

Um, do you have any idea what did, um, were your grandparents continuing with card company or had jobs kind of shifted that you know of?

LD: 00:23:10

I don't know what my grandparents were doing at that time. I know that there was a period of time where my grandmother was, stayed at home with her kids. Um, my grandfather to my understanding has sort of had a series of like entrepreneurial engagements over the course of his life. Um, so I know he did the card thing for awhile. I know eventually he got into the like packaged produce industry. Um, and that's what he was doing in the late 60s, but I don't really know what he did between the late 50s and the late 60s. In terms of businesses. I would imagine a lot of things.

AT: 00:23:46

Um, do you think your grandma was working at that time or maybe by?

LD: 00:23:51

My grandmother started working probably around the time my mom was in middle school. So if my mom was born in 1953 let's say 1966, 1965-ish and my grandmother became a secretary in the physics department at the University of Chicago. And what my mom has said is that she took that job to, um, at that point they were waiting for the city to buy their apartment building as part of like urban renewal plans for Woodlawn. Um, so they were sort of, she was working to help her brothers continue to

pay the expenses on the building until the city would buy them out from it.

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AT: 00:24:33 So, um, and has your mom shared with you, um, about her experiences? Cause it sounds like there were, they were probably in Hyde Park for quite some time or you know, between like Woodlawn, South Shore, Hyde Park in those areas. Um, has your mom told you about what it was like growing up as a Japanese American in Hyde Park? You know, over the 50s and 60s.

LD: 00:25:05 I don't think my mom and I have talked a lot about what it was like for her growing up as a Japanese American on the south side. I do know that she had, there were a number of other Japanese American families, um, who she went to school with who were babysitters and things like that. Um, her best friend, I know her best friend growing up was another Hyde Park, Japanese American girl. Um, I get the sense that my grandparents didn't, weren't particularly joiners, you know, they'd never joined a church in Chicago or a temple. They didn't participate in bowling leagues or my, my, um, my mom and her brothers never did, you know, uh, the Chicago Nisei Athletic Association or Sports Leagues or none of them joined the Drum and Bugle corps. Um, so I don't think that they were institutionally really connected, um, to a lot of other institutions within Chicago, within the Chicago, Japanese American community that were forming around that time. And I don't know why.

AT: 00:26:11 Um, before we transition into like some of your own personal experiences and you know about growing up in Chicago, um, is there anything else that comes to mind or that you want to add about like families, experiences, any that can be, I mean, anything that we've talked about up until now and we can always like go back if things come up later too.

LD: 00:26:41 Sure. I think one other that I find interesting, and this is influenced by just the things that I find interesting is sort of the migratory patterns that my family took in Chicago. So, my grandmother and two of her brothers were living in South Shore, um, through the late 1950s and all three of those families left South Shore around the same time. So, one of my great uncles bought a house in Park Ridge, which was in the

suburbs. Um, my grandparents moved to Hyde Park and then my other great uncle and his family moved to Uptown. And in a lot of ways those represent some sort of traditional patterns of migration that Japanese Americans took. A lot of families ended up moving to the suburbs, not typically suburbs like Park Ridge, but typically on the North and Northwest sides of the city. Um, but particularly that, um, southern, you know, south shore, Hyde Park, Woodlawn, Kenwood to Uptown, um, Edgewater, Lakeview kind of migration, um, is a really traditional path that a lot of Japanese Americans took.

