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Interview with Valerie Soe

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Interviewee: Valerie Soe

Interviewer: Yazmin Vallejo-Gonzalez

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Overseen by: Dr. Chrissy Yee Lau

Biography: Valerie Soe is a fourth generation Asian American woman from the San Francisco/Berkeley area. She is a documentary and experimental filmmaker, known for her films *Love Boat: Taiwan* and *Radical Care: The Auntie Sewing Squad*. Additionally, she is a Asian American Studies professor at San Francisco State University. She is an original member of the Auntie Sewing Squad since March of 2019.

Transcription Outline:

This section covers Soe's experience as an Asian American Woman in the Bay Area during her early life, her exposure to her Asian American culture, and the pressure of assimilation to the American culture she experienced throughout her early years.

High School/ Higher Education: 00:04:17

This section covers the way in which Soe was able to find her passion within politically inclined activism, the Arts and Asian American Studies. Inclusively, she touches on her experience attending UCLA as an undergraduate, as well as her experience in Chicago as a graduate student.

Career- Filmmaker/Professor: 00:07:40

This section covers Soe's career as a documentary and experimental filmmaker, and touches on the impacts of COVID-19 within the film industry. Additionally she covers how it is to be a professor in such a diverse area, and how this pandemic has affected the way in which her teaching has had to adapt.

Auntie Sewing Squad Experience: 00:21:34

How Soe first found out about the Auntie Sewing Squad, as well as memorable instances while being part of this amazing group.

Transcript

Yazmin Vallejo- Gonzalez: Okay, I think we are recording now. So I'll go ahead and get started. I am Yazmin Vallejo-Gonzalez. I am a Humanities and Communications major with a concentration in Journalism and Media Studies. I currently attend CSUMB and I am in Dr. Chrissy Lau's SBS 112 section two class Women and Social Change in the United States from the 1890s to Present. So today I am here with Auntie Valerie Soe from the Auntie Sewing Squad. As you can see, she's showing her shirt. And today's is December 9th 2020 and it is approximately 1:32pm. Before we get started, if there are any questions you do not wish to answer, please feel free to let me know or just say pass. Okay, so to get started, how are you today? How's your day been?

Valerie Soe: It's okay, you know, end of the semester, very busy grading mostly.

YVG: Yes, yes. That is very true. All right, to get started? Can you give us a little bit of background on who you are? Anything you would like us to know about you?

VS: Sure. Um, well, let's see. I am a filmmaker. So I make documentary and experimental films. And I also am a professor of Asian American Studies at San Francisco State University. And I've been in the Auntie Sewing Squad since the very beginning since March.

YVG: Oh, wow. Okay. That's great! So I'll get started with some childhood/family/early life questions. So I know within the spreadsheet, you specify that you're a fourth generation Asian American woman? So I wanted to know, how was it like growing up as a fourth generation Asian American woman here in the Bay Area?

VS: Oh, well, you know, even though my dad's family's from the Bay Area, Berkeley, specifically. But when I was a kid, we lived out in the suburbs of San Francisco. So we weren't really near like a lot of other Asian people. So you know, when living there we did experience some racism. Yeah, for sure. This is back in the 60s and 70s. And, you know, it wasn't like it wasn't like super diverse where we were. So yeah, that was a little bit of a problem. But you know, like, my grandmother lived in Berkeley, and we always went to have dinner with them pretty much, you know, the whole family like, the extended family at least once a month. So we would see them pretty often. And then my grandma would cook all these great Chinese foods. Even though my dad's family only mostly spoke English. You know, I was exposed to some Chinese language like Cantonese. And then on my mom's side, I'm third generation on my mom's side. So she spoke a little more Chinese. Both my parents only spoke Chinese, but spoke English to us kids. I don't speak in Cantonese, it's very sad. Even though they both know how to speak Cantonese. Because when I was growing up, it wasn't a thing to teach your kids any language except English in the US where you were supposed to assimilate, right. So yeah, so I kind of really missed that part of growing up is learning how to speak another language. And I still can't speak any, or incredibly little Cantonese. But I grew up hearing it. And specifically Actually, it was Taisonese. It's Like a sub dialect of Cantonese. So, yeah.

