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## Interview with Kats Mendoza

Kats Mendoza

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**Interviewee:** Auntie Dr. Kats Mendoza

**Interviewers:** Ivan Alejo, Tianna Cavanaugh

**Date:** April 30th, 2021

**Location:** Zoom

**Collection:** Auntie Sewing Squad Oral History Archive, SBS 322: Asian American Women's History, Spring 2021

**Length:** 01:38:19

**Overseen by:** Dr. Chrissy Yee Lau

**Bio:** Born in the Philippines, Dr. Katharina “Kats” Mendoza graduated from the University of the Philippines in Quezon City with a Bachelor of Arts in English, Creative Writing. In 1999 she immigrated to the United States of America to continue her pursuit of a higher education where she received a Master of Arts Degree in English Language and Literature from Virginia Tech. She then went on to receive a Ph.D. in Women’s Studies from the University of Iowa. She is now a valued member of the Auntie Sewing Squad, where she uses her sewing skills to make masks for overlooked communities that are in need.

**Thematic Outline:** (00:00:00) After brief salutations, Mendoza details her background and what it was like growing up in the Philippines. (00:10:11) She goes on to describe her education in the Philippines and what her family thought about her going to the University of the Philippines. (00:12:45) Mendoza begins to elaborate on her decision to continue her education in the United States, what it was like living in Blacksburg, Virginia and then in Iowa City, Iowa. (00:30:20) She talks about her experience in sewing and how she came to join the Auntie Sewing Squad. (00:34:25) Mendoza talks to us about some of her experiences with another sewing group and how it differs from the Auntie Sewing Squad, and how she and the Aunties share similar values. (00:55:33) She shares with us her thoughts on how some attitudes have changed towards Asian Americans since her arrival to the United States in 1999. (01:05:21) Mendoza enlightens us on how non-Asian individuals can help Asian American communities and offer a safe space. (01:10:40) She shares with us her area of expertise, on the topic of Filipina comfort women of World War II and how they relate with modern Asian women and their relationship with the US military bases in the countries of Japan, Korea, and other Asian countries. (01:25:36) Finally Mendoza concludes the interview by sharing some of the things she misses from the Philippines, how she shares her Filipina culture with US culture, and what Filipina communities she has found in the US.

## **Transcript**

00:00:02.040

**KM:** Something always goes wrong with the technology.

00:00:04.920

**IA:** Yes.

00:00:06.750

**KM:** So actually would you mind telling me a little bit about this project? Like I only have like you know just the highest level understanding, this is a project for a class with your Professor. And so, like groups of you are doing, like oral histories of the Auntie Sewing Squad and your professor is an Auntie herself.

00:00:31.950

**IA:** Yes, that's correct. Oh no.

00:00:36.420

**KM:** Sorry. Guys, is this an ethnography class, anthropology?

00:00:43.080

**TC:** So it's an Asian American women's history class, so.

00:00:48.720

**KM:** Wow, okay, very cool. It's entirely possible you know more about, like Asian American history in general than I do since it wasn't my field of study, really.

00:00:59.850

**TC:** I feel like the class really taught me a lot because I didn't know much before so it's been helpful in that way.

00:01:06.450

**IA:** Me too, going into this I didn't really know too much about the Asian American women's history. It's been very, very insightful.

00:01:20.010

**KM:** I'm assuming there must have been some discussion about pan Asian identity and you know the different facets of. Really cool, it's been a long time since I was in academia,

sometimes I miss it. Most of the time I don't. It's like I love seeing projects like this student engagement alright.

00:01:45.990

**IA:** So should we get into it? Yeah okay-- okay I guess we can start off as just if you want to give us a brief introduction of who you are, your name, and a little bit about your background.

00:02:03.120

**KM:** Alright, so my name is Katherina Mendoza, everybody calls me Kats and that's K-A-T-S people usually misspell as K-A-T-Z. I'm not entirely sure why, but that's like a consistent misspelling across the board, but I am 46 years old. I'm Filipino, and, well, as of December 2017, I'm officially Filipino American because I became naturalized. What? Three short years ago, not even. I have lived here in the US for 22 years now, I came here in 1999 to go to graduate school and I just never managed to leave and that's disingenuous because I actually have been much more fortunate than a lot of other international graduate students in that I actually was able to go home to the Philippines pretty frequently once sometimes twice a year for a long time and there were stretches where I was here in the US for three, four years, at a time, but being able to actually go home and visit my family and my friends, and you know like touch the motherland was a very privileged part of my 20 plus years here in the US. I-- let's see, do you want me to talk more about my background in the Philippines or shall we?

00:03:45.360

**IA:** Yeah if you want to. I guess our first question was if you want to tell us a little bit about your life before coming to the United States, what was it like growing up in the Philippines?

00:03:56.610

**KM:** Okay, so I had a pretty privileged upbringing. My father became an airline pilot back when that was a very glamorous profession and I remember he had this T-shirt that had been, you know, distributed to all the young pilots at Philippine Airlines and there was like a cartoon airplane with a big smiley face on it and lettering that said "Marry me, fly free" like it was a whole big thing you know you have these young dashing pilots and Philippine Airlines was the first airline in Asia, so that was also a big deal and they had a huge fleet and my father, you know began training to be a pilot in his early 20s and then he met my mother and she worked for a while until I think the birth of my sister. And then she left the workplace and became a homemaker and so we had a pretty privileged upper-middle-class upbringing. In the Philippines, the middle class usually have live-in house help, and we were no different and I'm the eldest of four siblings and we went to private school, we had maids, we had, and you know we call them maids, and so I will probably fall into the more problematic language of domestic help that we used when I was growing up, we have live-in house help, we had a driver, slash, gardener groundskeeper. And so we grew up "spoiled" is probably, you know, as apt a term as any, we