- LD: 00:27:50 To again, buck all the trends, my grandparents actually ended up moving back to California in 1970. Um, which was the year my mom started college. Well, technically they moved in 1969 they moved to a small town called Santa Rosa. And this was when my grandpa was working in the produce packaging industry and he had been for several years, had been commuting between Chicago and California. Um, and finally my grandmother was really fed up with this, that she had three elementary school aged kids and he kept, you know, going to California. So they moved to Santa Rosa. He found a house in the middle of the night by flashlight because the power had been cut off. And my grandmother was so upset that they, she refused to unpack their suitcases. So they lived there for a school year, like living out of their suitcases. And then in 1970, they moved to Irvine, which is where they lived until they died.
- LD: 00:28:47 Um, so my mom did her freshman, sophomore, junior year of high school at the University of Chicago lab school. And then she did her senior year at this like tiny farm community high school in the middle of nowhere in California. And uh, you know, so going from like the University of Chicago lab school to a school where Future Farmers of America was like the biggest student organization. I'm sure it was a change. Um, but then she never, she never really lived with them in Irvine, which is why she came to Chicago after college.
- AT: 00:29:22 Okay. So where did she go to college?
- LD: 00:29:25 She went to Oberlin in Ohio. Oberlin College in Ohio.
- AT: 00:29:29 By way of uh, Santa Rosa.
- LD: 00:29:32 Yes.

AT: 00:29:34 Well, I, and I, I guess to have just a little bit of context. So your mom went to Oberlin and um, after Santa Rosa and then when did she come back to Chicago?

LD: 00:29:49 So, my mom went to Oberlin starting in 1970 and I believe she came back to Chicago immediately after finishing, um, college. So, she met my dad at Oberlin and they, I believe they both started doctoral programs at the University of Chicago right after graduating. He started in chemistry and she started in, I want to say Far Eastern languages and cultures and neither of them finished those programs. Um, and then after that my mom worked for an organization called the Pan Asian Mental Health Reso- Research Council. And then she ended up going back to graduate school at the University of California, San Francisco in the 80s. So, she left Chicago for a little bit of time to live in San Francisco. And then she came back, um, shortly before I was born.

AT: 00:30:42 Okay. Um, I'm sorry, where'd you say she went to grad school?

LD: 00:30:48 She, uh, ended up getting like, actually finishing the program at the University of California in San Francisco.

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AT: 00:30:54 Uh, and then came back to Chicago and, and had you shortly thereafter. Um, okay. So now I'd love to talk to you about, you know, some of your own experiences growing up. Um, and, um, you mentioned you grew up in Evanston. Um, so can you tell me a little bit, um, I guess just generally like, um, at the time that you were growing up, like what, what was Evanston like and, um, uh, I guess one of the things I'm curious about is like how, um, connected people have felt like with maybe their Japanese heritage or, or their family's story growing up. So like, um, were you around other Japanese American families growing up or, um, as far as Japanese culture, like what, what would you say about your upbringing in relations to your heritage?

LD: 00:32:04 So, in terms of my own upbringing, I feel really fortunate to have felt a strong connection to the Japanese American community as a kid. My parents made the decision to attend the Midwest Buddhist Temple shortly after I was born. They, um, I really liked going to MBT and the minister at the time I think was just a really thoughtful Buddhist teacher and they explain that their intention was not for me to become Buddhist,

but their intention was for me to have a sense of Japanese American community. And I really think that that exposed me to a lot of people my own age who were also Japanese American. Um, I mentioned my mom's best friend growing up was also Japanese American. She, she had a daughter who's maybe six months older than me. And, um, then there was another girl who I grew up with who were all three of us were, you know, the same grade, all multiracial, Japanese American girls who were all growing up sort of close together.

LD: 00:33:10 So in addition to MBT, in addition to our family, I sort of had this like group of friends as a kid, um, where I was really exposed to a lot of other Japanese Americans who were my own age. Um,

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AT: 00:33:23 And that was through school?

LD: 00:33:23 We didn't go to school together. I didn't go to school with the other two girls, but we did a lot of like social events, especially before, you know, before elementary school, like in Pre-K and kindergarten stuff where our moms would get together and we would, I dunno, go to the zoo or things like that. Um, my mom was also very involved in the Chicago, Japanese American Historical Society and Heiwa Terrace when I was younger. So I was often dragged to community events. So I remember going to, um, an exhibit at the Field Museum called "Strength and Diversity of Japanese American Women", which I think came in 1995.

