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Title: Geri Handa Interview
Narrator: Geri Handa
Interviewer: Naoko Wake
Location: San Francisco, California
Date: July 20, 2011
Densho ID: ddr-densho-1021-2-9

<Begin Segment 9>

NW: Do you think then, this sort of pure awareness as an Asian American person living in the States and living as an American citizen, but you know, wanting to work with people from different Asian backgrounds and trying to share some of the similar concerns they all experience because of, you know, commonalities: being senior and also being discriminated against and so forth. Do you think you gradually came to the awareness that, you know, you want to do something about it, or do you think that someone, even, you know, one individual or probably your parents changed the course of thinking? In other words, I thought that, I'm wondering if you kind of . . .

GH: Where that came from?

NW: Yeah, where it came from, and then how you kind of came to terms with that, because at age of three, you weren't thinking that way, you know, but here you are in San Jose, you are really working actively, I just kind of wonder how it came about.

GH: Well, you know what, when you, when you care enough about something, and you find other people who also care, then you work together and it doesn't matter what background you come from, all you know is, or you feel that, you know, you share this common feeling, or of helping others, maybe. And so, then you work towards finding ways to work together, you know? And . . .

NW: When did you start to think in that way?

GH: When did I start thinking that way?

NW: Yeah, and you know, take, doing all of those things are pretty remarkable, I mean, in my opinion, it is, so you can just wake up in the morning, and, you know, do . . . Well, probably that's the way it was for you.

GH: Well, I, I think what it was is, you'd, you'd have to develop relationships and, and once you develop relationships, you get to know people, and you get to know a little bit about them. You haven't been able to really live in their shoes, but you know that they maybe have had some difficulties or whatever. And so, irregardless of that, they probably overcome many things, and so you, you just come to appreciate people and their experiences, and I, and I think we, maybe, then you kinda develop the trust, and, and then you find things maybe you can work together on.

And I, I, I don't know . . . hm, when that happened. Well, I, I think what it is, is maybe because I'm the oldest.

NW: You are the oldest of the siblings?

GH: I'm not . . . I have another sister, a sister, a younger sister; we're only fifteen months apart. And so, being the oldest, I always, I think I was always kinda put in a role or put myself in a role of taking care of my sister and, and, so then, my mother, she was the youngest, so sometimes, I found myself telling her things like "Oh mom, you know, a mother is supposed to be able to comfort their kids" [laugh].

NW: [laugh]

GH: And so she would get upset at me and say "Who's the mother here?" and I'd go "Oh, you're the mother" and so I, I found myself though, kinda in that role. So I think that's one of those things, maybe having that, kind of growing up in that way, I got used to taking care of things, or taking care of people or, you know, just, just doing that thing, that role. And so, and then in doing so, you have to kind of work together on things, so you always work together. And I think maybe it may come from just growing up in, you know, mostly Japanese, Japanese American kind of environment, so you know, I always felt supported, I've always felt, I've always felt loved, you know? And, and I think maybe it comes from there. That, you know, irregardless of what I do, I'm always going to be accepted and loved.

NW: That's a great feeling to have. Yeah.

GH: Yeah.

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