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Title: Keiko Shinmoto Interview
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Interviewer: Naoko Wake
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<Begin Segment 8>

NW: So tell me a little bit about your life after you came to the States. You told me you were excited, what do you remember from that time period?

KS: I was lucky, at the time I was in Las Angeles, yeah, living with Roy together, and that was a little be further, Torrance, and Los Angeles, but my school was in Los Angeles the city, in side. So my cousin lived in Los Angeles, long, long time, said that, well, Keiko, the best thing is to do the School Girl.

NW: Oh yeah.

KS: That way you learn English fast. Of course besides, I am going to school, English school, from 9 to 2 o'clock or 3.

NW: Oh wait, though, I heard that, somebody told me that, the School Girl was a system in which your American host family so to speak, pays for your education.

KS: No, not the education. They don't. I think that was my brother paid, tution. Only I got from this host family, \$50 a month. At that time, that was my only spending money.

NW: Yeah, but they feed you, so to speak.

KS: Oh yeah, and nice bedroom, you know, it's really nice, because his family had a business, steel company business. So, parents, these are Mr. and Mrs. Brookes, that's . . . they go all the time, social life, and three kids [needed] someone to watch. So it's such a big house, they had one maid room type, you know. I lived there. I just stayed after school, and helped cooking, she cooks, but dish washing or table setting, that's the kind I did. But twice a week, that colored lady [*sic*] came to clean the house, I didn't have to do, clean house or anything. Most of the time I just stayed with the kids until the bedtime, when the couple go to the meeting. Yeah, and that was a very nice family. I remember, I never forget. They had a beach house at Balboa, that beach, [in] Los Angeles. They had a beach house though, summer vacation, one month, always go together, yeah. I don't have to, she said, but this is my chance to see, I have to go back to Japan, too, at the time. But I like to go with them, and [they said] "Of course you can come with us." You know? Yeah, very nice.

NW: That's nice. Now, do you remember anything we might call as a racial tension or tension between different nationals? So you talked about . . .

KS: No, I never had it. I never had it. Even this English school, is all over the world to come to that, this country, before, go to school, whatever that would be, they all mix it. So I learned a lot of nationality people. They were all good people, too, of course. I never had difficult time myself. Yeah.

NW: How about school teachers? Did you, I guess you were working for this family as part of this School Girl system . . .

KS: That's, yeah, the school is all English. Yeah, none speak any Japanese, so everybody has to. But lunch time, everyone the Japanese group got together and talk in Japanese. And then the teacher sometimes passing by "Speak English! Speak English!" You know!

NW: Yeah. So, you didn't even hear about any biases or prejudices that somebody had to suffer from, because I talked to many people and some of them actually say, yeah, it was hard to find a house to buy because landlord or certain neighborhood, they don't want to sell house to Japanese Americans or it's really hard to find an apartment.

KS: That's too bad. But after I finished this English school, I went to trade, technical college in Los Angeles. And I studied designing, in the meantime, of course I liked the sewing. And my teacher recommended me and [said,] "Keiko, what are you doing in summer time?" "Well, I don't have any plans." You know. "If you want to, in Beverly Hills, some dress shop, a Japanese girl, not a . . . she is a middle aged person, she is looking for some dress maker. So [she] said, you want, I'd introduce you." So I went there, maybe a couple of months, weekends, and all the customers were, of course, in Beverly Hill, all the rich people. All the Hollywood actors, actresses, you know. Then I learn so many American customs, too. Maybe one side of that American style, too. I was in a way lucky. So I could see the people. Yeah.

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