LD: 00:34:00 Um, so that was probably like one of the earliest memories of a community event. We were just talking the other day about how there used to be Kanojo fashion shows that happened in the, um, room next door here at the service committee and how I think I was a model in one of those fashion shows when I was about five or six. So, from a very early age, I had a strong sense of, of other people who were also Japanese American, as well as community institutions, events, organizations that I really felt connected to. I also remember going back when the service committee used to run Fuji Fest, um, at the Union League Club. There were a period of time, maybe when I was like eight and nine where um, along with another person who was maybe like 10 or 11. We used to sell raffle tickets until they found out it was illegal for people under the age of 18 to sell, you know, to participate in gambling.

LD: 00:34:54 Um, and we were drastically under the age of 18, um, but who wouldn't turn down like an eight year old and a 10 year old asking you to buy raffle tickets. So I'm sort of, all of these things really made me feel connected to the community. Um, because of MBT I participated a lot in Ginza. I'd volunteered there starting as a little kid, um, you know, doing the snow cone machine and then working in the shop MBT table. And I also was in the original iteration of Ho Etsu Taiko when it was a youth, truly a youth taiko group. And then I stopped when, uh, my skills did not, did not grow.

AT: 00:35:34 Um, so you mentioned that, um, your parent's decision to bring you to MBT and to have you involved was less to try to raise you as Buddhist and more about community involvement. Um, have you talked to them about maybe why they felt that way or have any guesses if you, if you haven't talked about it explicitly?

LD: 00:36:00 So in terms of attending MBT, I think my parents, neither of my parents are particularly religious. Um, so I don't think that they really had a strong desire to have me have a strong faith identity. Um, so I think that that's why they were viewing it really as a cultural experience and not as much a religious experience.

AT: 00:36:23 Um, and uh, as, as far as school, what, um, elementary school did you go to in Evanston?

LD: 00:36:35 So for school I went to Midwest Montessori, which was a very small Montessori school from Pre-Kindergarten through third grade. And then third grade, I started at North Shore Country Day School in Winnetka. And I attended that through the end of high school, um, North Shore. And I am currently a trustee of North Shore. So it was a really positive and powerful place for me to be a student. Um, but it's an incredibly white school. Um, which is not to say that I think I would've really been exposed to a lot of Asian Americans or Japanese Americans had I gone to public school in Evanston. I think Evanston is very much a community that's segregated between Black and White. Um, but I think North Shore maybe even, I had even less exposure to um, other Asian American or Japanese American peers, um, at North Shore, through middle school, or I guess maybe starting in middle school and through high school I really began to explore what it meant to be multiracial. And I didn't really come back to looking at my Japanese American identity really until college and participating in the Kansha project. So I think from middle school to high school I really explored what it meant to be for me to be multiracial. That in college I think I spent a lot more time exploring what my Asian American identity meant

and then sort of it's been post-college that I've really return to what does being Japanese American mean to me.

AT: 00:38:07 Um, and which college did you go to?

LD: 00:38:09 So after North Shore Country Day school, I went to the University of Pennsylvania. So, um, I lived there. I lived in Philadelphia for four years, then I went to New York for two years, um, where I taught at a boarding school in West Chester. And then I came back to Chicago to start graduate school at the University of Chicago.

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AT: 00:38:31 Um, let's see, um, if you had to kind of do an on the spot, maybe like brief analysis of how, um, cause it's interesting how, um, you've kind of separated different parts of, or aspects of your identity at different times in your life. And I noticed that, um, kind of follows your trajectory of education as well. Like if you had to kind of like briefly analyze why, why that might've been and, and how, um, how specifically you kind of like you said you came back to your Japanese American identity when you returned to Chicago and you like, maybe just say a few words on that or explain that a little further.

LD: 00:39:31 Yeah. As I think about the way my own racial identity has changed over the course of my life, I think a lot of it was influenced by what kinds of maybe external opportunities or external, maybe, pressures were sort of shaping me at that moment. So I think when I was, because I went to a high school that did not have a lot of other Asian American or Japanese American students, um, exploring a multiracial identity I think was the easiest resource that teachers and peers could provide me. That there were other multiracial people at the school who I could begin to explore that identity with.