had domestic work taken care of for us and, like all my siblings and I really had to focus on, was their schoolwork. And like a lot of children of privileged like we have no real concept of the bubble in which we live because we went to a school where everyone else was in either that same situation or, even better like there were several students my school, who were not just upper middle class, but like legitimately wealthy and so what we could see of the rest of the world in our little bubble was like “Oh, there are people who have even bigger houses even more vehicles, even more, staff who you know flew around from vacation pretty frequently.” And it was like, I mean, privilege is privilege, you know. And I think that social economic privilege was part of what enabled my siblings and me to think about the, especially my sister and I think, privilege is part of what made it able, for us to, make it possible for us to think about like you know, we could have whatever careers we wanted because there is that cushion of economic privilege and education. But yeah I don't want to describe my upbringing as typical Filipino because, in many ways, it was, but as an adult looking back on the way that we grew up, like I cannot deny that that undergirding structure of privilege that we had and, so like a lot of the, you know, a lot of the feminist understandings of the world came to me a little later in life when I was pushing more and more outside of that bubble and able to see, you know how other people lived. When I was in my senior year of high school, my mother's sister and her husband passed away within months of each other and so suddenly, I have three cousins who became orphans and my family said “well come live with us since you know we're not going to let you be split up and distributed out to other parts of the family.” Which are some things that one other distant relative proposed and my parents said no, everyone stays together, come live with us and that started to strain the family's finances and that started to sort of break apart, that you know that protective shimmer of privilege, a little bit. And then-- so I was getting ready to go to college, I sort of had set my sights on the University of the Philippines, which is one of the top universities in the country and also like among the top universities, the only public institution. And so you have like a truly diverse mix of people going to the University of the Philippines because the tuition is subsidized by the government. And also the University of the Philippines happens to have been the site of a lot of activism especially like anti-Marcos activism in the 70s, Ferdinand Marcos and his wife Imelda were, they held the country and in its grip for about 20 years and the University of the Philippines had been one of the hotbeds of activism pushing against that dictatorial rule.

00:10:11.610

**KM:** And so I got a lot of, you know, comments from different relatives like “oh UP, isn't that where they turn all the students into activists” this and that. You know, for the most part, it was a prestigious place and it was seen as a great thing to be able to go in there, but there was also this undercurrent of like well isn't that where they teach people how to be communist you fight against the government and blah blah blah. And I remember being told by my father “Go to UP, get a great education, just don't become an activist.” Strange, very strange, but I went to UP and I learned more about the world. And I started to become more interested in feminism but I was a--

I was an English Lit major, actually, English and creative writing. And then I-- I'm not entirely sure how I fell into it, but in my senior year at the University of the Philippines, there was a call out for faculty at my very same department, so I already had friends who had graduated early from the English department and become junior faculty and I was like oh that's interesting. So I applied and I got accepted, and so I had a teaching job at the University of the Philippines before I had technically finished writing my thesis. And so, for the next three years, I was an instructor at the University of the Philippines, and you know it was a public school, a very prestigious university but severely underfunded, very low pay. I was also trying to get my master's degree, at the same time, but I was having to teach so many classes and take a full load of graduate courses at the same time that there's no way I was going to finish. And so when some of my colleagues and I got a chance to apply to graduate school in the US, you know, we all took the GRE, we sent in our applications, three of us got accepted at the same time, and so we all flew to Virginia Tech to start a two-year master's program and that's how I ended up here in Iowa long way around.

00:12:45.480

**TC:** Was there anything specific that led you to choose the US or was there, like other countries as well?

00:12:54.030

**KM:** No, so this was the only school that I and my friends applied to, and that had pretty much everything to do with the fact that the English department, where I was teaching had a connection to the English department at Virginia Tech. A couple of our junior faculty in previous years had already gone there to do their master's degree and come back and there was a prominent administrative person at Virginia Tech, who was very, you know, who's very connected with the Filipino community and the English department in the Philippines and so he was always, you know, helping us make those connections and encouraging faculty from the UP English department to go, you know, do their graduate work in the US, and so it wasn't just the English department in Virginia Tech there were, you know, there was a largish Filipino graduate student community there and then, most of them had learned about the program through that one American administrative officer. And so, like my friends and I were like okay this application is something that we can do on the side, and if we get in great if not we'll continue our graduate studies where we are. And we happened to go, so when we got to Virginia Tech there was already a Filipino graduate student community waiting for us and they had actually found an apartment for us and some basic furniture. And it was a very smooth integration because of that previously existing relationship. And as things played out at the end of those two years I, well about halfway through that program I realized like okay I'm getting a master's degree. I feel like I want to get a PhD as well, which is not something that Virginia Tech offered, at the time they didn't offer a PhD in English or in Women's Studies, which is what I was tending towards, and so I decided, as I was wrapping up my master's program that since I'm already here, and I know I

want to get a PhD, I might as well apply to schools and see where I can get in so that when I go back to the Philippines, I'll have finished everything and then I can just focus on, you know, my career as a professor. And that's not quite what happened, but I got into graduate school here in Iowa. Of the three of us Filipinas who went to Virginia Tech to go to grad school, I stayed and continued on in a PhD program. One of us stayed in Blacksburg and continues to work at Virginia Tech now, and a third was the only one of us to actually go back home, and she is still teaching at the University of the Philippines now. Yeah, I applied to four different schools because there weren't very many PhD granting programs in Women's Studies in the US, at the time like this was back in 2000 when I was applying and I applied to four of those ten schools and I got into Iowa and I was on the waiting list at Minnesota. And I was thinking "Okay, so they told me I'm pretty high up if one of the applicants they offered a position to turns it down I'm next line to, to be accepted into Minnesota," but all other things being equal, Minnesota is colder and has a higher cost of living so knowing nothing, really nothing about the Midwest I picked Iowa. And still here 20 years later. And it's ironic, I guess that the decision to come to the US for graduate school, you know that was made with the intention of bolstering and furthering my academic career has turned out I am no longer in academia. I finished my PhD but at that time I already knew I didn't want to pursue a professorship. I did continue teaching for a couple of years as an adjunct after I graduated but that entire time I was looking outside of academia for other jobs, and I know it's a rough transition for many. I feel very fortunate to have been able to find a good career outside of academia, without having to search for too hard, or too long.

00:18:10.650

**IA:** Thank you and I think on that discussion we kind of covered some of the questions that we had a plan to ask. I don't know if Tianna did you want to ask one of, one of the... one of the questions or? Should I go?

00:18:30.270

**TC:** I can ask the next one, so when you moved from the Philippines to the United States did you experience any culture shock and, if so, what were you surprised by?

