

# **AN INTERVIEW WITH ARSYA RESPATI**

An Oral History Conducted by Madison Chang

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Reflections: The Las Vegas Asian American and Pacific Islander  
Oral History Project

Oral History Research Center at UNLV  
University Libraries  
University of Nevada Las Vegas

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Oral History Project

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The following interview is part of a series of interviews conducted under the auspices of Reflections: The Las Vegas Asian American and Pacific Islanders Oral History Project.

Claytee D. White  
Director, Oral History Research Center  
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## PREFACE

“I knew that this place was the right place for me, and it turns out it was, so very lucky of me.”

Born in Denver, Colorado, Arsyah Respati was raised with her younger brother in Jakarta, Indonesia, by his fashion designer mother and hotel consultant father. After earning his International Baccalaureate degree at BINUS School Simprug in Jakarta, he matriculated in 2019 to UNLV's William F. Harrah College of Hospitality, where he plans to follow a culinary career. His brother is also in the U.S., while their parents remain in Indonesia. He remains close to his parents, speaking to them every day, and to his paternal grandfather, who used all his savings to finance his grandsons' educations. Here, he has a chosen "aunty," who helps him with culture shock and homesickness and who brings him Indonesian food. He speaks of his studies and his off-campus work at a Japanese restaurant and of his Muslim faith, Ramadan foods and fasting traditions, Indonesian politics, and the diversity of Indonesian cultures. He talks about the cost of living in Las Vegas, the importance of networking, and the diversity of Las Vegas Asian businesses.

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in Las Vegas, Nevada  
Conducted by Madison Chong

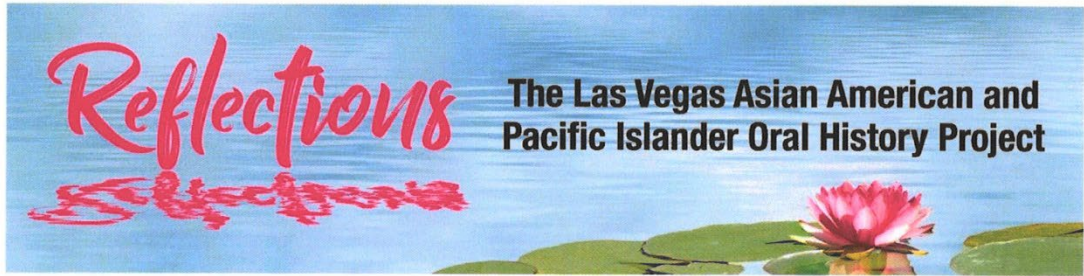
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**Hi. Please state your name and how to spell it.**

Hi. My name is Arsyia Respati; Arsyia, as in A-R-S-Y-A. Respati, as in R-E-S-P-A-T-I. What do you want to know more about?

**First, tell us where you're from.**

I was born in Denver, Colorado, but I was raised in Jakarta, Indonesia for about seventeen, eighteen years. I only stayed in Denver for a couple of months, so I have no memory whatsoever about Denver. But I am a part of a family of four. I have a little brother, I have a mother, and I have a father. My mother, she is a fashion designer. She is forty-two years old. My dad just turned forty-six, I think, and he is a hotel consultant. He owns his own company on hotel consulting.

**Can you talk about your family and your childhood, like schooling, recreation, friends, family trips, vacations, relatives, or just any favorite memories you have?**

Sure, yes. Our family, we rarely go on family trips because my dad is always working out of town, and my mom is always busy with her own stuff. But when we do, we usually go to different parts of Indonesia, not Jakarta in particular. For example, like Bali, Yogyakarta, just to name a few.

For schooling, I completed an IB program until I finished the diploma program. That's approximately twelfth grade. Then I moved to Vegas for college.

**Can you tell me about your grandparents or just some stories that your grandparents have told you about their lives?**

Yes, sure. My grandparents from my mom's side, I haven't really gotten to meet them. They passed away when I was born, so I haven't got that much of a close connection with them, but I am very close to my grandparents from my dad's side because we actually lived behind each

other. Usually, every Saturday or Sunday, we gather at my grandparents' place, and then we just eat dinner and talk about a couple of stuff. It's always a really good time.