LD: 00:40:13 Um, and I think also at the time, um, maybe, maybe, I dunno, I guess that there's sort of a way that developmentally that made sense for me where it was sort of the most obvious, physically verve- visibly obvious part of my identity that I feel like other people often grappled with. Um, and so I think it made sense that as sort of an eighth grader through 12th grader, um trying to understand what it meant for me to be multiracial made a lot of sense. Um, and that I always, you know, living at home at the time with my parents and I was sort of daily sort of considering

what this family structure meant. Um, when I went to college, I think similarly, there were not, there were a lot more Asian American students who went to Penn with me. Um, but there were not a lot of Japanese Americans particularly, um, no Yonsei Japanese Americans. Um, so I think that that's really where I was given a lot more opportunities to participate in Asian American programming and, and have resources like an Asian American Pan, Asian American cultural center. Um, so I think that's sort of why in college, um, sort of grew more into exploring my Asian American identity.

LD: 00:41:33 Um, my senior year or the summer between my junior and senior year of college, I participated in, um, JACL Chicago's Kansha Project. And unrelated to that, I also, um, like that same summer I was talking to a friend of my mom's and she was like, you have to take a class with this guy named Ichiro Azuma if you ever get a chance. And he was teaching a class that fall that was about, um, internment history. And so sort of unrelated to each other. I ended up having these two experiences really close together. Um, and I think that that kind of set up the next transition, which was circling back to exploring a Japanese American identity that I had felt really strongly as a kid, um, but then hadn't really thought about as much in high school and certainly not in college. Um, so that sort of set up, coming back to Chicago and then really having a great opportunity to reconnect to the Japanese American community.

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AT: 00:42:30 And, uh, forgive me, uh, Azuma's class was at U Penn? Okay. Um, okay. Well, and this, um, this kind of leads into my next question, which was about, um, the degree you pursued at University of Chicago. Um, can you share about, um, what it was that you studied there and maybe some of the, the um, um, motivation, inspiration that you know, brought you to that, that degree and that research topic? Yeah.

LD: 00:43:12 So I came back to Chicago to get a master's degree at the University of Chicago. It was a master's in social science and as part of the program was only a one year program, but we had to do a capstone thesis and partially out of interest and partially out of expediency. I decided to do a project around Japanese Americans in Chicago because I figured I had a lot of, um, entree points already that would make it easier to do a one year thesis on that topic. So I ended up mapping using directories, um,

from the legacy center here at the Service Committee, mapping Japanese American residential patterns from the 1940s through the 1970s and was able to notice some very clear trends in terms of initial congregations. Um, on the south side and near north side, and then a very noticeable migration northwards through the city. Um, so through Lakeview, Uptown, Edgewater and then out into the suburbs. And if you overlay this on other, um, racial housing patterns in Chicago at the time, there's, um, very noticeable instances where, especially on the South Side and the near North Side, um, in the late forties, early 50s those neighborhoods become increasingly Black. And as that happens, Japanese Americans leave. Um, so that's part of it. And then part of it just sort of follows general patterns of white flight as white Chicagoans left for the suburbs in the 60s and 70s.

AT: 00:44:50 Um, and, uh, can you tell us like a little, a little bit more about, um, maybe some of the takeaways from, from the projects or what you found and in doing that research?

LD: 00:45:06 So I think in terms of my own research, it really helped me crystallize a sense of, um, maybe the purpose of the overall incarceration history, which, you know, I, I don't think that the WRA ever intended to permanently house Japanese Americans. But I do think if you look at the overall philosophy of the Roosevelt administration in terms of the power of the government to intervene in terms of social problems, um, they really saw pre-war Japanese American ethnic enclaves as a social problem. And if you also look at sociologists, you know, of the 30s and 40s, um, there was this deep preoccupation with assimilation and what assimilation means, and suddenly here's this opportunity to have this government intervention to be a solution to this problem. And so to me, I really see one of the primary goals of the WRA and as this project of dispersal resettlement, um, so that you would, you would determine who was loyal, who was disloyal, for those who are loyal, you would then scatter them.