YVG: Having these intersectional identities, did you ever feel some sort of disconnection from either one, or due to the like the surrounding communities or just the people who you grew up with?

VS: You know, like I said, I think there was a lot of pressure to assimilate. So it wasn't until maybe like when, when I was in high school, we moved to Oakland. And so then there was like, a lot more like diversity. I went to Skyline High, which is a public school in Oakland, and I graduated from there, and then there were a lot more Asian Americans there. So that's probably when I started to be a little bit more, you know, in touch with being Asian American or Chinese American, in a more active way, as opposed to just going to have dinner at my grandmother's once a month, right?

YVG: Yeah. Okay, thank you. So, like, we'll start talking a little bit about high school, higher education. So like, what were you most passionate about through your school years? Were those passions ever influenced by the current political climate at the time, or the location that you were living in?

VS: Oh, my god, that was so long ago. I Can barely remember. I don't know. I can't, I can't even answer them. I can remember maybe back to college, but high school was like way too long ago.

YVG: Yeah No worries. How about if were there any specific social movements that you can remember that sparked your interest in any form of activism. If so, when did that happen? At any point in your life?

VS: Oh, well, I think in college for sure, yeah, because I went to school at UCLA. And then there was a, you know, much bigger Asian American population there. And they have Asian American Studies Department. Actually, it was not a department yet, you couldn't get a degree in it at the time, which is like in the 80s. But I did work on the Asian American student newspaper, I was like one of the editors. And so you know, I made a lot more Asian American friends, although I eventually got my degree in Fine Arts. So there weren't Asian American Studies majors at that time. But I was really pretty active, I would say, with the Asian American student community there.

YVG: And to kind of touch back to you going to UCLA, did you always know that you had a passion for the media arts? Or like, since you were younger?

VS: That's actually that's a very funny question. When I started at UCLA, I actually was enrolled as a pre biology major. Because I thought I was gonna go to med school and be a doctor, right? But, but my parents were not like, you know, they didn't encourage me one or the other. Like, they didn't care. It was more like my own thing. But, um, but once I got to UCLA, I think I actually switched over pretty fast. I think I switched, I want to say to the English department for maybe a year, you know, of course, really taking like your general education classes that didn't really matter that much. And then I didn't want to go to the film school. But the film school is really hard to get into. So we're supposed to transfer you when you're a junior, right, and you have to have a certain GPA, and I did not have that GPA, so that I went to the art department, which was fine, because the art department was a little bit more, a little looser in the kind of stuff you could make. I was still making like videos and working photography, and so forth. But they were a little bit less. Like if I had gone to UCLA film school, they have a very commercial filmmaking aesthetic. And so to me, that's not like what I'm interested in. So I think it was great in some ways that I was able to take classes in the art department. And then I went on to get my MA, my MFA, my Master of Fine Arts at an art school. I didn't mind. I have never been to film school. So I went to the Art Institute in Chicago, and studied what they called video at that time,

video and photography, actually have a master's in photography. Hilarious, but I don't ever I don't shoot at all, you know, except on my phone. Yeah, I'm pretty bad. But I know how to teach it. I can teach it. I can teach. I teach photography at San Francisco State in Asian American cities. So I know the concepts and like the theories of it. I just don't practice it too much.

YVG: Okay.I believe you kind of covered this? So what instances brought you to find interest in pursuing a career within these majors? Or did you ever question your choices throughout college? Like, am I doing what I truly want to be doing? How was that?