A story that my grandparents told me, it's not really a story that he told me, but it's just something I observed. He is a very humbling person. He basically used all his money for my education and my brother's education, which is something that I really admire about him and something that sets a drive for me to do good in school, basically. That's basically it for my grandparents.

**Are your grandparents also from Jakarta?**

Yes, they were also born and raised in Jakarta, yes; same goes for my mom and my dad.

**What and where was your higher education?**

My higher education was in Jakarta as well. It's an international school. It's called BINUS SCHOOL Simprug. The curriculum is IB. It's an International Baccalaureate. I finished until the diploma program. It's pretty hard, a lot of sleepless nights, a lot of coffees. But, hey, I guess we're here.

**What made you decide to come to UNLV? What made you choose to go to college in America?**

First of all, for why I want to study abroad in the U.S. is because I have a U.S. citizenship, and so I'll probably be able to pay in-state tuition. It's a cheaper option as compared to other countries to study abroad to, or even Indonesia. Some of the schools in Indonesia are more expensive than what I pay here, yes.

But why UNLV? First of all, I didn't get accepted to Cornell, so that's out of the picture. The rest of them literally didn't spend as much as UNLV because a year before I went to UNLV, I went to a couple of schools that I was looking into, and I felt that the UNLV Hospitality Hall,



AKA the only good building in the campus, really caught my eye. I knew that this place was the right place for me, and it turns out it was, so very lucky of me.

**What kind of things were you looking for when you were applying to colleges?**

First of all, price. Tuition is very important to me. Not so much about the environment, honestly. I didn't know what I was getting into before I came to Vegas. One thing that really caught my eye on UNLV is how they claim to be one of the best hospitality schools, which really caught my attention, and that is why I went to UNLV, one of the reasons why. Yes, that really caught my eye.

**How do you identify ethnically?**

Legally, I would probably be considered as both a U.S. citizen and an Indonesian citizen, but for myself, my personal worth, I felt like I am more a part of the Indonesian ethnicity than more of an American just because I was basically raised there, and my mom and dad are Indonesian. Basically, my whole line is Indonesian, so I identify myself as an Indonesian. I felt like I know more about the culture rather than as compared to U.S. culture. Yes, I probably consider myself as an Indonesian.

**Can you explain to us where Indonesia is for people who are not very familiar?**

Yes, sure. Are you talking about the whole Indonesia?

**Yes.**

Indonesia is basically just next to Singapore, but then above Australia. It's a lot of islands, basically, just basically were made into one, and then they were called Indonesia. If you're curious about where I lived, Jakarta is literally in the heart of the Java Island. There are five islands in Indonesia. There is Java, Sumatra, Kalimantan, and so on and so on, and Jakarta is in the heart of the Java Island.

**Can you tell me anything about your family's migration story? What made your family members decide to come to the U.S.?**

My family didn't actually move to the mainland U.S. It's more only me and my brother who moved. My mom and dad are still in Indonesia. What decided for me and my brother to come here is because we felt that we could've grown to be a better person here with a healthier environment, not to say the least. I don't know. It's just more experience of studying abroad, getting to know more people, networking. I felt like if I had stayed in Jakarta for my undergrad, I would be stuck in this one bubble that I'm already used to for the past few years. That is one of the reasons why I decided to leave my family and then go to here; also, my brother.

**How and when did you and your brother leave?**

We left at the same time. We left, I think it was the summer of 2019, around June, July or August, maybe. I forgot. That's approximately the time that we left from Indo. It was still with my dad and my mom. We weren't blind, but then a month after, they left us.

**You said that you were born in Denver. What made your parents decide to go there?**

My dad was working at a construction site at the time, and then mom basically tagged along because she was still in Indonesia, working in Indonesia, and she decided to tag along with my dad. Then, yes, I was born.