LD: 00:46:18 Um, Franklin Roosevelt said one Japanese American family in every community across the country. Um, and you know, ultimately that didn't happen. But I think there was this intentional, internal, and external dissolution of a Japanese American community when people came to Chicago. Um, there was discouragement of, you know, forming ethnic enclaves in the city, although the [inaudible] I think had sort of mixed, mixed intervention. Um, you know, they acknowledged that there was a lot of, um, residential concentration in Chicago. Um, but then I think there was a lot of internal pressure within the community to, um, sort of prove your Americanness and, and

really what that means is aspiring towards whiteness. Um, not necessarily racially, but in terms of, um, uh, sort of sanctified American middle class lifestyle of, uh, you know, a house in the suburbs, a white collar job, kids who went to college that I think was very much internalized by the community. Um, but I think that that is not unique amongst Japanese American community, that that is sort of a winch pin of, of some of the violence of, of this broader aspiration of whiteness that this country has embodied.

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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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AT: 00:55:28 Um, let's see, um, I think we can start going into some, a little bit more like reflective questions. Um, the questions are a little vague on purpose.

LD: 00:55:50 That's okay. Um, so I guess I would like to ask, um, why, why is your, your family's, um, actually, really quick. I've noticed that you, you have a ton of detail about your family's, um, history

trajectory, um, like not even wartime, but you know, in Japan and stuff. So when did you start learning that and, and, and how, and, and you even mentioned going to Japan, so I'd love to hear a little bit more about your experiences exploring that family history.

LD: 00:56:41 Yeah. So I was really lucky to have gone to Japan with my mom and grandparents in 2001. So I was in fourth grade. My grandpa could speak Japanese, so he interpreted and my mom really wanted to have this family history trip where we visited both of their, you know, where their families came from and really learned about our family history. I think I was a little bit young to truly appreciate the experience. Um, but uh, that's sort of how I learned a little bit about their history in Japan. A lot of, a lot of learning about my family history actually happened very recently. My mom and I participated in the Rohwer pilgrimage this past April and we were interviewed by a reporter from the Chicago Tribune and that kind of like pushed us to actually research our family's history to be able to talk to this woman about it. Um, so from that I learned we had all these family pictures, um, that had never seen before.

LD: 00:57:44 Um, so these are, there was one picture I'd seen of my grandmother and her siblings from before the war, but we had a whole series of pictures of their family before and after the war. Um, there were a few pictures taken in camp, none of my grandmother, but of her sisters and other family members. Um, and you know, we looked up their, um, their WRA records. We looked up the, in the national archive of their final accountability records to sort of see when and where they went after camp. So it was very recent that I began exploring my own family. And, and I appreciate you saying that I know a lot because I, I feel like I really don't, I feel like there's so much that's been lost in terms of even what I could possibly know about my family's experience.

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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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- Maria: 01:03:09 Does that influence, sorry if I'm interrupting because we are connecting it in legacy- it that way. Because of the the Never Again is Now March. And this is my interpretation of the story that we're building together in the documentary is that we're seeing, you know, like correlations between what is happening now and uh Yonsei activism and using what they have learned from their history of JAs, as Japanese Americans. And how they're saying that this is happening again. Does that influence your role, your act in activism because you were one of the people that were leading the march and you were chanting and you were doing all these things. Does that influence, you know, like knowing this history and knowing that, you know, where this administration is repeating things that have already been done in your role as a par- active participant in rallying the community in like, not only, you know, like letting them see what's happening, but also in like trying to force change and why is this and if you can answer about looking at it.
- LD: 01:04:29 Yeah. [laughs] So as I think about, um, activism within the community today, um, there are a few sort of disparate thoughts. Um, recently I've been really fascinated in the fact that the word radical and the word radish come from the same root word, which means root. Um, and, and so I think it's like all your, your political actions should always be rooted in your history. Um, and to me that I, I see that as a huge motivator, um, in terms of, um, being able to recognize that this pain and violence that was experienced by people who I loved very deeply, um, is happening again and has happened many times. Um, and so anytime that I see that, I think that's a huge

