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Title: Kathy Yamaguchi Interview
Narrator: Kathy Yamaguchi
Interviewer: Naoko Wake
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<Begin Segment 4>

NW: Why do you think you, I mean, I think, you can look around, and in this country you can really find a lot of medical injustice. For people who wouldn't have access to public health services and so forth. Why do you think you particularly interested in survivors?

KY: I just was a Japanese. I, I don't know that I'm particularly interested in survivors, it was just that, I mean, I wasn't gonna seek out, wasn't particular. I mean I, antiwar, antinuclear, but I wasn't, you know, I wasn't looking for a group. It just happened; it seemed appropriate for me as a Japanese American physician to be involved. It just seemed like I should do this, it was only every two years, you know.

NW: Did you that it's going to be such a long term relationship with?

KY: No. No. Not at all. No.

NW: So do you feel that you are happy with the way that your work went with survivors?

KY: Oh yeah, my, my . . . yeah. I don't do much, Geri does all the work. Geri is what holds it together.

NW: She seems to be very good at making network and keeping it.

KY: Sure. Right. And she has a vision too. I don't. I just wanna do what's placed in front of me. That's, I have a, I'm not, I don't have. And if it's in front of me, then I'll do it. I . . . I don't. I think it's a good, it was a good issue. And, one thing I was frustrated about was I was interested in you know, like, a national health plan, and if we had a national health plan, the survivors wouldn't have to work about healthcare, 'cause they . . . everyone would have it. It was frustrating because survivors did not wanna be political at all. Because they were worried. They were too scared to, they didn't want to make any political statement at all.

NW: Right; yeah.

KY: So I found that frustrating because . . .

NW: Right

KY: . . . I wanted to fight for single-payer national health plan and they didn't want to say anything. It was totally nonpolitical. I thought that was, I found that frustrating, but that's the way it was. It's okay.

NW: Yeah, yeah, but it is frustrating, especially given the fact the Japanese government started to give Japanese survivors and then American government supposedly was able to do the same for American survivors because many of them American citizens.

KY: Yes, yes, yeah.

NW: I understand that 1970s there was a lot of struggle to get the governmental recuperation.

KY: Yeah

NW: Do you think that's sort of American, unique American environment for American survivors kinda contributed to your engagement with them? Because I think that . . .

KY: Oh, yeah. Probably. Yes, yeah. Because it sort of fit in with the fact that I thought everyone should get healthcare. I mean, I work here, and I take, we take care of the people without insurance. You know, we totally just take care of the poor.

NW: Hmm, right.

KY: And that's what I've done; my whole career has been taking care of the underserved, you know.

NW: Do you think it's unique gratification, satisfaction, pleasure, I don't know how you can refer to it, but I think when the people get involved in volunteer work, or social justice causes, it's a give and take. So you give things for people and then you take pleasure out of your work and whatever that comes out of it. Do you think the satisfaction part for you when you work with survivors is unique? Because of the fact they are survivors, nobody else?

KY: Ah, yeah. Yeah. I really feel that they've been through a lot. I think it was very, experience had to have been extremely traumatic and frightening. And as a group they are so appreciative of all the work that, all the help that we give them. They're very appreciative and I'm used to patients who are like "uehehe" [phonetic] you know, and aren't like that. So it was really nice, to, to spend the weekend with them.

NW: Right.

KY: And they're patient, and they, well-behaved, and they say thank you. You know, whereas we have all these patients "ueheheh where's my blah-blah-blah?" you know.

NW: Right, right.

KY: So it's a nice change. It's a nice change. My, my, and every time I finish, that I love, what I've always enjoyed is I've enjoyed working with the Japanese doctors. 'cause they're, they're

different. They're a trip, you know? They're just . . . but . . . every time at the end of it I say 'I'm gonna learn Japanese so the next time they come, I can speak Japanese.'

NW: [laughs].

KY: And I never do it. I've tried many times, but I've not ever succeeded in learning Japanese.

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