00:18:43.230

**KM:** I didn't really feel a whole lot of culture shock at least at first, because I had been to the US several times before, like many Filipinos I have relatives, not just in the US, but also in other parts of the world like Filipinos are everywhere. And so you know I had come here for sometimes a couple of weeks, sometimes like a month and a half to visit family, and so I, you know, I have the language being Filipino, bilingual, I had experience in different parts of the US before. Actually, when I first got to Virginia I didn't go straight to the university, I went to another part of Virginia to spend some time with one of my aunts and her American husband and so like they also helped me out, you know I got acclimated really quickly because I'd already had that prior experience and the Philippines, I mean we have our own complicated relationship with

the US and its culture. And so, like back home, you know we grew up watching some American T.V. programming. My father bought a little black box from one of his friends that allowed us to get the T.V. signal from the US airbase that was like four hours drive away and so like you know *Degrassi Junior High* which, that might be a Canadian T.V. show I'm not entirely sure, but even on the local Filipino T.V. stations, we had like *Remington Steele*, so very young Pierce Brosnan and what *Moonlighting*, a very young Bruce Willis who was already losing his hair so like just there was a lot of cultural competency already. And that also was kind of a function of you know, the particular world in which I move. Like I had a lot of friends who watch a lot of American T.V. as well, and some sometimes like watched it more maybe than the local programming sometimes. So, in terms of adjusting to daily life in the US, it wasn't really all that difficult it was smaller things that started, to emerge like, I know the way that everyone we encounter, like every stranger walking down the sidewalk everyone says "Hey, good morning, how are you?" and that felt a little invasive sometimes like I'm just walking down the street, I'm thinking my thoughts shallow or deep and, and then there's this interaction with a person. And then there was always this, okay, I got teased about this by my American friends like my first year or so. You know how people here will say "Hey, how are you?" It's not a genuine question it's just a way of greeting and I did not understand that at first, so I would respond by actually telling them how I was. And then I get this sort of like "Oh I wasn't expecting this" sort of look. Like I tell them, like "Oh I didn't understand the reading last night or there's a stupid paper that I'm having trouble writing or I'm not really prepared for the class I'm supposed to teach." And so it took me a while to understand that no, the proper response to when somebody says "Hey how are you?" is like "I'm good, how are you?" So that's you know, just those small daily interaction things that you don't really get when you're in the country as a tourist. So there was some acclamation that I had to do. To move from being a tourist, being a visitor in the US to being somebody who lived here. And then there was an added layer of somebody who lives here as a graduate student, as an international graduate student in a university that, you know, had a very small percentage of international students and then there was this other layer of being, "oh one of the Filipinos in the program" because I think I mentioned earlier when I came here for that graduate program there were three of us and we three had been friends as undergrads and then we became colleagues as instructors at the University of the Philippines, and then we all came to the US together. And so we were at first, at least, like we seem to be treated as a unit by the other people in our graduate program, like the other graduate students, most of whom were white and the faculty which was overwhelmingly white. It took them a while, I think, to start to think of us as individuals and treat us as individuals, rather than as just that clump of Filipinas. So yeah so it's like pretty much everything it was a mix of very little culture shock and also culture shock in surprising ways. I don't even know if some of that can be called culture shock. But it's a very particular artifact of again my upbringing in the Philippines and the relationship between the Philippines and the US and then you know the cultural export of the media to the Philippines.

00:24:42.030



**IA:** Just I guess briefly. You have lived in different areas of the United States, was, is there a difference between... what are some of the similarities and the differences between the areas where you were where you live?

00:25:02.010

**KM:** Well, so in terms of actually being a resident rather than a visitor I lived in Blacksburg Virginia, for two years, and then I have lived here in Iowa City for well, there was a couple of years where I lived in another city in Iowa called Cedar Rapids, which is about half an hour away from here and it's pretty much just those three locations in which I've lived and... I think it's notable to point out that Blacksburg and Iowa City are city or college towns, so that makes them already not really exemplary of the area because Blacksburg is southwest Virginia, it's very close to the border with West Virginia and it is a small town. But, like the university, there is a big enough presence that you know, international students are a rather common and mostly accepted part of the community and while... while it's technically the south, Virginia is maybe less southie. And so... like the experience of living in Blacksburg was also its own kind of bubble, and of course, we were completely engrossed in graduate school and that took up all of our time and energy. But like I remember a couple of occasions when we ventured outside of that town and into the even more rural areas of Southwest Virginia where suddenly you know, we felt aware that, like oh we're in a different space. Like I distinctly remember being stared at by locals like at a random restaurant in West Virginia or wherever and, you know, just in general Blacksburg was its own thing, was a college town. Iowa City is also very much a college town and I think the college townness of Iowa City is perhaps a little more extreme than Blacksburg was, I mean the University of Iowa, if I remember correctly, tends to rank pretty highly on the annual lists of party schools that come out every now and then the University of Iowa was a very woo hoo kind of town, go out at night, there are lots of bars, many of the downtown institutions are our bars. And I'm sure downtown looks and feels very different because of this past year, but, yeah when I was in graduate school like anytime I ventured out late at night, it was very much a bar or party scene. So that also took some getting used to not because you know I never partied in my youth just because when I came over here, I was no longer really in my youth anymore, and I would get tired just watching them walk downtown towards the bar at 10 pm like oh honey, you should go to bed, but also I'm an old lady and I need to go to bed. Cedar Rapids were very isolating, Iowa City has this... Like it's a place where you can just walk down the street and there's a pedestrian mall and center of town and many, many times, I would just sit on a bench they're reading or something in between classes and hanging out and within the space of a few hours, I would run into a whole lot of people that I knew. It has that sort of walkable community feeling to it. Cedar Rapids is very different, it's much more industrialized. There aren't very many like spaces in the city where people can congregate outside of a commercial setting so that was a very lonely, isolated period, really, it was just my husband and I. You know, but I can't really speak to anything else, like the majority of my experience as a resident here has been as somebody who lives in a university town it's very much organized around the students

and the faculty because that's a big part of the economy here in Iowa City, it's very university focused.

00:30:06.180

**TC:** So just on to another question that we have, so you shared a little bit about your involvement with the Auntie Sewing Squad and we just want to know, how did you become involved with that group and have you had any sewing experience before?

00:30:20.130

**KM:** Yeah so. I actually started sewing clothes, mostly for myself, my husband, my small niece and now my nephew. Maybe three years ago, like I've known how to sew in a general sense because they made us learn in home economics in fifth grade, but I didn't actually start sewing as a hobby until about 2018. And when it became clear that the pandemic was a serious thing and I started seeing news articles on how there was a shortage of masks even at hospitals and that people would, you know, if they absolutely have to be in their homes, they should be wearing protective masks. I started looking for patterns online because I knew mask-wearing was much more common in Asian countries. And just as a means of protecting others when you yourself are sick, and so I looked for some like Asian sewing blogs, and I found some patterns, and so I made masks for myself and my family, my friends, and then I found on Facebook, a local group that was sewing masks for hospitals and other institutions here in Iowa specifically and in Eastern Iowa and I have been sewing for them for several months and I don't remember exactly how I learned about the Auntie Sewing Squad, it was probably on Facebook, also because that's where most of the organizing for the Aunties happens, it's entirely possible that one of my friends who knew that I was already sewing masks maybe tagged me in something or the algorithm saw that I was interested in making masks and showed me one of the news articles one of the many news articles about the Aunties but yeah just at a time when I was starting to feel burned out on sewing masks because I, you know I've been working full time from home this entire pandemic too. So the mask making was an on-the-side after-hours all throughout the weekend thing and by June of last year I was feeling tired, but I've done a lot of masks, maybe I'll stop. And then I learned about the Aunties, I felt reinvigorated I'm like oh, this is really cool a whole bunch of Asian American women and allies sewing masks for very carefully vetted communities who were you know, who did not have access to these protective masks in general, like all right, that sort of brought me back. I wish I had a more specific memory of how I first learned about the Aunties. But it just sort of happened one day and I was looking back through my Facebook posts because I... you know I'll take a picture of the mask sometimes before I send them out and then suddenly in June there's a hey I'm really proud to be sewing for the Aunties post, I go okay so that's when it happened, don't remember how it happened, but I'm glad it did.