**Who or what were the hardest people or things to leave behind in Indonesia?**

This will sound really harsh. I miss my Indonesian friends, but I'm also pretty happy that I left my Indonesian friends, not in a really toxic way, but in more of like, okay, this is a new chapter, and I should meet new people that are more impactful for me and help me to grow as I become a better person.

But the hardest people to leave behind, number one, would be my grandpa. He has done a lot for not only me, but also for my dad and my mom. He is basically the backbone of our family. Then second would be my dad and my mom. They sacrificed everything just for me to study here. Then third would be my brother, but I probably see him at Christmas. Those are basically the main ones.

**Is there anything that was hard to leave behind?**

Hard to leave behind?

**Yes, like do you miss the weather, or like...?**

Definitely do not miss the mosquitos. Honestly, no. Those are the only things or, slash, people that I miss. Other than that, I'm fine with it.

**How do you stay in touch with distant family members or keep in contact with your family back at home?**

With my dad and my mom, I actually regularly call them every single day whether it's me after work or when I wake up in the morning because of the time difference. I think with daylight savings, it's now fifteen hours. My mom and my dad, I call them almost every single day or every other day. My brother, not so much because he is also busy with his own things. But my grandpa, I call him once a week. Basically, I stay in touch with my family through FaceTime and video calls.

**How long is the flight that you have to take, and how often do you go back home?**

The flight itself including layover and the distance, I would say it would take you about a day.

Yes, about a day. It's pretty weird because from Indo, for example, if it's like the fourteenth there, you'll probably arrive at the same time that you're going to be in the U.S.

**So, it's time traveling.**

Yes, you've basically time traveled. As for the last time I went to Indo, it was last year during the peak of COVID. I decided to come home because I didn't know what to do here, and then I basically was by myself, and I missed my parents, like freshman things. Yes, I went back home, but I came back this February, actually. I'm not sure when I'm going to come back to Indo next.

**What are your or your family's fondest memories of home? Did you guys do anything as a family together?**

There is a lot. I definitely miss playing basketball with my dad and my brother. It's always a wholesome feeling because personally for me, I'm closer to my mom than my dad, but with my dad, I talk more with him about sports. That's what we bond over, sports and schools. That's why it's always a very fun memory. With my mom, usually we do Sunday brunches. We go to this one place near our house. It's like a European patisserie shop. We always go there at eleven or twelve in the afternoon, and we just drink coffee, just have a very wholesome breakfast. But mostly, we just hang around the house because my mom and my dad don't really go out a lot. Well, my dad does, but it's always for work, so he goes out of town. But everyone is in the house. We just watch Netflix or just talk, basically.

**What was it like for you to go through the U.S. Immigration process?**

Honestly, I didn't struggle as much because basically I have both Indonesian and U.S. citizenship, so I have two passports. It didn't really matter for me. It was kind of difficult for my dad and my brother, actually, because my dad went for Hajj in Saudi Arabia for a couple of months, I feel like, and the airport guys saw my dad's passport, and they were like, "Hm, this is kind of suspicious." I was like, "Not really." We got scolded for a good two hours, and we actually missed our next flight after that. It was pretty painful. As for me personally, I didn't have any problems.

But there is always a problem when I want to go back to the Indo because, apparently, I'm not supposed to have two citizenships because Indonesia doesn't allow U.S. citizenship. They let you have two citizenships until you're twenty-one, so then by twenty-one, you need to pick one.

**Oh. So, what are you going to pick?**

U.S. But there is this loophole actually that my aunt told me. In order for you to retain two passports, you actually need to go to another country, which happens to be the case; it's always Singapore. If I wanted to go back home, I'd probably go from Las Vegas and then L.A. to Singapore, and then you have to go out of the airport and then go back in, and then go to Jakarta afterwards. It's pretty tedious but, hey, I mean, it's worth it.

**I'm sure it's worth it. It's home.**

Yes.

