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Interview with Linda Lee

Linda Lee

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Interviewee: Linda Lee

Interviewers: Delia Jimenez, Karen Koji, & Mhongzoong Yang

Date: November 20th, 2020

Location: ZOOM.US

Collection: Auntie Sewing Squad Oral History Archive, SBS 112: Women & Social Change, From 1890s to the Present, FALL 2020

Length of Interview: (00:46:46)

Overseen by: Dr. Chrissy Lau

Bio: Linda Lee is Korean American. Her parents immigrated here from Seoul, South Korea in the late 60's. She was born in Las Vegas, grew up mostly in Orange County, went to school in San Diego, went to graduate school in New York City, and now she currently resides in Santa Monica, CA. Growing up, Lee's parents owned a business in LA in the middle of Koreatown. Lee became an Optometrist & works at her family's optical business with her mother and uncle. When she was 17 y/o, she and her friend volunteered for the Dikakis campaign in Orange County, and demonstrated with the pro-life movement. She has worked in the Biden campaign as part of a volunteer leader crew for phone banking to swing states. Lee sews Face Masks for marginalized, low-income, & people in need, and she discovered the Auntie Sewing Squad on Facebook.

Thematic Outline: (00:02:00) Lee began volunteering in high school, she worked for the Democratic Party & the pro-choice movement. In college, she also did a lot of community service within her sorority and later got involved with the Biden campaign. After that, she had kids & Lee started doing community service through her children's school. When the pandemic hit, the Auntie Sewing Squad popped up on her Facebook feed, and decided to do what she could to help communities in need. (00:19:33) The George Floyd incident opened Lee's eyes and mind, and was first informed about the incident through her daughter. She goes into detail about why her daughter was frustrated and wanted to be a part of the movement. Lee wanted to keep her daughter safe and learn as well, so she began to understand and research more of the incident. She has learned a lot from her daughter and by participating online, she is aware of what is going on in the world around her. (00:30:10) Influencers like Billie Eilish are influencing her daughter in a positive way to speak out peacefully and with your words to invoke change. It caused Lee to begin understanding what was going on and the importance of the Black Lives Matter movement. She attended a rally, not just because of her daughter's safety, but she was able to gain knowledge of the movement and the statement behind BLM. (00:39:00) President Donald Trump's statements and racial incentives like "Yellow-Peril", "Chinese Virus", and "Kung-Flu" infuriated Lee. She finds it shocking and bizarre that people don't see this as a real issue with real consequences. Linda feels like this can actually empower people and motivate them to speak up. She talks about an incident she experienced at a grocery store where she felt prejudice and

intimidation by men due to a sneer comment. Lee gets a perspective on why people behave the way they do, and was disappointed that not many people are better and kinder. (00:43:06) Auntie Linda Lee wishes that the Asian American community are able to speak up more about the treatment that they are given, and that people are unaware of their own biases. She wants people to stop thinking only of themselves and to treat people with kindness and respect.

Auntie Sewing Squad- Linda Lee Transcript

KK: OK.

DJ: OK. So, hello. Today is November 20th, 2020. (00:01) And today we are interviewing Auntie Linda Lee. Our location of our meeting is on ZOOM and our proposed subject of this recording is for the Auntie Sewing Squad Oral History Project. (00:09) Good afternoon, Miss Lee. Thank you for joining us today. My name is Delia Jimenez, (00:17) My pronouns are she/her/hers and I am in my second year studying Humanities & Communication. (00:20)

LL: Hello.

KK: My name's Karen. I'm a third-year and my major is Biology. (00:27)

MY: Hi, my name is Mhongzoong. My major is Environmental Studies right now, and yeah. (00:39)

DJ: OK, so we're going to get started on our interview questions, and they can start. (00:46)

LL: Is someone going to ask me a question? (01:03)

DJ: I know, I was waiting for them. Do you guys have it open?

MY: No, I am opening it right now.

LL: Oh, okay.

DJ: I can start with the first question then. So, the first question is just to tell us more about your background in sewing and volunteer work. (01:12)

LL: OK. Um, yes. I'm not really, I wasn't a really big sewer. (01:20) I only learned how to sew, probably like I don't know seven or eight years ago, mainly because of my daughter's dance. She does Hula. (01:25) So, I just learned to sew her costumes just so I wouldn't have to pay for them. (01:34) Well, I custom make it to fit her well.

DJ: Yes.

LL: So, yeah, I mean, basically in terms of volunteer work. (01:40) As I was thinking about it, I guess I have been volunteering a lot starting from high school. (01:48) My friend and I, actually, we started talking a lot during the pandemic. (01:57) Well, also because of the election and everything, we got involved in the Democratic Party in Orange County, which is a very red part of California. (02:00) And, I was actually unaware that it was like a Republican Zone. (02:12) But, she and I worked for the Democratic Party. We registered voters, we went door to door. (02:17) And then from that, we just started getting involved with the pro-choice movement.