motivator to, to speak up and to try to act in ways in those same ways that I sort of condemned my grandparents for not having acted. Um, I think I've also been really preoccupied in this idea of, um, Kodomo no Tame Ni um, both in its historical context and in its contemporary context. And so to me contemporarily it's like, uh, imagining a future and sort of actions for the sake of a future children who are not yet, you know, who maybe are currently children or you know, a world that's yet to come. Um, but also this notion that like part of this, um, historical maybe trauma or distancing was also for the sake of the children.

LD: 01:06:12 And that, um, you know, this notion that historical forgetting is, is like a defense mechanism and is an attempt to sort of protect, protect the future. Um, and sort of those are very, um, ideas that are very much intention and maybe those are the ideas that create that gap because you're saying on the one hand, generations before us worked to protect us by distancing from this history. And at the same time we're using this history to work for a better future. Um, so to me, I think that's how I bring this history into, um, some of the work that we're doing today.

Maria: 01:06:59 Could you explain to us what the chant means? Like the literal translation of it? And, I mean, you were mentioning the right to interpretation, so that would be for clarification. Great. Because you're, I caught you there because you repeated that chant. So I thought you might, it would be great to get what it means.

LD: 01:07:15 Yeah. So I, I was sort of charmed at this turning of, um, "Kodomo no Tame Ni" which means for the sake of the children into a protest rally, um, of "Kodomo no Tame Ni, they're our children, set them free". Um, because I think that, um, there are some sort of canonical lessons that in allegory get passed down about camp. And it's things like "Shikata ga nai" and "Gaman" and, um, and it, it presents as very stoic, um, and maybe stoney response of uh, as what Bill Hosokawa "Nisei The Quiet Americans" did to endure. Um, and so I think I like this subversion of this, um, idea because I do think it's, it maybe is not as much as subversion, but I think that there are many things that, um, "for the sake of the children" could mean.

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LD: 01:09:28 Do you, maybe could we talk about the Kansha Project a little bit? Sure. Yeah. Um, so I've mentioned a few times that I uh the

summer between my junior and senior year of college, I participated in JACL Chicago's program called the Kansha Project, which was the first year of that program. So the Kansha Project is designed as a program for college age, which is now 18 to 25 year old Japanese Americans from Chicago or the Midwest to travel together to Little Tokyo in Los Angeles and then to Manzanar. And I also came back to Chicago the year that the Kansha Project transitioned from being a staff run program to being run by alumni of the program. And so I was fortunate to be able to lead the first alumni run trip, um, in 2015. Um, and I think in seeing both the Kansha Project and the alumni leadership board, to me that's a really inspirational group where I, I recognized that I was very lucky to have felt like I grew up with a strong Japanese American community.

- LD: 01:10:37 Um, but I see so often that this is really the moment when, um, many young Japanese Americans are sort of feel that they are able to embrace that identity. Um, and so I'm, I just feel really fortunate to be able to sort of observe that and sort of watch that process. Um, and then to sort of see really the incredible things that people do when they come back from that, like this project. Um, where there are sort of tentacles all across the community of, um, what I like to consider Kansha culmination projects. We asked participants to do an art project right when they get back or an artistic reflection on their experience right when they get back. Um, but I really think that a lot of the Kansha culmination projects extend across multiple years and that they look, you know, they continue to grow and change, um, from some of those original conceptions. Um, so that's just, I, I think that that's like the original form of activism that I have engaged with in the Chicago community is, is being able to craft this experience for, for other Japanese Americans. And then I just recently, um, came back from Rohwer again with the Arab American Action Network, um, where we took a group of high school students, Japanese American and Arab American high school students to Little Rock and Rohwer and really explored the history of the Japanese American incarceration, civil rights movement and post-911 anti-Arab and anti-Muslim sentiment. Um, as sort of three historical moments together.
- AT: 01:12:13 Was that, um, was that with Kansha project specifically or was that J- who was running that?
- LD: 01:12:18 Yeah, so it was a program of, uh, JACL Chicago. Um, we tentatively, and it's still a tentative title, had been calling it bridge builders a few years ago, a program called bridging communities, a very similar program called bridge and