00:33:40.140

**IA:** Yeah so many things like that just happened in life that just kind of like, spontaneously occur and it just, connections are made, and they just, they happen out of nowhere.

00:33:50.820

**KM:** Happy accidents.

00:33:52.380

**IA:** Yeah and for our next question, we had a you did mention a little bit on the survey that you had experienced a little bit of casual racism from a previous group, could you talk a little bit about that, and maybe also, if I can lump this question together as well, I know, like as a doctor of Philosophy and Women's Studies, do you still experience any racism or prejudice like just throughout your life or everyday life?

00:34:25.530

**KM:** Okay, so-- like I don't want to mischaracterize what was happening in my previous group because, for the most part, everyone in that group was very generous with their time, with their labor, with their materials, with their support for one another, but it still felt like just a bunch of us individuals in our own homes. Going on our machines and then expected without this labor for other people, and there was also a more or less centralized way of gathering donated fabric, cutting, pre-cutting, masks and distributing those precuts to the individual sewists and that was, you know, that was great except that sometimes in that big batch of donated fabric, or in the fabric that the individual mask makers would buy there would be like some Native American-ish prints and patterns and that's a more generalized problem in the garment industry like you can see, in a lot of RTW shops, you can see, in a lot of like hobby fashion fabric stores, you'll see as a generic sort of native-looking print that doesn't have any real, specific ties to various groups. That are-- that is not you know designed by a native designer so just, in general, there's that appropriateness, and we would see those kinds of fabrics and there was very rarely any sort of critical thought about like oh we're just, you know, taking these culturally appropriative fabrics and patterns and just distributing them out to whomever without thinking about how this might be problematic for us as makers for the recipients. And then there was a specific occasion where one of the other mask makers posted a photo of the fabric, a pre-cut fabric that had been given to her to sew. And it was just like the print on the fabric was this generic-- was of generic Asian children like they have slanted eyes, and pigtails, and they have parasols, and little bunnies and the person who posted the photo was asking like okay is this fabric OK to use, because I feel-- I feel like kind of icky about it and problematic, it might be offensive and she was genuinely asking for input and several of us jumped in and said, thank you for being thoughtful and asking about it, and I said, you know as an Asian American myself, I feel uncomfortable. With this very generic sort of print, if there's a way that you can either not use it or use it in a way that hides the print maybe it's like the inner lining of a mask where it won't be visible because we don't know who's receiving these masks, like we don't know individually and also it's just, the circulation of

these kinds of images, is how people learn these stereotypes and prejudices and I tried to explain that in you know, in one of my replies and several of the responses were, you know, like “Oh, I never thought of it that way before thank you” and some were like okay interesting, maybe we need to be a little more watchful.” But there were several people who were saying, “Oh, that's just silly, that's not offensive, they're just cute children, would it be a problem if the children were white or black I don't think so.” And you know just the language of like oh you're overcorrecting you're being so SJW (social justice warrior) but not in so many words because this is Iowa. And we are “Iowa nice” I don't know if you've ever encountered that phrase before, but “Iowa nice” is a thing, where everyone's like really nice and agreeable to your face, even though they really disagree with you and so on the surface, everything's like oh, you know it's not really a problem they are just cute kids we should use it there's a shortage of fabric, at that point, there wasn't really a shortage of fabric anymore. But it just was disheartening and I think that if I had not already lived here for so long, I might not have detected that undercurrent, really. Because the “Iowa nice” covers up a lot of things. And, especially in this little bubble of Iowa City, Iowa City to generalize likes to think of itself as very progressive and forward-thinking, but in a lot of ways, I mean the structural you know the systemic racism is there, as it is everywhere it's just that here we perform better, we present better as progressive but the problematic fabric prints was one thing, the defensiveness on that particular thread about the fabrics, oh, and the person who was pre-cutting the masks and apparently had been the source for that one fabric that the sewist had been worried about the he got very, very defensive. And he ended up leaving the thread and deleting all his comments, he was like what are you, are you calling me a racist, I'm not a racist. But aside from those specific things, there is a way to go online to a specific website to see which groups were requesting masks and so you could log online and see like oh the housekeeping staff at this hospital is requesting 20 masks, the the Iowa harm reduction coalition is requesting 40 masks and individual sewists could just volunteer and I noticed over time, that things like the harm reduction coalition which works with people with addictions, in order to provide them safe spaces and clean equipment and all of that...

00:41:31.500

**KM:** Places like the local women's health clinic that performs abortions. Places like that got way fewer volunteers and took a much longer time to get all of the masks that they needed. Like specifically for the women's health clinic I was the only one who volunteered to sew for them, and I filled their entire request, no one else stepped up. And so, like those kinds of things where people were apparently not sewing for everyone who needed them, were picking and choosing you know easy places to donate to places that align with their own values and neglecting other communities. There were several calls for making masks for the Ho-Chunk Winnebago Nation and that took a while, it took a while for that request to be fulfilled too because there were never as many you know volunteers. So it just got...it was always like smaller things, but the accumulation over time just became tiring and then I learned about the Aunties and so the Aunties are very upfront politics and they're you know they're very, very strident assertions that

we are sewing because the government is failing communities. We are vetting all of the requesters to make sure that we are sewing for people who really truly do not have access to this material. This is what we've decided to do, and we are mostly a group of the Asian immigrant queer people of color who are putting in our labor, our hard labor, to do this, that really appealed to me at that moment, because I was feeling exhausted, you know, just constantly churning out my own labor for this other group that didn't really consider, you know, all the requesters to be equal. I don't think I phrased that very well, but I hope you get the general sense of it, yeah.

00:44:04.800

**TC:** So as we're on the topic of racism and prejudice, from the time that you immigrated to the United States to the present day, have you noticed a change in attitudes towards the Asian Americans, specifically Filipino Americans, or has it been pretty subtle like you've been saying?