VS: Yeah, well, you know, it's funny, like I said, there was no Asian American Studies major at UCLA when I was there. And so I was really interested in finding a way to kind of connect my activism with like, my creative work. And like, luckily, in the art department, they were open enough to that kind of experimentation, that I was able to do that. I know, at UCLA, they had a program, that ethnic communications program, and Bob Nakamura was part of that in the film department. But again, you know, I didn't get in, so I couldn't take classes with him. But now I'm actually really good friends with one of his sons, Tad, who's a filmmaker. So, yeah, so it's kind of interesting, this kind of roundabout way things go, right. But, but like I said, I feel like, you know, in some ways, it was better for me to go to the art department, because I could be, I could do things in a less conventional way. And so I started to make stuff that was really very, um, you know, more experimentally more activist oriented, you know, like overtly political stuff. So that suited me. I feel like that turned out to be a good thing.

YVG: Okay, um, how was the transition? Like, going to school in Chicago? Did you enjoy it more than UCLA? Or was it really different as to what you were used to? How was that?

VS: Well, I mean, you know, I grew up in California. And so I had never lived anywhere except California, except I lived in New York one summer, right after undergraduate. So going to Chicago where they have, you know, it's really cold there was pretty huge shock, because if you're from California, and you never have experienced any kind of season, it was pretty extreme. I think at the time to the department I was in was not really attuned to a lot of sort of the more activist or political stuff that I was interested or talking about, like culture, you know, because this is like, you know, the mid 80s and people Still, you know, it was just starting to be a thing in the broader art world to talk about, like, you know, culture and identity and politics and so forth. But so Chicago was definitely like a few steps behind that. So I think that that, you know, that was a little problematic for me, I had, I think that I don't want to say I was like, ahead of my time, but I feel like I was maybe out of step with what they were doing. But at the same time I got really good technical training, you know, and I did work with some amazing women photographers, when I was in Chicago. So there were a couple of two or three of my professors who were really great as far as like feminist photography was concerned. So I like that a lot. Yeah.

YVG: It's crazy. Yeah, I know. I've always lived in California my whole life as well. And I recently visited Chicago in the summer, and I was like, This is too cold.

VS: Oh, well, it's also in the summer. It's humid, hot. It is so hot. You know. I mean, people in California are so spoiled. Even Southern California, you know, this is like you think oh my god, it's 80 degrees is horrible. Yeah, it's not. It's, it's dry. You add humidity, and on top of like 90 degree weather, then you're just yeah, that's like a whole nother level of discomfort.

YVG: Okay, a little bit about your career, your filmmaking and being a professor, how has being a professor in a community you grew up in influenced how or what you teach in your classroom?

VS: Oh, I am so lucky to be in San Francisco, especially SF State and an Asian American Studies, right. Because I'm able to teach, like creative classes, I teach a filmmaking workshop and a photography class, and I've done a community arts class, and I teach film industry, and Asian American Studies. So it's mostly Asian American students. And so just to be able to work from that perspective, you know, as opposed to if I had been like, in a film school, where the, it would be mostly American students. So I don't have to explain a lot of sort of the political grounding, or the activist grounding for the kind of work that I'm interested in talking about, and also seeing them, you know, exposing them to and also the work that they do. So that's kind of fun. Um, yeah. And I think, you know, San Francisco, of course, is super diverse. I would say the city itself is like 35%, Asian, at least, maybe even 35%. Chinese. I mean, just 35% Asian, San Francisco state is a little bit more, it's like more Filipinos. And maybe maybe at this point, maybe more Vietnamese. So it's like, you know, the demographics are slightly different than San Francisco itself. But still a lot of Asian people. Right. So yeah, that's been super great. Yeah.

YVG: That's great. How do you think COVID has impacted the environment of your classroom? What measures have you had to take to create a more classroom like environment? Virtually?

VS: Oh, well, you know, San Francisco State was one of the first schools to shut down and go virtual back in the spring. So we switched over, I want to say pretty quickly, within like, a month, so probably by April, we were all in line. And so I taught a summer school class online. And so this is technically like, the third term that I've been doing at least partially online. But it's still really hard, because I think, you know, students are trying very hard to stay engaged. But I know that it's not the same as being in person, right? I mean, some people are doing okay with it, they're rolling with it, because they're, like, used to being online, you know, and they're just, that's how they communicate anyway. But I know there's a bunch of people who are, you know, don't like that. And they would rather be, you know, in a classroom talking to people in real life. Especially for the film, the media workshop, where they have to make movies with each other, it's, it's really hard. It's hard for them to coordinate and to get together, because, you know,