(02:24) And it was actually really fun, (02:29) I don't know if that's the right word. But, you know back then there was no cell phones. (02:35) And so we would actually be told, come to this Planned Parenthood at like eight o'clock in the morning on a Saturday. (02:38) And we would show up there and there would be like people scattered all over different locations. (02:47) And we never knew where "Operation Rescue" was going to be holding a demonstration. (02:53) So, everybody would be like on payphones, I guess, (03:00) I don't know how they communicated, pagers, back then. I don't know. But we were just going to stand there and then wait and be told where to go. (03:05) And we would then get in our cars and drive off to wherever the main demonstration is. (03:13) And it was, I don't know. It was actually, I think, a very interesting experience. (03:19) So, we were, you know, we'd be like in human chains, basically leaving the doors open, (03:25) like try to like allow pathways for women to be able to come in that needed care. (03:30) So, that was actually, I think, one of the bigger things I did when I was younger. (03:35) We did get involved, I mean some of the demonstrations we went to were rather large. (03:42) We didn't even realize how large they were. We were just kind of there all morning and then we had to leave. (03:46) So, we asked the people, and we were in like layers, it was like layers of chains like we were probably the third chain in of people. (03:51) And then we were like, well, we got to go home, we have things to do. (03:58) So we, you know, we closed our chain. And as we were going out, the whole street was shut down. (04:02) There were like police with, like riot gear on. It was like, massive. I had no idea.

DJ: Wow.

LL: It was really, but you know I was glad that I was actually to be a part of that kind of thing. (04:14) So, I don't know, that was high school. And then in college, I did it mainly through my sorority. (04:19) We just tried to do a lot of community service. And then, yeah, and then after I had kids, it's just mainly through school. (04:26) You know, Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts. (04:34)

DJ: Sounds fun.

LL: Yeah, well, it's really stressful. (04:42) Actually, I kind of burned myself out because I was holding, like, way too many positions and doing too many things at once. (04:45) And then so right before, probably a couple of years from, a couple of years ago. (04:51) I decided I was just going to try and pull back because it started to kind of wear on me. (04:56) I wasn't sleeping enough, I was getting a lot of migraines, and you know I work. I'm a single mom. (05:00) So, it's a lot on my plate. So, I kind of pulled back on volunteering until this came up. (05:07) And then once the pandemic hit and I was home and I had so much time on my hands. (05:15) You know, so like there's not a lot to do. There's not a lot that we could do. So, I just learned I just sort of watched YouTube videos on how to sew masks. (05:26) And I did a small donation to my son's high school mask drive. (05:35) And then I just kind of put my sewing machine away. But, then one day, the, it just popped up on my Facebook feed, the Auntie Sewing Squad, just randomly. (05:39) I don't know why, it just showed up. (05:49) So I clicked on it and it was really, it just seemed like it was something that I really wanted to do, to help, you know, communities that were really hurting, (05:51) that were in need, and it just seemed really important. (06:02) So, I asked to join and I kind of lurked around probably for a couple of weeks because I was afraid of just overextending myself again. (06:05) And I ended up. Yeah, and I don't know. (06:16) But as I was watching all the posts come up and I was seeing who they were donating to and like the

women just like selling hundreds of masks, (06:19) it was just kind of, God, it was really inspirational to just see this group of women come together and get so much done. (06:27) So I just decided, all right, I'm going to do this. (06:35) And I pulled my machine back out. My whole living room was like a sweatshop. (06:39) I was going to throw away a table that I had in my bedroom. (06:44) And I had just moved it downstairs and I was about to post it online to just sell on whatever. (06:49) Get rid of. And then this started. So it's like a big drafting desk that I had. (06:54) And instead of giving it away, it's now sitting over my dining, my living room table and it's my cutting station. (07:00) So, my house, that's my cutting station and my dining table. (07:08) Half my dining table is like my daughter's high school, (07:15) Distance Learning, and the other half is my sewing station. (07:21) And then the ironing board is now permanently in the dining room behind me. (07:26) And so, yeah, once I started, I just, I haven't really stopped much. (07:31) I try to sew every oh for a while, sewing every day, like after work. (07:36) I try to sew and sometimes I'd be up until like 1:00 in the morning because I would be like, okay, I'm gonna finish this one bit. (07:41) And I was going to finish this one bit. The next thing I know, it's like 1:00 or 2:00 in the morning. (07:47) I'm like, OK, have to go to sleep! I have to go to work the next day. And so, yeah, in the beginning, I was doing a lot more. (07:51) And then, I think for a long time, I just try to do something every single day. (07:57) That was like, I think I started in July and so and I did every, I did, I did constantly do mask's until a couple of weeks before the election. (08:03) I took a couple weeks off because then I got involved with the Biden campaign. (08:13) So I was like, OK, I have to focus on. So, yeah, we did like three weeks, but then I just committed to another tasks, so I'm back. (08:21) Well, the election's over. Yeah. (08:30) Thank God. So anyway. Ok, so anyways, sorry. (08:35)