00:44:24.630

**KM:** Okay, oh I just realized there was another question that I didn't even touch on, maybe I can blend the two. So I think the question that I skipped had to do with oh, as a doctor of Women's Studies like do I still encounter racism? Well it's not that having a doctorate in Women's Studies really protects you from anything. If anything, it can sometimes invite prejudice in some ways, like I used to get a lot of like "you're studying what?" "Well what about men's studies, why is a women's studies even a legitimate area of study?" So there was a lot of that, especially earlier on. Again it doesn't protect me from anything, and I do recall in the process of getting my degree in Women's Studies, there was some stuff that went down quick. For example, my program Women's Studies was very small, and I was one of a cohort of three, I was the only person of color, I was the only international student in my cohort and maybe one of two international students in the entire group of graduate students and I actually started in that program wanting to study fatness and culture, like, I was looking more towards a cultural studies kind of focus. Like the fat woman's body and how that's you know that's marked and stigmatized and those specific ways in which it is written in the media. And I had done some scholarship on that before in my master's program. I did one of my major papers for this program, like the paper that we have to write in order to qualify to continue study and the PhD program, I did it on the fat body and I noticed that the faculty, in particular, were always kind of surprised when they asked me like "oh so what's your focus of study going to be" and I said "oh fatness" it was like "Oh, okay", and I noticed that I was always sort of being gently steered towards like well, what about Filipinas? Like the other international student was from India and she was studying Indian women and it gradually became clear to me that there was this assumption that as the Filipina graduate student I was going to, of course, be studying Filipina women. And so, when my declared focus of the study was different from that expectation, but people didn't really know what to do with me for a while and I did eventually give in to that expectation, into that pressure, and I ended up focusing the latter years of my tenure as a graduate student and writing my dissertation on Filipina comfort women and, while I learned a great deal doing that and studying and I think it was an

important topic to focus on, I honestly, looking back, I do not feel it was 100% a choice on my part because once I started to write about the comfort women, once I started to talk about that topic, faculty grew very interested in what I have to say. Like I had first written about the comfort women as just one of the smaller papers in the seminar that I was taking and there was a lot of like positive responses like “ooh this is really interesting, what a fascinating awful awful topic, and you tell me more.” And you know, as somebody who just needed to get through grad school, who needed to find faculty to be on my committee to support me throughout the process, because you have to build a committee to support you in your scholarship and you know vouch for your, to read your stuff, to recommend you for graduation, to support you in your search with faculty jobs and you have to have other established faculty behind you and I found that when I started to focus more on this topic, more of the faculty were interested in what I was doing. I was performing that international Filipina graduate student persona that they had expected from me. So that was a piece of institutional racism, I guess, we call it, you know, that was hard for me to reckon with. But I have to be honest like I did not come here wanting to study the Filipino comfort women, but I guess, without meaning to, I ended up sort of using them as well to further, you know, my progress as a graduate student. Kind of a hard thing I have to live with right now. Sorry Tianna you'd also wanted to move the conversation.

00:50:15.900

**TC:** It was just from the time that you immigrated to the United States to the present day. Have you noticed any change in attitudes towards Asian Americans specifically Filipino Americans and that kind of fits into the last question as well.

00:50:33.300

**KM:** Okay, so a change in attitudes. I don't know that I can really speak to that, I think, part of it has to do with how my entire time here I've lived in small communities with a very, very small Filipino population. I have encountered several times the stereotype of the Filipina as a military wife or a mail order bride or a nurse. And you know, occasionally, people have been, especially when they see me out and about with my like big white American foreign fed husband, like there was an assumption there. And I think that has been true, for a while I don't know that it's changed very much. There was a Filipino American community in Cedar Rapids that I tried to hang with several times, many years back, but several of the Filipinas had met their American husbands through like pen pals services, this was before internet dating, and I noticed that at like the big Filipino American picnics there were always like several single white guys hanging around, friends of the American husband's in the Filipina women and it used to be me and another Filipino graduate school friend who would go to these picnics together and we would always get subtly and not so subtly pushed towards the single guys. Like “Oh Hey my husband's friend is here, do you want to talk to him, he likes Filipinas?” And so it was just like an icky feeling, like first of all I'm just trying to get through the day, I'm just trying to graduate school, I don't need a boyfriend and I don't want your husband's creepy friend. So that, like, that particular stereotype

about Filipina women, you know, looking for white American husbands wanting to find some white guy to marry them, yeah, that was always like a weird sticky-icky thing. In the last several years, changing gears a little bit, like Iowa City, the University of Iowa has seemed like a very dramatic rise in the number of Asian students, particularly undergraduate students and the university system is not prepared for like such a large population of international students like I have friends who are student advisors and they have so many students who are not fully prepared for higher education in the US and there aren't a lot of that built-in support, so the university and there's just been like an explosion in the number of local businesses like restaurants and groceries and small shops catering to this sudden influx of Asian undergrad students and I cannot help but wonder if that has caused some upset or resentment in the larger community. I mean people here seem to really like their boba tea. But other than that I don't know. Also, I mean I've been at home for over a year, I don't get out much of the world, I didn't get out much into the world before that. Honestly, so I don't have much more than speculation and some whisperings from friends who work at the university but it's yeah the sudden rise in the Asian population in this very small and mostly white town has made some ripples I'm sure.

00:55:26.100

**IA:** And for myself, I'm actually a first-generation Mexican American and I grew up with Filipino Americans. And I found that there's, there seems to be a connection between us and have you noticed that here in your life in the United States having a connection to other immigrants, whether they're Asian or non-Asian?

00:55:55.470

**KM:** Yeah definitely. I mean. First of all, I was not Asian until I came to live in the US. Before that I was just me. If you asked me, if I was pressed to answer, I was like oh yeah I'm Filipino but you know living in the Philippines growing up in the Philippines. Like my regional identity was not something I had to think about. For us back home regional identity was like oh yeah my parents are from Leyte or Tacloban, but living in the states, suddenly, I find that oh I'm Asian and in this category of Asian, but at the same time, a lot of people have trouble reading me as Asian because I don't look Chinese or Japanese or Korean. You know, as a Filipino, as a Southeast Asian I was not necessarily the kind of Asian that was recognizable to a lot of white people who haven't had much interaction with nonwhite communities before. So that was an interesting thing to reckon with and also being Filipino and having the last name Mendoza, I sometimes get mistaken for Hispanic and people who would encounter me on paper first before they see me or hear me will read Katarina Mendoza and oh that's a European first name and a Hispanic last name and they assume things about me. And then they meet me and sometimes they can tell, by looking what I am, and so I get asked so, where are you from, no where are you from really? And then explain like oh I'm Filipino where's that oh that's in Asia, what and you know not saying, everyone has this reaction, but especially in the more, in the less cosmopolitan areas where you don't have a big concentration of immigrants and specifically Filipino