making movies is like a team sport, you know, you have to work with other people. Also, there's a bunch of students who are international students who have gone back to Asia. Right. And so they're in a completely different timezone. So if I have a class, I have a class that's at 12:30, California time, that's like four in the morning in Asia. And so they have to either wake up and try to be awake that time or you know, or they have to watch like the zoom recordings of the classes, which is not the same, right. So yeah, it's been really hard in that respect, and I know that working on their projects with others with their group projects is also really hard for them to, to just figure out a time where you can even talk with your classmate. When you're when there's so much of a big time difference. It's really hard. Yeah,

YVG: I can see and understand from the students perspective, you know. But I can't even imagine it from the professor's perspective, like how it is to like, try to make sure that you are giving what you're giving the information you're trying to give out.

VS: Yeah, I think I think we all have kind of slowed down our expectations a little bit, you know, just try to allow a space for people who can't process information as well, if it's spoken to them, right. So they have to read it, or whatever. And so I have to deliver the information several different ways. So, yeah, it's a lot of work. Yeah.

YVG: Well, hopefully, it can go back to normal sooner than later.

VS: I mean, were definitely not having a spring semester. Yeah. But luckily, this is gonna be the fourth time around, so we will get to be a little better at it.

YVG: Yes, that's true, we'll have a bit more experience. Let's see. Okay, can you tell me a bit about your filmmaking background? What spiked passion within this area, what has been the most exciting and rewarding experience that you've encountered when making your films?

VS: You know, I mean, like I said, way back, and when I was an undergraduate, I was really interested in trying to figure out a way to make creative work that also was like, like, politically engaged, you know, that had some kind of impact that wasn't just about like me, expressing myself, you know, so within the Asian American community, there is, you know, the filmmaking community, there is a big tradition of that, where people make artwork, and Korean films and movies that are really about trying to work towards, you know, social change. And so it's been nice to kind of have that group of folks to work with, you know, the Asian American filmmaking or the media community itself. There's an organization called Asian American documentary network that I'm in. And that's also a really great place, because there are a lot of people, a lot of Asian American filmmakers who make these social issue documentaries. And like a lot. Even within San Francisco, we used to have meetings when we could meet in person, and I think like, you know, sometimes, like 40, or 50, people would show up. And, I think there's a few 100

people in this group. And so that's been kind of nice to, to have, you know, like minded peers who do that kind of thing. Yeah. And then also, there's a big network of Asian American film festivals. So like, pretty much I would say every major city in the United States has a film festival, Asian American specific Film Festival. So San Francisco has a really huge one. I want to say that it's the oldest one, Los Angeles has a big one. San Diego, New York, Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia, Hawaii. Hawaii is not only Asian American, but it's primarily Asian American. So you can play your movies at all these different festivals, and it's like a little circuit. So then, that builds up the audience, for people who want to see Asian American films. So I want to say in some ways, it really did lay the groundwork for the success of movies like Crazy Rich Asians are like the farewell, right? Because there's this audience now of Asian American film goers, not just filmmakers, but the film audience that looks for and wants to have Asian American content in their films, right? Because they've gone to these film festivals, and they're used to seeing these kinds of movies. So when Crazy Rich Asians came out, you know, there was this thing called gold open. It's like a group of people, who are Asian Americans and buy out entire theaters when Asian American films open. So they did this for Crazy Rich Asians. And let's say they did it for the Farewell also, and a few other ones. They buy an entire theater so that the box office goes up, right, because it's important. That's what Hollywood looks at. So if the box office goes up the first weekend, especially, sometimes the movies will only open in maybe a few 100 theaters across the country. But if the box office is high enough that it will expand to more theaters. So it's really strategic to kind of get people to go to see the movie on the first weekend.