DJ: No, yeah, that's totally fine. And that was kind of like a segway to our next question, which was, How or Why did you get involved with the Auntie Sewing Squad. (08:40) And you pretty much answered it, and I think that's awesome! I think it's very, it's an inspirational thing. And I just want to say thank you for helping marginalized communities and families. (08:51)

LL: Yeah.

DJ: Oh, sorry. Go ahead.

LL: Oh. no no. Go ahead.

(NEXT QUESTION- 3)

DJ: Oh, ok thank you. So our next question is, Were there any, like world events that opened your eyes or had an impact on you when you were growing up? (09:00)

LL: So I think when I was growing up, I kind of grew up in a bubble. You know,. I grew up in the suburbs, like upper middle class, middle class. (09:11) And it was kind of diverse. There were a lot of Asians, Latinos, (09:22) not that many African-Americans, but, you know, it was, it was a pretty mixed community. (09:29) So I don't know. I think when I was a teenager, I wasn't that, I didn't really think much about what was going on around me. (09:34) You know, there was no Internet. So, it's so different now, for you guys, this is just so different because I have a 16 year old daughter. (09:44) And so, yeah, yeah. It's interesting. When I think about it, I'm like, I know the AIDS epidemic was happening when I was in high school. (09:53) But to be honest, I didn't really pay much attention to it because I thought. (10:02) Well, it just didn't have anything to do

with me, that sounds so selfish. But you know, I'm like, oh ok, you get it through having sex and I'm not having sex. (10:08) So I'm not gonna get it. Yeah, I don't. You know, I mean, I would just hear bits and pieces of the news. But, I never paid much attention. (10:22) And so it's interesting now because. Well, anyways, it's a different topic. Sorry. Go ahead. (10:33)

DJ: Ok, yeah. Oh, go ahead Karen you can go.

LL: You know, I just. It's just interesting now because I, I think this year has changed. I've changed a lot. I think, well, I've learned a lot is a better way to put it. I think just with everything kind of being put on pause and prior to this, shows, always like on a, (10:51) like a rat in a wheel or mouse on a wheel, you know, (10:58) the rat race just, you know, working, taking my kids to school, you know, just, just maintaining the house, my business just... You know I never really... It was just like constantly go, go, go. (11:08) And then the pandemic just kind of hits and it makes you slow down. Well, it forced you to because we couldn't do anything.

DJ: Yeah.

LL: And so, you know, I think I did learn a lot this year. (11:16) I just, just watched a lot of documentaries, and that changed a lot of the way (11:24) I was thinking. And it actually changed a lot of how I thought of things. (11:30) Like, I look back at the time of when I was growing up and I realized that I was so oblivious to what was going on. I think I watched, I watched a documentary about the AIDS. (11:43) I don't know, like, How to Survive a Pandemic?, is that what it was called? Like about that time, and I was really just, I don't know, it was interesting. (11:47) It's interesting to go back and look at documentaries from the time that I was there. I lived it, but I was so out of, like, oblivious as to what was going on. And so it's kind of just changed my perspective on a lot of things. So yeah, anyways.

KK: The next question is, what is one thing that you want people to remember you by? (12:09)

LL: I guess that, I just, that I care. About trying to... I don't know, like I want, I just, I just care about the Earth, the community, and I just want to make sure that I mean, in a lot of ways, (12:35) I'm fortunate. You know, and what I have, and I know that for a lot of people, they don't have as much as I mean, I'm not rich by any means. But, you know, I have a lot of security and I realize there's a lot of people in this world that don't, that don't have people to lean on. (12:56) And so, I think it just makes me more, like you know, I want to be able to provide for people that might not have any other means, as much as I can. (13:05) And just, just, to leave the world a better place. I feel like. I don't know, our generation has kind of, like a lot of the younger generation feels like our generation has kind of ruined the planet for them. (13:20) And you know, it's just all about like consumerism and capitalism and like, you know. And it's, it's, I think the time, the 80s kind of were kind of like that, that was just about... (13:35) What you have. I mean, it's still a little bit, it is still a lot like that, but it's, you know, it's like at what cost though? I just want to make sure, that, you know, our planet survives and the people on it, you know. (13:50)

DJ: Yeah.

LL: So, anyways.