immigrants I am not read easily, but I do, I mean that makes it even more significant when I do find connection with other immigrants, you know whether Asian or not, and you have to go back to something I touched on earlier, the fact that I'm a Filipino and have a Spanish or Portuguese sounding name, because of our colonial history with Spain, you know that also affects things because the Philippines is like predominantly Christian, predominantly Catholic, and that is, you know, a very real very present artifact of 300 years of Spanish colonial rule we have Spanish names that were given to us by the colonial masters, we have European Roman Catholic you know, religious and cultural practices, and you know, in some ways, that means I connect more easily with Latinos who have similar, you know, or at least who's colonial pasts resonate in some similar ways to the Philippines colonial past. And then, in general, just living here as an immigrant, you know, trying to be the happy well-adjusted immigrant which is not always possible to do like yeah you do tend to gravitate to others who are living the same experience as you know, living in a college town it essentially means that if your friendships are mostly formed through the university, they are transient because everyone is here for a period of time, and then they graduate and then they move away. But when my community was mostly located in the university, many members of that community were fellow international graduate students because we understood what you're going through. You know, I mean, it is something really particular to move here with one or two suitcases, find a place to live for some of us in a place where we don't really have that great fluency with the language finds a place to live, try and furnish everything yourself, while also trying to do higher education. Even if you're fluent in conversational English, academic English is a very different thing so that was a point of connection, sometimes we would help each other with the jargon. We would help each other, like oh there's a new international student who arrived in the middle of the school year she doesn't have any furniture. Who has a car, who can go help her furnish her place, who has an extra table and extra chair, who understands that very specific kind of homesickness? That hits you when you know you've been busy with your graduate coursework and you're teaching all throughout the day and then suddenly late at night, it hits you that oh I'm far away from home or oh it's been three years since I was able to fly home to see my family. You have to turn to other immigrants to really talk about that. And I remember about two years into my programs here in Iowa I got hit really hard by a combination of seasonal depression and situational depression. But I hadn't realized until I moved to this latitude that the very short dark days in the winter was really physically detrimental to me, and also, I was struggling just grad school in general, and so I started seeing a counselor and I was very lucky, the counselor that I got assigned to at the University Hospital was another immigrant from Nigeria and he was maybe five, six years older than I was. He had also you know moved here on his own for graduate study and he understood parts of my situational depression that I hadn't even been able to really articulate up until that point, and so I mean, of course, I was also taking medication, but the regular sessions, with a counselor who, even though he was not Filipino or Asian but was himself an immigrant. That made it first of all, easier for me to talk about the various difficulties I was having and also, for him to identify as the kind of help that would best serve me. And that I think was a crucial



moment I think in my time here as a graduate student, if I had maybe ended up going to a different counselor. I might not have been able to make it over that particular difficult period, I might not have continued my graduate studies, I might have just gone back home, who knows. And of course the Aunties, that's a massive you know point of connection there and it's been particularly important as one of the things that has kept me going throughout this pandemic. Just to know that I'm part of this larger community of people who are putting labor for a purpose for one another and for vulnerable communities has been, you know, it's been very uplifting.

01:04:53.550

**TC:** So on that topic, just being vulnerable and being missing home and stuff like that in what ways, do you think people that aren't part of your community or the Filipino community or Asian American community can help to support these communities and offer a safe space to people a part of it?

01:05:21.420

**KM:** One of the most important ways is to listen, really. I am not an activist in the active sense I learned about myself. As an introvert, I am more comfortable like working and lurking in the background and offering support that doesn't necessarily require my physical presence and I know that limits the work that I can do. I like to think that in the 17 years I spent teaching that I was more able to model you know what it meant to acknowledge the struggle of people of color and then the necessity to understand how institutionalized racism marginalized groups of people I think in general. One of the most important ways to be a good ally to people of color, Asian or not, is to first listen. To not listen just in order to respond to not take up space and voice. Because there are so many nuances to life as a person of color in this particular country and it's still really hard to break out of being lumped into you know this big amalgam of Asian, like what does that actually mean to me to be Asian American? Asia is a massive part of the world. Like I'm Filipino, I'm Southeast Asian, we have a very specific colonial history with Europe, with the United States. China, Japan, Korea, they have their own very complicated histories. And each of those nations, you know the story of their immigration to the US again there's so much nuance in that. The way Filipinos came to the US at various points in history so very different, and so you know very constricted by policies that were in place of the time. It's just. It will take a lot of listening on the part of allies to even begin to comprehend us as not just one big pan Asian group of people or you know one big African American group of people. There are many other things I will talk about, but I think, giving a voice is very important.

01:09:07.230

**IA:** Yes, and just on that topic of listening and maybe even also gaining more knowledge. Which for me this class has provided, but there are some things that I didn't even know about, I had no knowledge of prior histories, and I-- and I don't know if we can go back to this, or if you don't mind you know, the Filipina comfort women, I feel like for me if I didn't have this opportunity to

interview you I would have never known about, that it's something that just wasn't, you know, it was, it wasn't in my path of understanding. And so, I know you talked about like it wasn't really your, it wasn't your primary focus at one point, but it ended up being and I know for this class we did study the topic of war brides in relationship, to the United States and how we have occupied various countries in Asia, the Philippines, Japan, Korea, Vietnam. Do you mind just sharing a little bit more about that, and what that was about and, and maybe it can be tied into, you know, into what the US has also been doing?

01:10:40.650

**KM:** Okay, so the Filipino comfort women which I particularly focused on, like they are a very small percentage of comfort women as a group. When people talk about comfort women usually they're referring to mostly Korean women, because at the time of the Second World War, Korea had been annexed by Japan, and a lot of Korean people, men and women have been forcibly conscripted into the Japanese military, men and boys were conscripted into the Japanese military to work with soldiers, mostly and a lot of Korean women were conscripted to work as prostitutes, but actually, there were sex slaves for Japanese soldiers because giving Japanese soldiers access to regular sex was considered part of what kept them healthy and whole and made them good soldiers that they had to have that release. And so the army, as an institution, supplied them with women. It was also, you know, sort of thought of as a way-- to keep the incidence of venereal disease down. So, in order to keep the soldiers from visiting prostitutes or raping local women in the communities that the military occupied, the army would then provide them with this-- that we have your own, you know, your own corral of women that you can visit and we have doctors that monitor everyone blah blah blah. But most of the women were not there voluntarily, they had been taken from their families or sold into military sexual slavery. And when people talk about comfort women and the movement to garner justice for the comfort women, they are talking mostly about Korean women. But when the Japanese military invaded the Philippines during the Second World War, there were a few hundred Filipino woman who also were forced into sexual slavery, for the occupying forces, and like we don't know for sure how many there actually were and how many were forced to live in the barracks as comfort women, versus, you know, just being raped in the course of the war and there's a lot of gray area there. But about 400 former comfort women have identified themselves or been identified by their family, the real numbers higher I'm sure. And so the Filipino comfort women, they aren't studied very much, I mean not comfort women as a population are given very much attention in general, but within that umbrella of study Filipina comfort women are given less attention, and so I started looking into that for my own research work and something that I started to see as I, you know as I dug into the subject matter was that the way that comfort women tended to tell their stories, there was a certain uniformity almost to their stories and what I saw was that first of all, for about 50 years after the end of World War II no one really talked about the comfort women, at least not publicly not officially the comfort women were not really part of all of the efforts after the war to address war crimes like the comfort women, their existence what they went through was an open secret.