YVG: Yeah, I think I remember hearing about that one. Once you mentioned that they would rent the whole movie. Yeah. That is amazing. Do you think that by winning awards and recognitions for your work has made you feel like that you've successfully portrayed the intention of your films like has Like if the audience has like successfully grasped what you want to give out?

VS: Oh, yeah, I mean, I think it's not I don't know necessarily about the awards. I haven't won that many awards. But just to have people see the movie in the theater is really fun. You know, and I was lucky enough that the last movie I made called Love Boat Taiwan came out in 2019, early 2019. So I was able to play it at all these film festivals and you know, actually go to them and see people watching the movies at the theater. And that was really fun. Because, you know, it's really different than when you're watching at home, on your computer, or right or on your phone or whatever. As opposed to being in a big group of people watching a movie, especially if they're, it's a movie that has, like, you know, this design to kind of be watched with a group of people, like, you know, there's parts where you're supposed to laugh and parts where you're supposed to have your emotions, and it really is amplified when it's with a group of people. So, so yeah, that was really fun. And I don't know if you can replicate that online.

YVG: Yeah, I was going to ask you something, as well. Just how has COVID-19 has kind of shifted that change within your filmwork?

VS: Yeah, I feel really sad for people whose movies open this year because they didn't get to have that same experience, you know. So I do have a few friends who do have their movies come out this year. And you know, they've gotten in a lot of different film festivals, and they'll probably get a lot of screenings online, but it's still not the same as going in person and watching it with an audience.

YVG: So now we'll move into just your Auntie Sewing Squad experience. And, and I read it within the spreadsheet that you first came across Auntie Sewing Squad on Facebook, on a Facebook group. But what drew you to join? Was it like their mission? What was it?

VS: You know, it was funny, because Christina Wong, who's the head of the sewing squad, the Overlord, she is in my last movie Love Boat Taiwan. And so that's why I know her. I mean, I know her because she's also a performer. Right. But that's how I know her more closely. And so we're Facebook friends, right? And I think right around the same time, It must have been like, one or two weeks after the lockdown shutdown in March, probably around the 22nd ish. Because I think we shut down everything in San Francisco in California around the 15th or something. She posted something on Facebook and said, you know, I'm going to make some face masks. I'm going to do a live stream. And I thought, Oh, yeah, I want a face mask. But I don't know where you can get them because there weren't any. But I know how to sew. So I looked online for the pattern, and I found some fabric lying around my house. And then I thought, Oh, I should do a livestream just like Christina, I want to say we might have been doing live streams at the exact same time that day. So, I did a live stream, right, I sewed my first facemasks and it was really fun. And then I don't even know at some point, Christina posted this thing saying, Look, I'm starting this group, because I feel like we need to figure out where we can get more fabric. And elastic, because there wasn't any elastic available. Um, and it's funny how elastic kind of became like this holy grail for a while. Yeah, but the fabric thing too. Because I mean, you know, I've just had a little bit of fabric lying around my house. So, yeah, and then it just kind of took off from there. And people started to see it was like a really great way to network and to find other people who were interested in making face masks, because, you know, there wasn't any PPE at that time for anybody. And so, you know, it was really bad for people who were like medical workers. So those are the people we originally started to make the masks for, medical workers, which is absurd, right? If you couldn't get a face mask, even like a surgical mask in a hospital, it was like crazy. So, you know, I mean, we really felt like we were literally like saving people's lives at that point, you know, who were otherwise going to be exposed. So yeah. So that's that's the very, very, very first start. And then, you know, eventually, I think Christina lives near the garment district in Los Angeles. So she would send people out with wads of cash to go to the garment district and buy elastic and whatever cotton fabric she could find from the wholesalers

down there. And so that's how we kind of figured out how to do it and then we were really using anything you could find. For the beginning I was making ties out of lanyards from Film Festivals. I made a movie about that. Because there was not even like enough ribbon or anything, right? You couldn't find anything. So people were using shoelaces. I know some people were tearing out the elastic from fitted sheets.. And then using the sheets to make the masks. Yeah. So it was pretty much like the Wild West there for a while. It was Yeah. Really nutty. Yeah. But you know, gradually we figured out a better supply chain. But in the beginning, it was just like, wow. Yeah

YVG: Yeah, I remember people like we're trying to show different ways on how to make a mask like using rubber bands as elastic and it would push your ears forward.