MY: Another question I have for you is, relates back to what you were talking about earlier. So,

coming from an upper middle class family, were you able to see what the less fortunate communities had struggled with? (14:15)

LL: I did, because my parents owned businesses in Los Angeles, so you know, we would go out there quite a bit. So, I mean, I think, but it was kind of, you know, it was from afar. You know, my parents had a business, and you know, just like middle of Koreatown. (14:38) And then, they had dry cleaners back then. And then, one in Hollywood. So, you know, I would, I would see it. But um, I don't think I really thought... much of it. I mean, it was just the city. (15:01) I guess that's how I would think of it.

MY: And then, the next question I have for you is, growing up, what problems with sexism and racism did you experience? Were they subtle encounters or did they have a big impact on your life? (15:17)

LL: I don't think I experienced very much. I think, again, because I grew up in an area that had a lot of Asian American people. And to be honest, I think back then, if I did experience something, (15:39) I might have been oblivious to it, like I might have not even realized that I was being discriminated against because I was a little bit, I don't know. Naive, I don't know if naive is the right word or just I always thought that, I give people the benefit of the doubt all the time. Maybe too much when, especially when I was younger. (16:02) So, I mean, in terms of racism, just, you know, neighborhood bully calling me names, but it never really hurt my feelings actually. Yeah, because I was, I remember, I was like 8, and the reason it didn't hurt my feelings is because I didn't know what he was talking about. He was riding around on his bike calling me and my friend "Gooks", (16:20) and I had no idea what he was talking about. I had never heard that word before. And I was just, like, thinking to myself, what's wrong with that guy? (16:30) Go get a life, and just leave us alone. So he was, like, trying to pick on us because of my race, but I didn't even realize it. So, enter now. And in terms of, say, I don't, I don't know. I don't know if I've ever actually been held like, felt like, because of my gender, I was held back, you know, so. (16:46)

MY: Um, well I guess you just answered this right now, but you mentioned that America is out of an illusion compared to today's America. What are some of the biggest differences?

LL: So, I think the biggest shock to me was just, how much racism is still present in our society. I was very oblivious to it. (17:32) Especially, you know, growing up, I just thought, I didn't really pay much attention to the fact that a lot of the Civil Rights movements and all of the things, like the rights that women have earned, I never really gave it much thought that it was in the recent past. You know, I like, I always thought that happened a long time ago. (17:55) So, it's all ironed out. Does that make sense? Like, I didn't really, I didn't see it. So, I just thought it was a thing of the past that no longer happens. And, I think the first thing that ever surprised me was, I have a friend here that I met who grew up in Alabama. (18:11) She's just a couple years older than me. But, she would just tell me that when she was in school, there were no bi-racial couples and that if there were bi-racial couples, they were harassed. (18:23) And she says, she, one time those knew somebody who got their car lit on fire because it was, you know, they were dating someone of the other race. And that really, I don't know, that really rattled me because I was thinking, wait. That happened, when, when you were in college, I was in college. (18:49) That wasn't that long ago, and I think that was the first clue, that I guess that's the best way to put it. I

mean, I would see things. You know, you see things on the news about... you know, all the, all the issues that are happening now, that have all kind of blown up. But, you know, you just hear about it and I didn't really think much of it. I mean, I did it. I did think that they probably are. (19:18) There is some bias, but I didn't really realize the extent of it. And like, how detrimental it is to our society. And to the lives of the people that are subjected to this sort of like, racism. But yeah, I think the whole George Floyd thing just really opened my eyes. (19:45) It made me kind of open my mind, maybe it's a better way to put it. You know, my daughter was really angry at me because that morning, she woke up and saw a video and I didn't see it. (19:50) She's 16, and well she's 15 at that time. (20:00) So, you know, she tells me about it and I'm just kind of busy doing my own thing. And I was like, well, that happens sometimes. That's what I said to her, and she got really, really angry at me. And it's like a day or two later, you know. We kind of had a little bit of a blow out because she was so angry at my response, and how I just kind of blew it off. (20:23) And I didn't see the video, and I didn't. And then, I think her response made me kind of step back and pause. And then, I did see the video. And then, I just started looking at all these things that were popping up online. And then she's. I think it's like through her, to be honest, that I have learned a lot because she is so aware of what's going on in the world around her, even though she's only, what 15, 16. (20:51) And would just start to tell me about things. And then, I would start to look into it and then I, it just really. Yeah, then that kind of, it just led from one thing to the other, you know, to the other. (21:10) The next thing I know, I feel like she's taught me so much in terms of the world we live in. And it's interesting, but I think it's harder for me because I didn't think the world was that way. (21:22) And then, to learn that it's not how you thought it was, is a little bit. It's harder to like, deal with. It's, it's just, it's devastating in a way. (21:31) I just thought that our country was in a better place than it was. And it was, it was really, it was really sad. This is a really sad realization. (21:40) So yeah, it just kind of led me down this road. I just started watching one of the documentaries, reading different books. And a lot of it is just her, like explaining things to me because sometimes I'm not, maybe I'm not as open about certain things and she'll, I don't know. Then, she puts it in a way and I'm thinking, okay, (22:05) that kind of makes sense. Never thought of it like that before. And it is because I, yeah, I did get into the habit of dismissing things because you hear about it so often. (22:13) But, I think it's different with this world, with everyone having a camera and actually seeing it. It really kind of drives it home. And it's, I don't know. Anyways. (22:25) Now I forgot what the main question was. It was no question that I rattled on. Sorry. (22:30)