You know, like oh yeah wartime prostitutes whatever we're not bothered by them and it wasn't until like the mid-90s, that people started really talking about comfort women having been victims of military sexual slavery and we need to address this heinous you know part of that wartime history, we need to find justice for them, and what I saw in the testimonies of the survivors, is that the context in which people were suddenly interested in hearing their stories shaped the way that they have to tell their stories because the focus of their allies, their lawyers and the survivors themselves because their focus was on getting some sort of recognition and justice for what happened to them. They had to tell their stories in a very particular way in order to present themselves as worthy of that justice. You know, there was this very clear through-line of presenting the comfort woman as the helpless victim, the young virgin taken from her family brutally raped. There was this really prurient voyeuristic focus on how brutally where you raped, how many times a day were you raped, how many soldiers were you made to have sex with, how badly were you treated? And it, you know, this-- this particular story like in a way it's almost like retraumatizing, this extreme focus on the survivor, not as a survivor, but as a victim as this battered bruised bloody body. And the way that the story was told and that way in order to make the comfort woman, you know the person for whom we must find justice. Like it negates other aspects of their humanity it negates, for example, ways in which the individual comfort women found ways surviving their experience. It necessarily erased some parts of their own narratives or understandings of their, you know, to use the word relationships with their perpetrators. And so I decided to-- to look into stories about and by the comfort women outside or stories told, not just in the courtroom or in the context of the movement seeking justice, but I started looking for other ways, other venues, in which they told their stories and other ways in which those stories could be told that perhaps, allowed them more freedom outside of that perfect victim image. So I instead of going the route of interviewing the survivors, which would be I think for a lot of people like the first major tendency like "Oh these women they survived this terrible thing they're seeking justice let's go talk to them and ask them to tell us our story" instead of going that route, I started looking into where else have they told their stories about themselves and I found poems, I found art, I found an autobiography by a Filipina comfort woman and because I'm still an English major at heart, like what I do is I study literature and in looking at these alternative ways of telling their stories, I found so much more. Like their comfort women talking about how like oh yeah you know my mother was raped by my father and that's how I came into the world, and then I got raped by this random guy in my village long before the Japanese soldiers ever came and made me a comfort woman and I guess that's just my destiny so she's telling this different story that looks at the fullness of sexual violence, and structural violence, like in her community and in her past. There's another woman who wrote a poem about how, you know, she was abducted and forced to become a comfort woman, but then a Japanese officer took a liking to her and separated her from the rest of the comfort women so she had her own room, she had better meals and she would only have to have sex with him and so she said: "Well, this is this is maybe the way that I can survive this." And so she talks about him as her husband, or rather no in the translation because this poem was in Tagalog, she was describing herself as having been

made a wife by this Japanese officer. And that particular circumstance of him having chosen her as a sort of a wife gave her more safety, made her experience of being comfort women just a little less brutal maybe than it would have been if she had not been chosen. You know those kinds of ways of thinking about their experience, and the history behind it, and the ways of surviving through it, and then the ways of putting themselves back together after the end of the war, like in those poems, in those stories, like I also started to see the ways in which these survivors, some of them had to pretend it never happened because their family members would reject them otherwise. Some of them, you know, found ways to talk about their experience with other women who had gone through the same thing. There is a way in which telling the story of the comfort woman as the victim, like in, in court it is necessary to a certain extent because our juridical system is itself very limited and only recognizes certain narratives, you know like you have to look like a victim in the ways in which we understand the victim to be, the perpetrators have to look like perpetrators and the ways in which we understand them to be. I do believe it is very important to be able to get justice for the comfort women on the international stage in the legal context, because that, hopefully, would help. And that kind of impunity that makes these kinds of wartime practices to comment like it has to happen at that level, but that cannot be the only way in which we hear the stories of the comfort women, we also have to make space for ways for them to tell their stories to be in the world as full people and not just victims of sexual slavery. And you know, in as much as a dissertation can do anything to change the way we think and talk about parts of history, like, I hope that my dissertation was able to do that. It's what, 180 pages bound between fake leather covers, probably not going to be read by more than a couple hundred people. That's what I looked at. And I have to say, there were many times where I looked at other grad students I knew, like people who were oh studying a graphic novel or, you know, this and that and like why didn't I pick something a little less painful? And even then, you know that signals what privilege I have as a person who merely studies these narratives, never having had to live through something like that, I'm able to just study their stories, their art, their poetry, their autobiographies. I didn't have to live through it and even that was already incredibly, heavy and difficult.

01:24:29.520

**IA:** Yeah it's definitely a very sad topic, but the opportunity is there for others to gain knowledge and-- to understand and-- and to know that, that those things do exist and have existed. And-- and it's there for people to see, you know to-- the knowledge to gain and helping understand the difficulties that other people have faced in their lives. So we're kind of like toward the last of our questions, and I can just kind of switch a little bit. What-- what is something you miss from your home country that you can't find here? It doesn't have to be like something-- like a physical thing, it can be something like a connection or like-- like a feeling that maybe you just can't find here.

01:25:36.930

**KM:** I miss the language. I miss speaking in Tagalog or like very mangled Taglish. I miss slang. Or more specifically I feel a loss, because having lived here so long, I know I am no longer up to date on just the slang language back home. It's an interesting thing you know like I'm married to an Iowa native and he's a great ally, but he's not Filipino he doesn't speak Tagalog. He doesn't have the same-- I have, like, cultural touchstones that I share with him because, as I was growing up, I read a lot of you know, English literature and I watched some US TV and so, there are some things like from my upbringing that we share, but there is like a whole library of cultural touchstones that he has no experience of. And you know, sometimes like it would be nice to be able to talk about like the cartoon *Voltes V* with him. But he didn't grow up watching-- like this was the very, very early years in Japanese anime before it became a big thing here in the US like old school, mecca, robots from the 70s and early 80s.