VS: Yeah, those were not very comfortable. Right. Or like your bandana or like paper towels, I want to see if there was something that really came out of paper towels.

YVG: Yes, I think I did see that.

VS: Yeah. And then we ramped up the production. And now it's just like this monster machine that makes like, 1000s of face masks. Because there's a lot of people doing it. I mean, there's probably like 200 or 300 active people making face masks. You know, not everybody does it every week, like I haven't made them for a couple weeks because I'm grading finals and stuff. But there's other people who you know, pick up the slack. So luckily, there's a lot of us at this point. Yeah,

YVG: That's great. So yeah, it's amazing how it just spiked and everyone was working together to create these masks.

VS: Well, you know, I think we were motivated, you know, this phrase that we use rage sewing.

YVG: Yes, I was. I was looking through the website and Professor Chrissy Lau was showing us the mission and all about the Auntie Sewing squad.

VS: Yeah. Yeah, that was part of it. I mean, that really fuels It is like because the Trump administration was, like, criminally negligent, you know, really, like, awful. I think they've totally should be in jail for how badly this has been handled. And how many people have died. I mean, you know, it's like, more than a quarter million people. Right. And that's, that's, like, so crazy. So anyway, but that was one of the motivations, we were very mad about that. You know, very, very angry. And just to get out, like the anxiety and frustration and anger. This is like, one of the ways we did it. It's just like, you know, you either do that, or you just like being on Facebook scrolling all the time, and just getting more and more angry. So it's better to at least be

constructive and make something right. Yeah. And then eventually, we started making masks, not for the medical workers, because they started to be able to get PPE. So we started to make stuff for people who are really kind of, you know, falling between the cracks, like undocumented people, you know, incarcerated people, homeless people, all that. Yeah. First Nations, a lot of people in the reservations are really having a hard time finding any PPE. So that's kind of where we are now. We did some asks for, like, the movement for Black Lives, like in early summer when people were going out in big crowds and participating in protests, right. But we found, actually, that most of the people who were doing the big protests already had masks because they were like, conscious and knew that was something to do. But still, we would go and take them with like, just hand them out for anybody who might not have one. Yeah, so that was fun, too. Yeah. And then we've supported the get out the vote. In the fall, a lot of masks went to the poll workers and people who were doing things like that. I think we got masks for people like firefighters who are fighting the fires. So anytime there was any kind of need, I felt like we just, you know, it's very casual and random, too. It's not like we have someone who's deciding this like as a committee. Yeah. Like an auntie will say, Hey, you know, we have these unhoused people in my neighborhood who need masks, can we get like 100 masks for them? And then I'll help distribute them. And then people say, yeah, I'll make some so yeah, it's really super ad hoc. I mean, there are you know, there are some more organized ones, like the Aunties, who say we need like, 5000 masks for First Nations. And then they, you know, they figure out more the logistics, but there are these smaller ones too. Like, you know, my grandmother's in a senior center, and their workers need masks, you know, so can you send me like some.

YVG: So yeah, no, that's great. But it's such a close knit community to where it's like support for different parts of different places everywhere, you know.

VS: People again, just want some way they can do something positive, you know, in this really depressing and anxiety prone time. Again, how they can feel like they're making a difference as opposed to just being helpless. Yeah, no. So it really helps. Yeah.

YVG: I know that social media is what introduced you to the Auntie Sewing Squad as well as knowing Kristina. How do you think that social media has impacted different activist communities to make a difference during this pandemic?