MY: This question is kind of out of place but, (22:34) So, you mentioned how your family had, was, and was an upper middle class.

LL: Uh-huh. (22:42)

MY: So, I wanted to know, like, how did your family come to America? (22:50) And like, you know, what their situation was like when you got here and how their lives were before they had come to America. (22:54)

LL: Yeah, so my dad came here on a student visa, from Seoul. (23:02) So his family, I think, was okay. (23:10) You know, my mom's family was, was not wealthy. (23:16) I think they came here. They were given a small sum of money, and then that was kind of it. (23:21) That's all the help that they got from their family, so they really started off, (23:26) With very little. So it's, yeah. Over the years, I've heard stories. (23:33) They said my dad went to Oregon State, and they

just had, like, a small studio apartment. (23:37) My mom. She would just, she told me stories like, she wouldn't even go to the laundromat to save pennies, she would hand wash everything, cooked everything. (23:44) They didn't have a car, which is hard to believe because I saw pictures of them in Oregon where the snow is like, 3 feet high. (23:55) And my dad had a bike, and that was their only mode of transportation. (24:04) And my mom told me that she would ride on the handlebars, which is crazy. (24:09) Like, "yeah right Mom." My Mom doesn't even know how to ride a bike. Okay. So, she's sitting on the handlebars and my dad is like, drive, like you know. (24:15) That was their only mode of transportation. So, they, they really did work really hard to, like, save and scrimp and (24:23) And then, in the summer times, my aunt, my dad's sister lived in Las Vegas. (24:33) So during the summer, he would go there and back then, there were no computers. (24:38) You know, the casinos did everything by people calculating things. (24:44) So he would work in the casino in the back. I guess doing all numbers or whatever, adding things up. (24:50) And my mom actually worked as a hotel maid, which I can't imagine like, that surprised me when she told me that, that she actually, (24:56) She worked as a hotel maid, and they would save up their money to kind of help last them, while they were students. (25:05) And then after he graduated, they moved to LA. And yeah, then, you know, they, they had good jobs. (25:10) And then, eventually, they just started opening up their own businesses. (25:19) And then, I guess the rest is history. (25:24) So, eventually they had few dry cleaners, can't remember, (25:28) If it was 2 or 3 anymore. And then, my mom opened up an optical business with her brother. (25:34) And that's actually the business that I work at now. So it was like in '89, since then. (25:42) So then, I became an optometrist. And then, I kind of took over. So now, I'm the doctor in that office that she started way back when. (25:51) So she's still, like, managing. So but, yeah, so they, they came from, (25:59) In a way, I think it was like, kind of, I guess you could say, it's like the quote on quote, "American Dream." (26:06) You know, they, I can't imagine my mom being a hotel maid, just because she would never, she'd probably be mad if she knows I'm telling you this. She's very opposite of me. (26:12) She's always dressed really nice, she's always very glamorous. You know, she, she has a nice car. (26:24) She's, you know, and so. And yeah. (26:29) Anyway, so. (26:34) Yeah, yeah. And so I, um. But the thing is growing up, (26:37) I mean, because of where my mom came from, she was always worried about, (26:45) She always made me think that we are like, literally on the verge of homelessness. (26:50) Even though we were in a really big house in the suburbs, and she had like a Mercedes and a fur coat, and all this stuff because growing up, (26:55) She would always say, we don't have money, we don't have money, we don't have money. (27:03) We don't have money, like all the time. I grew up hearing that all the time. (27:06) So when you grow up hearing that, it's like a young child, you know, you take it literally. (27:10) And so, I used to always worry, like, you know, are we going to be homeless? (27:16) And it wasn't until my parents end up getting divorced when I was in college, my freshman year of college. (27:22) And then at that time, my mom started like, spending more. (27:29) That's when she started, you know, buying fur coats. She started, (27:34) So let's go on a vacation because she almost never goes on vacation. Like, maybe like prior, (27:38) Like, you know, we would take a road trip, like once every 5 years or something. Right, (27:43) And then all of a sudden, she started, like, doing these things to kind of cope with a divorce. (27:48) And I started realizing, we're not poor. Why? (27:52) Why did, but I literally did grow up thinking that one bad thing could happen and we'd be on the streets, which in hindsight is really ridiculous. (28:00) But it was because that's what she said all the time. You know she was, I guess, just, you know, just very frugal. (28:10) And so, it just made me think we

don't have money. So, anyways. (28:17)

MY: And that's all I have for you. Whoever is next can go. (28:27)

LL: Excuse me?