01:27:19.380

**IA:** That'd be something like *Voltron*, was it *Voltron*?

01:27:24.930

**KM:** Well yeah *Voltron*-- *Voltron* was the lions and I know there's like a vehicle *Voltron* but the *Voltes V* is even earlier than that. And it's also like five different spaceships that bolt together into this giant, you know robot with a sword. But it was a big thing for my generation, the martial law babies, those of us in the Philippines who were born during the martial law rule of Ferdinand Marcos, that was a big thing for us. But yeah I miss speaking in Tagalog. I miss speaking in Waray-Waray, which is my parent's regional dialect. I am in frequent communication with friends back in the Philippines and so like when we get on Zoom or whatever my accent gets very, very thick. Also when I go home, and I'm surrounded by people who talk in Pinay accent, I don't sound as if I live in the US at all. Like it just all comes back. And it's not like I make a conscious effort to speak in a particular way when I'm here, it's just that what comes in my ears comes out of my mouth and, you know, sometimes I won't notice it for a long time. Then I'll get on a Zoom call with a friend or I'll talk to my auntie in Las Vegas who also immigrated here several decades ago, and suddenly we're talking in our dialect and I realized how much I missed it. I also sometimes miss the really, really corny Filipino humor. Like you know it's so corny you shouldn't laugh at it, but you do anyway because maybe you know. So yeah, more than food or music or movies, because we can get that now, I tried to watch like one Filipino movie a week, at least. And during the pandemic, I have finally started learning how to cook and I make Filipino food frequently and you know it's the ingredients are somewhat different, but I can make a good approximation of Filipino food, even here in Iowa, but the language there's just something deep and real about, you know, hearing Tagalog and Taglish all around me just randomly walking through the mall or on public transportation.

01:30:22.080

**TC:** Well, thank you for sharing that you kind of answered our last question, the last question was how do you try to bring together the culture from the Philippines to the US, feel more like your home country, but you did mention you try to make food from the Philippines and then watching a Filipino movie wondering...

01:30:33.150

**KM:** Yeah it used to be really hard to find Filipino cinema, but Netflix has a surprisingly large number of Filipino movies, and even a couple of TV series, and I can find them on Amazon sometimes and on YouTube too so that's been great I try and get my husband to watch them with me, sometimes, but every movie he watches turns out to be like about a person struggling with their exes and he says, I don't want to watch another movie about people in their exes. I have a friend here in town, who is half Filipino, her mother's Filipina and her father is American and she and her partner and kids don't really like Filipino food. So when I cook a big batch of Filipino food I'll bring just enough for her because they're not going to want to eat it anyway, so I just say this is just all for you, yet. So we take care of each other that way.

01:31:52.710

**IA:** We kind of went over one-- well we skipped one of the questions and I kind of wanted to bring it back to the-- do you have any Filipino American communities in your area that you can have or that offer a safe space?

01:32:13.890

**KM:** Well, as I just mentioned, that friend of mine and her mom have adopted me and calls me her other daughter. I guess it also I wouldn't say it helps but we get mistaken for each other in this town a lot and I don't think we look like each other at all. Our friends don't think we look like each other, but apparently, there's enough Filipinoness in both of our features that we regularly get mistaken for each other, you know, she's a big part of my core community here. In terms of a larger Filipino American Community, not here in Iowa. Really, I mentioned earlier, I have gone to several functions, like the Filipino American picnics and things and there was, you know, this weird undertone of like "Oh, I know, a single white guy was looking for a girlfriend" like so that sort of put me off. Like a lot of Filipinos, I have a lot of relatives here in the US, I have an aunt by marriage who lives 20 minutes down the road. I'm actually going to go see her tonight. And she and her husband were also Filipino. They're professors at University of Cedar Rapids and so like we have very similar politics and so we are a very nice supportive community. Another thing that I noticed when I was trying to be more active in the broader Filipino American community here in Iowa is, you know, most of them were much more conservative than I am. And so, in that respect, that also made it harder for me to form deep bonds with that community because I was too feminist. Too many of my friends were queer like what's going on with that, and so it has happened that my core community here in Iowa City is mostly not Filipino, but very heavily LGBT and white allies. And that's just where I've ended

up. We have the same politics, we have very similar value systems. They are very much, several of them are very active in the activist world and that has been really the base of my support here. So, while I don't have very many Filipino friends, I do have deep bonds with people whose values I share.

01:35:25.110

**TC:** I think it's definitely good that you found your own community, even though it may not be a Filipino American community you at least have people that you have genuine relationships and stuff with.

01:35:38

**KM:** Even in Iowa.

01:35:43.050

**IA:** I think that's it for me I don't have any more questions. I know we had some questions on here and we kind of-- we wanted to try to keep it within the hour, but the conversation is just so-- it's a good conversation. But you know I did enjoy the conversation and getting to know you, you're a wonderful person. Thank you, thank you for your time. I like the shirt in the background, by the way, the Auntie Sewing Squad, yeah.

01:36:13.980

**KM:** I was looking for a not messy background in my-- this is my sewing room/home office and most of it is a mess. This was the one clean corner and then I noticed my mannequin was there naked, that's probably not a good look, so I put on an Auntie shirt on her, you know just to go with the overall theme.

01:36:36.720

**TC:** Well, thank you for sharing with us everything that you did, we enjoyed it-- well I know I enjoyed it, but I think I can speak for both of us, we both enjoyed it.

01:36:45.720

**KM:** Thank you very much, you had very thoughtful questions, I really appreciate that. And, you know I wish you the best of luck with this project, I hope-- I hope you carry on with that good work, even outside of the class.

01:37:04.260

**IA:** Okay, so, yeah and thanks again and hopefully we'll hear from you soon as well.

01:37:13.350

**KM:** Yeah oh there is-- I think there's a form that you need me to sign.

01:37:21

**IA:** Yes.

01:37:21

**KM:** I will get to that today and send it to you. Yeah if there's-- I'd be interested in seeing like what the other Aunties have also said if there's some sort of like place where we can go to after the project is over, and you know, see what other oral histories you and other classmates have been able to dig up as I would really appreciate a link to that when the time comes.

01:37:47.640

**TC:** I think it might be going to an archive or something of that sort, I know we submit them somewhere like that, but if we get any more information about how to see those as well, we'll share it with you definitely.

01:38:02.850

**KM:** Okay thank you.

01:38:04.680

**IA:** Thank you so much, it was nice meeting you.

01:38:08.340

**KM:** Tianna, Ivan, take care.

01:38:10.590

**IA:** Take care.

01:38:11.220

**KM:** I hope you have a great Friday and an awesome weekend.

01:38:16.290

**IA:** Thank you.