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Title: Hiroki Kimiko Keaveney Interview  
Narrator: Hiroki Kimiko Keaveney  
Interviewer: Anna Takada  
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<Begin Segment 7>

- AT: 00:32:42 So I would love to hear a little bit more about, um, your own journey and experience and, and learning your family's history and also, um, this history in general because I feel like, and I know you've touched on it at times, but everyone kind of has their own like, oh, well we didn't talk about it. I learned about it. So I want to hear more about like your experience about learning about your presentation and then also kind of like connecting those dots and piecing together your family story.
- HK: 00:33:19 Absolutely. And I'm like trying to cross my legs. Um, yeah, it's - healing is really painful experience. Um, it's like when you get to the other side, you're like, whew, okay, I made it. But while you're in it - I think when I was 19 that was my first pilgrimage. I think I was just so like radical and QTPOC and it's just like a mess honestly. But like being at the internment camp, being at Minidoka in Idaho, it was such an important moment. I think even when I was 9 years old or 10 years old, whatever or however old I was in fourth grade, I always knew I needed to go. It's kind of like how I've always known I need to go to Japan to find my birth grandmother. It's just something you know, intuitively, and I like, I knew I need to go to a camp. I was like, I have to like, how am I - like I live in fucking Ohio, like no Asian people. Like I was like, I need, I just have to. And so the first time I went on a pilgrimage, I just cried so much and it was the first time I ever felt Japanese American. And it was because everyone looked like my family. There were mixed people. There were people who looked like my aunt and uncle. There were people looked like my grandparents. There were people who weren't Japanese, but were just there to support, like whether it's interracial or there's just really like Japanese culture and they're there. And it felt like home though. It felt like what I knew. And um, it was the first time I ever really heard about the suicides in our community. And it was the first time I ever really saw older Japanese Americans cry. And that like, that fucked me up. And, and then when I went on Manzanar

pilgrimage, seeing my grandfather cry was really hard. Um, he even just starts crying when he's just talking about the internment. He even doesn't even need to be at the camp. He just starts crying. And, um, so for me it wasn't like - it's just hard seeing old people cry and it's hard seeing your community cry. It's hard seeing your family cry. And it's crazy. Cause I think a lot of people when they're older, they want to protect the youth. They don't want them to see them cry, especially if they're your family. But I think that's how traumatizing internment was, was that like my grandfather literally can't control himself. Like he just starts crying. Um, yeah. I think as a community - they - we just try to control it and hold it in for so many years that - I mean that's the bad part of shigataganai is like, it, it just like - it's why our community has so many like mental health issues, honestly. We may be financially okay, but spiritually are we? Emotionally and like mentally are we okay? And um, yeah, I don't, I don't know the answer to that. And I think our community like learning about the history as a whole, like you're asking, it's really interesting. It's like we are from a people who colonized other Asian people. We are from people who colonized our own people. Like, what was it, the Ainu and the Okinawans. I'm like, what the fuck's wrong with people? And I just coming from that legacy and understanding how like Chinese and Filipino and Korean and like South Asian, whether Pakistani or Indian didn't have the opportunities we had in America because they weren't part of an empire. Um, and well, an empire at that time period. I'm considering China being an empire at certain points in history, but, um, I think with Japan it's like, it's such a bizarre state - situation to be in. It's like it was such a culture shock I think for Japanese Americans because they were treated not great. There's still experienced racism, but they were treated better than other Asian people, Asian and Pacific Islanders I should say. And so I think when internment happened, it sent a shock-wave through our community. This like sense of superiority that I think they had because they were from an empire, you know, that it just, it really, you know, when you meet someone who's Japanese American, you know, when you meet someone who is from Japan, you know, when you meet someone who was in Hawai'i during the internment, you know - or at least I know when I meet someone who's from the mainland and incarcerated because I think people who were incarcerated carry this like shame and like sadness with them. Even if, if it's us, like the fourth generation, there's this like sense of shame that we carry about being Japanese and this like disconnection that when I meet people I'm like, oh that person, they immigrated or their parents immigrated cause they don't hate themselves or like that's why our friend Anne is - am I allowed to talking about it? That's why she's so fascinating to

me because she's Yonsei and Shin-Nisei and I can see both in her, and Shin-Nisei are just like so empowered. I was like what the hell? And the Yonsei are just like werb-werb-werb you know, it's like, Oh God, I hate us all. And it's like, I think with like, um, with our community, it's just, we're just so complicated. And like my mentor, she told me, her partner called it like shades of JA. Like there are just so many JAs and we're not even talking - I wasn't even talking about Okinawans. I wasn't even talking about the Ainu I wasn't even talking about like what does it mean to be from Hawai'i because they did experience different types of incarceration but just not seen as incarceration on the mainland and same with Canadians. And then also same with people in Latin America who were brought up, you know, so yeah, so I wanted to say that. And I also wanted to say that I think I was really lucky. I know a lot of people don't have exposure to their family history, and my family, because they're narcissists, they love talking about themselves. And so it was easy for me to learn their story because they would just so openly shared it. And then also they openly shared it on the internet too. And like when I was in fourth grade, they even were willing to share like little stories that you would tell a child. Um, so I never felt like - excuse me - I think that's part of the reason why I moved from Seattle to LA. I knew I could learn my family story. I think if I had never really heard any of it, like in fourth grade or through over the years, I wouldn't have felt like, oh, let me move here. Because a lot of Japanese American families just don't talk about it. So, so I feel really like blessed in that sense that like, yeah, my family stories really - I don't know if tragic's the right word, they're tragic elements. But yeah, my family's story is really complicated and really sad. Um, but I knew I could learn it. Um, and I didn't realize how complicated and sad it was or I probably wouldn't have tried to learn it cause it was, it's depressing when you learn your family story, you're like, oh man, you went through that. Oh my God. And that happened. And, but at the same time, like I'm so grateful that I learned it because if I hadn't learned it, I think I would still carry that sadness with me. And now that I don't, now that I know it, I know I'm not sad anymore. I mean, I get sad and I cry, I cry, I like fricking internment trailers, but it's like I don't carry the sadness of not knowing anymore, which is a certain type of sadness and trauma. Um, I just carry like, man, my family's messed up. Like, and I can joke about it. And I think when you can joke about something, not always, but I think for me now that I'm able to joke about it, it means that I have done some healing because I remember the first internment camp I went to, I like could not joke at all, but like as time has gone on, I can make jokes when I'm at an internment camp, but like maybe that's horrible. I

don't know. But it's like, it's, um, I think when you're able to joke about something, yeah, it's either you haven't processed your feelings or you have and like you're able to find humor even in the worst situation.

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