MY: No, I said that was all the questions I had for you. (28:35)

LL: Oh okay, is that? (28:39)

DJ: Oh no, Karen, do you have a question?

KK: So you talked about some, you talked some about the case of George Floyd. (28:44) And so, I wanted to know your opinion on the movement that I think, is still occurring called (28:58)Black Lives Matter, and like the riots and looting that occurred during the Black Lives Matter protests. (29:07) And did you attend any of the protests going on? (29:18)

LL: Yeah, so I think that was one of the, (29:24) Bigger things I think I've learned about during this time so I think you know, Black Lives Matter started a couple of years ago. (29:30) Right. I mean, I heard about it. I feel like I've heard about it, but I didn't really understand what it was about. (29:40) Okay, this is going to sound funny but it's interesting. I think it's because, you know, (29:50) We don't really look into it, and you just hear it like, you know, you hear a lot of people saying... "but all lives matter." (29:55) And I'm guilty of having said that in the past. And I didn't really understand what the movement was about. (30:02) And then. I don't know how, I saw Billie Eilish's Instagram post. (30:10) So, this is all influenced by my daughter. And, you know, she wrote this huge long rant explaining it and very just like in your face. (30:19) And I was like and to be perfectly honest, I mean, I was kind of I was starting to understand it just from, (30:29) you know, reading about things and watching documentaries and things. But once I ran that huge long post, it was like the light bulb, (30:35) really kind of went off in my head like, OK, now I completely understand what this is about. (30:46) And I've actually, I've actually shown some of my friends, "if you don't understand, (30:52) go look at it all." And I'll like send them the link. OK. This is what people are taught. (30:57) This is what people mean. You know, it's because I can't explain it as well as she put it in her thing. (31:03) And she was just so emphatic and. But, yeah. (31:08) So, you know, I and I feel like I think a big misconception is that a lot of people think that the Black Lives Matter movement is. (31:14) They think that they're the ones doing the rioting and the looting. I mean, I don't I mean, I. (31:25) Well, according to my daughter, she says, ninety three percent or something of all the protests have been peaceful. (31:31) And you know, and I do believe that they mean that there might be some people that went to some of (31:38) these demonstrations that then kind of took advantage of the situation and just, (31:44) you know, started participating in it. (31:49) But I also do believe that there are just a lot of other people that were just purely there to take advantage of the situation. (31:53) So my daughter, she really, really wanted to go to the demonstrations and I was against it. (32:00) And I started getting the feeling that she was going to go even though I said she couldn't go. (32:06) So I decided, OK, you know, I'll let you go to this one. (32:11) I mean, I was afraid with the pandemic. I'm like, you know, face, mask, face shield. (32:16) Stay away from everybody, follow all the social distancing rules. (32:20) And she met her friend there, and it was supposed to be a student protest, (32:25) but she did not know that BLM was having a protest at the same exact place that the student protests was happening. (32:31) And she ended up getting