communities happened. Um, so didn't quite want to use the same name, but never really embraced bridge builders.

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- AT: 01:12:40 Um, thank you for, for sharing that. I guess, um, um, if you had to, uh, I don't know exactly what I'm, what I want to ask, but I want to ask it so bad. Um, I guess like for this, um, you've mentioned the Kansha project's role in, um, connecting a lot of young, um, Chicago based Nisei to, um, the incarceration history. Um, and I'm wondering, I guess I just, I would love to hear like more of your thoughts and maybe like on a bigger level, uh, like a, about why here, let's do it this way. Each generation within our community is so vastly different as an I'm, I'm say- saying that like fact. Um, and I guess I would love to hear from you, like if you were to kind of like classify and uh, you know, it will be generalizing, um, if I can ask you to do that. Um, like how are I guess how the, the Yonsei generation is maybe unique, um, like wha- or, or just sharing your thoughts about, or reflections on what you see or notice, observe about the Yonsei generation in this community.
- LD: 01:14:32 So as a disclaimer, I think these are just my thoughts and this are going to be very generalized statements.
- AT: 01:14:37 At best, what I asked you to do.
- LD: 01:14:39 So I think, you know, the Issei, if you think maybe beyond the Japanese American community in terms of what immigration, what happens, uh, for second and third, fourth generation, um, ethnic communities more broadly. You know, I think the Issei were not dissimilar from a lot of immigrant generations in coming to America and their, their primary goal was sort of like making a life or like making this country hospitable for them and their children. Um, I think that got sort of dislocated. And so I think some of that got also transferred to Nisei who really felt this. Like I feel Nisei in general felt this sort of like sense of establishing themselves in America, um, often starting having to start over after the war and sort of like trying to build families.
- LD: 01:15:30 Um, so then I think a lot of the Sansei I know grew up, um, with expectations that they would go to college. Um, sort of moving their families from maybe middle class to upper middle class or upper class lifestyles, um, in a sort of suburban experience. Um, and then I think, which is not dissimilar from other groups.

Yonsei I think have, have a lot more flexibility to sort of deviate from maybe more prescribed pathways. Um, and so I think that that's where, you know, I think a lot of the Yonsei I grew up with also college was, you know, very inevitable. Um, but you also see this ability to sort of explore more creative responses or, um, more politicized responses. And I think that's not to say that I don't think that the Nisei and Sansei also had politicized responses.

LD: 01:16:29 I think the other piece of this was like, I think for the Sansei there was very much, um, you know, movement around redress. Um, and so that really fostered engagement of, uh, academics and lawyers to really document, um, this experience in a very particular way that I think again, leaves the possibility for Yonsei, to have much more divergent and artistic engagements. Um, I think my mom would probably say something about the difference between parents and children and parents or grandparents and grandchildren. Um, that for her, the people who were incarcerated were, um, again, that they're sort of like less flexibility in a parent child relationship, but that grandparents sort of get to be, or at least grandparents in the 80s, 90s, and 2000s get to be much more like whimsical people in the lives of their grandchildren than parents who sort of have to like maybe struggle with more on a day to day sense.