VS: You know, I mean, social media is one of those things, it kind of is a good thing and a bad thing because it can be manipulated in so many different ways. So you can I think what Auntie Sewing Squad has tried to do is they kind of learn to use social media too, for their, for what they need it for, right. And, you know, by using Facebook, but also I think there's like an Instagram page. There's no Twitter, I don't know why they're not on Twitter. Oh, no, there's no Auntie Sewing Squad Twitter. I'm on Twitter all the time. So I don't know why they don't do Twitter, but whatever. But there is like, there's a few really high profile Aunties who post on their social

media, like Rebecca Solnit, the writer, she has, like, you know, 5000 followers or something, whatever the limit is. And she also writes about the Auntie Sewing Squad in all her articles. She just posted something in The Guardian, UK Guardian, and mentioned it. So we have, like a crowdfunding page, like an open ongoing crowdfunding page that you can donate to. And so every time she mentioned, she links to that page, you know, that we get a bunch of donations, which then that helps us because then what we do with that money is we don't have to pay for postage, when we're shipping masks to places, right, we get reimbursed so we don't have to pay for our elastic or fabric as much anymore. So, you know, I mean, we get a lot of fabric donations, but it just helps ease the logistics and the costs, you know, because like, if you're sending out masks every week, maybe once is only like $15. But if you do it like once a month or twice a month, then, it gradually adds up. So just it's helpful. Um, they the aunties just did a big coat donation drive for the Navajo nations and for Standing Rock and some of the South Dakota tribes, because it's cold up there, and a lot of the kids don't have clothes. Right. And that was another thing people will donate specifically to that, and then we'll buy a bunch of coats online and send them.

YVG: So yeah, I agree with it being it can be the best thing or the worst things for sure. Yeah. But yeah, does help, like get the word out there sometimes.

VS: Yeah. And I feel like Christina was very adept at social media. So she's been like, able to kind of use it to her purposes. So it's definitely a skill.

YVG: Okay, yeah. And we're heading to the last question. So have you had any impactful or heartfelt moments and, and instances as an auntie, and what makes you feel most proud about being a part of this amazing group of people?

VS: You know, we have this thing called Auntie care. I don't know, it's probably on the website. But there's, there's the philosophy of the Aunties that you can do whatever you can do within your ability to help out the group. So if you can't, sew you can do something else. So I know there's a bunch of aunties who have never sewn anything. So, they bake cookies for us. Or there's one Auntie who does yoga, she's a yoga teacher. So she gives online yoga classes. There's an auntie who just makes this really great hand salve that she sends out to people. So there's an auntie who's organized these. These like secret pen pals, what is like Secret Santa things exchanged right between the Auntie's. So that's been really fun. So every once in a while, you'll get little packages in the mail of like, cookies or tea or whatever. And just little things like that, I think really helped people keep going. Because it feels like you're connected to the other folks in the group. You know, they're looking out for you. And then also you can give other people stuff. So you know, every once in a while, I'll bake some cookies and give them to the local aunties. And just like little things like that, you know, make our day, especially I think during the pandemic, it's hard to stay connected to people and not feel isolated. So to have that kind of thing

is really great. I might say, oh, recently, there is some Auntie who said, her mom really likes to get postcards, like in the mail. And so she asked the audience to send her mom, not even her, but her mom postcards. And so all these aunties sent postcards to this auntie's mother. And she's like, Yay. You know, when she got the postcards. So just little stuff like that is really sweet and nice. Yeah.

YVG: Little things that remind us that there can and still be a connection even though we are not, you know, physically there. When you're talking about cookies, I did see the spreadsheet and the cookie eating .

VS: Yeah. That's it. That's actually not as true as it should be. But Christina just likes to make up little nicknames for everybody else. So yeah. Is someone interviewing her?

YVG: Who? Christina? No, I do not think so. I don't think she was being interviewed. I didn't see her name on the spreadsheet. But I'm very thankful for you being here today and answering my question. I really appreciated everything you had to say very

VS: Well, I'm glad it worked out. Yeah. Because I remember I think Chrissy said that, that she didn't need me to talk to anybody. But I guess then you signed up at the last second.

YVG: Yes!

VS: Yes. Good. I'm glad I could help you out to

YVG: Thank you so much again!

VS: Yeah. And if you have other questions, you know how to reach me.

YVG: Okay, I will go ahead and stop the recording really quick. Thank you.