into the wrong crowd and started marching with the BLM people and I called at three, I mean I got off of work at two-thirty, (32:39) I said, I'll pick you up at four, and, that was when the demonstrations started unraveling like this was in Fairfax District of Los Angeles. (32:48) One of the first big looting burning down the city. (33:02) You know, type of things that happen. And it was I mean, as I was driving to like pick her up. (33:06) It was, it was a little bit scary. I could sense the anger in the air. (33:13) And I was, it was at a couple times, I'm at a red light and there are just like mobs of people just walking all around me. (33:16) And police everywhere. And I just started getting nervous. (33:24) But, I, you know, I ended up getting her. (33:28) We just went home and then that night we just watched as the city just started getting completely vandalized and the Starbucks was burning down. (33:32) And, you know, The Grove where we go shopping all the time is being vandalized and set on fire. (33:42) And I mean, it's it's sad, but I don't, that's not BLM. (33:46) I don't I don't think that that's BLM. And then. You know, then the week after it happened in Santa Monica. (33:53) And that's where I live. And that actually that was really, really hard. (34:01) It was. Because I mean, I've lived here for 17, 18 years, and I you know, I'm kind of on the like edge of Santa Monica. (34:05) But to just see it on the news. Well, it was a little bit scary to see them just like destroying everything in life. (34:16) I mean, the next day I. I drove around and I was just it was just like, devastating. (34:23) It just really just like destroyed my city. And I was really shocked at how close those looters were to my home. (34:29) I didn't realize they were only like a block away. I have no idea. Like the PETCO two blocks up from me, right. (34:37) Where I buy all my pet supplies, they got looted. Now, the CVS on the corner that I go to all the time. (34:43) They got completely looted, like, I had no idea like, it, I did because of the news. (34:50) They only show the main downtown area in Santa Monica, but it was pretty much the entire city. (34:54) So it's it's it's, I guess, I have a lot of mixed emotions because it's heartbreaking. (35:04) But I don't blame BLM. Two, totally different things. (35:10) So but, yeah, that was, that was hard. (35:15) It was really hard. Yes. But then after that first thing my daughter went to, you know, she wanted to go to every single demonstration. (35:21) And I was like, OK, I'm going to go with you. Just so I could monitor. (35:29) And the second time, we didn't know where they were. We just started following the police helicopter, in the sky to see. (35:35) So, let's just follow the helicopters. And then we ended up in a car, a caravan demonstration. (35:42) And this is perfect because we're socially distanced. (35:48) And I think, you know, we ended up just going into that demonstration for like an hour and a half or something across Los Angeles. (35:52) And then we went. I mean, we did a few others, but then the biggest one that we went to. (35:59) You know, this is all her wanting to go and me just being concerned for her safety, (36:07) but I do have to say I'm very grateful for her having drag me in because I feel like I gained out of it. (36:10) Just as much as she did. I learned a lot from it. (36:19) So then we shoot. We ended up in June going to the All Lives Matter, one that started in Hollywood in front of the. (36:23) I had no idea it was a four mile march. I have no idea there was gonna be like tens of thousands of people there. (36:36) I was just like going. Okay, if you want to go, I'll just go to chaperone you. (36:42) But I think I got really caught up in the spirit of it all. (36:46) It was completely peaceful. I felt like it was very safe. (36:51) It was outdoors. People did respect, you know, people weren't all crammed together. (36:55) And, you know, it was it was good. So we actually did march the entire four miles. (37:00) And then he had to go back, which was problem, (37:06) because Uber was like forty dollars to go for miles because everybody was trying to Uber back to their car. (37:11) I was like, wait. This was about it. So we yeah, we left it two miles away. (37:17) And finally I

was like, it's so hot! I didn't sign up for marching eight miles up, wearing like jeans. (37:23) And I was like, really hot outside. Yeah. But I think that might have been the last one. (37:30) We went to, but I am really glad that I went. (37:37) I think it kind of re-energized my sense of. (37:41) Being socially active, like in a more... Proactive way. (37:48) You know, not just donating money and just sitting there and watching on the sidelines. (37:55) So overall, it was a good experience. Yeah, I'm glad I did it. (37:59)

DJ: Yeah. I like, love, love how your daughter, so “woke” I think we definitely need that nowadays. (38:08) It's definitely refreshing and it's very moving, you know, to see how, just engaged she is. (38:14) It shows the kind of like powerful spirit she has for, yeah, I think, I think it's (38:20) Awesome.

LL: Yeah, I feel like the younger generation is just, well, I'm making myself sound old. (38:25) It's just it's so interesting to me. Like, how much more aware. (38:34) I think it's because the Internet, you know, you guys have access to like so many things. (38:39) You know, when I was growing up, we watched the evening news and it was like Tom Brokaw and I never really watched it because it was really boring. (38:45) Anyways, yeah.

DJ: Yeah. OK, so this is the last question we have. (38:57) So with COVID-19 still in place, how do you feel about the xenophobia, racism and the label of “Yellow Peril” towards Asian-Americans? (39:00) You know, so Donald Trump has termed Coronavirus as “the Chinese Virus” and “Kung-Flu.”(39:10) And so, like, just what's your opinion on how this deadly disease has been given negative sentiments for specific groups of people? (39:16)

LL: Yeah, it really pisses me off. It's infuriating. (39:23) And the interesting thing that I'm noticing, though, is that. (39:29) I don't think people realize it's racist. I think that's the most puzzling thing of all is... (39:35) It's shocking to me that people don't realize that, doing that, has real consequences. (39:44) Yeah. I think as I was talking to my friend, and she, it was a couple weeks ago, she was like. (39:55) Saying Trump's not racist. I was like, are you kidding me? It was just, I don't know. (40:04) I was really, really blown away, you know, because then you see those videos. (40:09) I feel like it has actually empowered people. To vocalize these thoughts. (40:14) We see all those, Like young Asian girl in New York City subway just getting attacked. (40:22) Did you guys see that? It was like early in the pandemic, (40:29) just being physically attacked and chased through the subway system, and just like beat, for no reason just because she was Asian. (40:31) You know, and then you just I was seeing a lot of these videos, and it's really frustrating. (40:38) It's really frustrating. I feel like. Asian-Americans in general don't speak up. (40:46) About. What they experience. (40:52) And that's a little bit frustrating to yeah, I mean, in general, Asian Americans don't speak up as much as they should. (41:00) But I feel like it's starting to change. I feel like it's really starting to change and that it should change. (41:06) I mean, I think it you know, I I before, like on my Facebook, I tried to like not post political things and whatever, and I don't comment. (41:14) And but I this year I just lost it. I just got all crazy on my Facebook. (41:25) I'm like, Forget it! and I respond. I even, I think there was like some House Representative of some part of the South talking about “the China Virus”. (41:29) I don't know. It just, it just made me so angry that I actually responded on his Facebook thread saying, shame on you! (41:38)