LD: 01:17:32 Um, so that it's maybe both that relationship to who was incarcerated amongst the Yonsei as well as sort of like flexibility in terms of trajectories. I think like Jason is a great example where he, um, you know, I think if I think about his parents and if they gave up their banking jobs to start a film production company, like I think Dr. Ben would have, uh, not known what to do. Right. But you know, like I think his parents, um, he, he has the, he has the luxury of being able to do that and to sort of pursue this and to get support from his parents and his family in a way that I think would not have been the case 30, 40 years ago.

M: 01:18:18 Talking about that, do you think it has to do with timing the fact that we're able to hear and tell the stories now rather than 20, 30 years ago and maybe something that could have affected, you know, Nisei and even Sansei when they didn't have the platform that we now well or at least you as Yonsei have to share these story stories. Do you, and maybe the fact that information is available for you, and I'm not saying that it was easy to obtain, but maybe easier than it would have been for maybe your mother or maybe your, you know, like apart from the fact that it was so close to the time that it happened, maybe that detachment that you as Yonsei have to look at the history,

can allow for that exploration of this thing that happened. And what do you think about that?

M: 01:19:10 Because that's kind of like the approach that the legacy part is like going back and we're you know retelling this story through the voices of like very like older Sansei and you know, like in oh, like young Nisei and we're using their testimonies to kind of end, you know, like the end line is that Yonsei are primary, the people we're hoping that we'll see this as well as, you know, like anyone in the community, but the fact that oh, this happened and eh, why didn't we know about this? So it's kind of like an informative thing. So do you think that, and I guess my question goes back to, is it a privilege, eh, that we now have, that you guys now have these Yonsei to be exploring these things and maybe now is the time, what do you think about that? Do you have an opinion on maybe the timing of things and you know, pretty much why is it important to even discuss this now? Because some people are like, oh, it's history. It's past. Why even like put the finger in the wound, I don't know if that's the expression. That's pretty much that.

LD: 01:20:21 Yeah. I think one other thing that's really crucial about the timing, and I think often the redress movement gets overlooked or sort of like, it's a footnote in the history. But I think amongst the things the redress movement did is it opened the doors of people telling their stories. Um, so I think in terms of the number of oral histories or interviews or memoirs that you might have gotten, you know, in the 60s or 70s versus after the mid-80s and 90s and 2000s, you know, I think it was this synergy of suddenly the technology made it much easier. And there was, um, you know, this moment when people were really asked to testify and to tell their stories. And I think that that really just opened a flood gate of possibilities for many other people to, to tell those kinds of stories. Um, I think that was crucial in terms of making it intelligible for future generations.

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AT: 01:21:22 Um, what do you think are some of the main, um, lessons or, or messages that, um, need to be taken away from the incarceration history? And maybe I might extend that to resettlement as well.

LD: 01:21:41 What do I think are the main lessons, mm, so when I think about takeaways from this history, I'm always torn between

acknowledging ways in which it was unique and acknowledging ways in which it fits very easily into a broader arc of United States history. Um, you know, if I think that there're important takeaways in terms of probably constitutional law and, and the rights of citizens. Um, but I also think that more broadly, like the amount of echos and reverberations across historical time, um, is, is not surprising. So on this trip that we took to Rohwer, um, we visited Little Rock Central High School, um, which was integrated by the Little Rock Nine. And one of the students who was, um, integrating the school, she talked about how, uh, initially the Arkansas, um, national guard had been called in and she talked about how you knew she's, she's a citizen. So she just assumed that the Arkansas national guard had been called in to protect her and to, you know, help her get into this school when in fact the Arkansas National Guard had been called in to, um, initially to prevent her from going to this school.

LD: 01:23:10 And it like just the echoes of people who talked about, you know, the, the military police with the machine guns were pointing them in, um, into the camps and sort of what do we expect as citizens for our government to do for us? And then these moments where you just are sort of, um, faced with the reality that your government doesn't really consider you to be a person, um, or you know, imbued with the rights of a person. Um, and I think maybe my takeaway is sort of like to be really attentive to the ways that, that this history, um, repeats itself over and over again and sort of what then is our obligation to do.

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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.

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