DJ: Nice!

LL: I don't know what got over me. I normally don't do this. But I just berated him like, you know, shame on you for saying these kinds of things. (41:48) Because actually, early on in the pandemic, before things got bad and before, (41:56) like L.A was put on lockdown, I experienced a little bit of that because I was just shopping. (42:00) You know, after work, I stopped by the store to pick up, you know, whatever, groceries and the place was pretty empty. (42:07) But there were these two, like younger men and... I can hear them. (42:18) Talking about COVID. But I kind of, I know one of them said something about China. (42:24) And then the thing is, I, I'm just going about my business. It was like a Whole Foods 360. (42:34) So I was like, you know, it's like the place is really big, but it's open, you know? (42:39) So we weren't close to each other, but I heard him reference it. (42:43) But I could see out of the corner of the eye that one of the men, like was glaring at me and it was to the point where it actually intimidated me. (42:47) I got a little bit nervous and I got a little bit like, OK, I'm going to stay away from because it was like I could sense like. (42:56) It's like a combination of fear and anger. You know, and it's it's because. (43:06) They're... I mean, it's a lot of it is just misinformation. (43:14) And then they're just ignorant of the facts and they're scared, too. (43:18) And I understand that. But I just I just remember thinking I'm going to stay away from them. (43:22) And I'm going to not leave the store, actually. (43:27) Us three might have been the only customers in the entire store.

DJ: Oh, wow. (43:31)

LL: I was just thinking I'm going to wait for them to leave before I leave because I don't want to be outside with them at the same time, (43:36) And you know, that's the kind of thing that happens when Trump is like saying things like that. (43:44) It's just, I don't know, it's just the most aggravating thing. It's interesting. (43:50) So, I mean, the book I'm reading right now, my friend told me to read, was "White Fragility." (Robin DiAngelo) This is really interesting. (43:55) It's just it's just a lot of it explains about how people don't realize a racist or just they don't even realize their own racism and they deny it. (44:02) And, you know, they just get really defensive about it. And so I think it's helping me get some perspective on why people behave the way they do. (44:11) I think that's, that's ... I think something that I'm struggling with is. (44:20) I just thought people are better than this. Not that people are all bad. (44:27) But I think, though, it's helping me realize that people are just more unaware. (44:33) I think is the better way to put it. People are unaware of their own biases and. (44:39) Yeah, so anyways, but hopefully, hopefully, I think the Asian American community needs to. (44:47) Be more vocal and more outspoken, or just minorities in general. (44:56) So they'll change. (45:03)

DJ: Yes, Do you guys have anything else to add? I just want to say, honestly, thank you so much for talking with us today and just giving us so much insight. (45:09) It's it's deeply appreciated and it means a lot to each of us.

LL: No problem. (45:17) I'm happy to share.

MY: Thank you for that. You were talking about books. (45:21) And I just thought, like, I'd like to mention that there's two books that are really good. (45:27) There's one. It's called, "So You Want to Talk About Race?" (Ijeoma Oluo) (45:34)

LL: Uh-huh.

MY: And it just basically tells you how to talk about it, like how to go about it with somebody. (45:38) So you should really read that, it's really good.

LL: OK.

MY: And then there's this other one. (45:44) I think it's called, "Uncomfortable Conversations with a Black Man." (Emmanuel Acho) (45:50) And I haven't read that, but I like a small clip of it and it was written, so you should really, like, try to get into those, too. (45:56)

LL: OK. I feel like there's so many books on all these issues. (46:04) There's not enough time to read them all, and sew at the same time. But, you know, I started thinking I'm going to do more audiobooks. (46:09) So I could sew and listen to the books at the same time. (46:20)

DJ: Resourceful.

LL: OK. (46:25) So is that all the questions?

DJ: Yeah, thank you, so we're going to end the meeting. (46:30)

LL: OK, well it was nice to meet all of you guys.

DJ: Thank you. It was nice to meet you too. (46:35)

LL: Thank you.

DJ: Have a good day.

LL: OK. You too. Bye- Bye.

DJ: Bye! (46:46)