**What were your first memories of Las Vegas?**

My first memories of Las Vegas...it was really hot. It was crazy. It was really hot and dry. In Indo, I'm pretty used to the hot weather, but it's hot and humid. Everywhere you go, you always sweat. But then in Vegas, you just get itches. It feels like you want to shower every two, three hours. That's one of the things I remembered from the first time landing in Las Vegas. As much for academic-wise, I do not remember, but I do remember my first roommate and the first people that I met. They were really nice. That's probably it about Las Vegas.

**Where did you live when you first arrived in Las Vegas?**

I lived with this roommate, randomly. He's from Hawaii as well. He is pretty cool. But I decided to move out the second half of the semester because I wasn't really that close to him, and I met

other people that I was really more comfortable with. But yes, I lived in the dorms. Now, my third year, I live in an apartment.

**What were the most difficult things about those early days in Las Vegas?**

Probably for me is getting out of my comfort zone because, again, I'm from Indonesia, and mostly the people who are really close to me and the people who I care about, mostly talk in Indonesia. It took me a while to get used to talking in English on a daily basis. It was pretty hard for me to adjust, but at the end I succeeded in adjusting. As for socially, it was pretty hard as well because I don't know why, but it's such a habit for me that if I go out of my comfort zone, I tend to be more quiet, more self-sufficient, and more closed off in front of people. But as time goes and I meet certain people that I felt more comfortable with than an acquaintance or an average person that I generally meet, I started to show my true colors. I share about my interests, the stuff I do, the stuff that I'm interested in, and so on.

**You said that one of the hard parts was speaking English daily with other people. How did you learn English?**

Honestly, it just comes naturally. I feel like the more you talk to people in English, the more you're more fluent with it. I basically went to an international school where most of the people that I meet talk in English. What I meant by talking Indonesian daily was talking with my dad and my mom, which are the people that I see more than my friends. That's probably why I'm also used to talking in English because some of my friends don't even know how to speak Indonesian.

**Who was the most helpful when you had to adjust here? Did you have a go-to friend?**

I would say my aunt. She is not my biological aunt, but more like a mutual. Her name is Tante Fatmah. She is a very, very nice woman. She is a very, very nice aunt. One thing that I really

admire about her is that she always brings me Indonesian food, so I don't feel homesick at all. She was one of the first persons that I know that I can always go to. If I have any troubles or anything that I need help on or Indonesian food most of the time, I would probably go to her. She basically treats me like her own son, which is something that not a lot of people do. I usually go over to her house once a week, usually on a Sunday for lunch. I just basically talk about *how you been doing?* and stuff. Yes, she's really nice. She was one of the first persons that helped me adjust.

Then the second one would be the roommates that I'm living with right now. They helped me adjust to the environment here. I think that's about it.

**Is your auntie from Indonesia, too?**

Yes. She is married with an American. I think she identifies herself as an American now.

**When did she come from Indonesia to America?**

If I'm not mistaken, she said it was around the '90s.

**Oh, so she was here for a good, long time.**

Yes. She built a family here, basically. She has two kids. Both of them live in Puerto Rico now.

**Can you tell me about your work in Las Vegas, any jobs you've worked, your experiences, how you got them?**

Sure. For me, I want to excel in the culinary career; that's my passion and that's my goal and my career path. I want to basically create my own restaurant with the experiences I get from other people and, also, my own Indonesian cuisine. I want to incorporate them.

I worked for this Ramen bar for a good seven months. It was a really good introduction for me in the culinary industry because I've never worked in a kitchen before, and it was a really good introduction. At the last few weeks of me working there, I felt "demotivated" and I didn't

feel any motivation to work anymore because basically I've learned everything that I need to. The kitchen manager, not to say, was doing me pretty dirty. I would get called in at six a.m. in the morning. It was breaking both physically and mentally for me, and it wasn't really good for my health. Then I just decided to quit without any job after that. I was unemployed for a minute, but it was a good reset for me because I fixed my sleeping schedule, and I started to get more refreshed, happier in the mind state.

Right now, currently I'm working for a Japanese-Italian restaurant. The owner is Japanese along with the two sous chefs. I like it there. I enjoy it more than my previous job for sure. They seem to care about me a lot, and I always get employee meals and stuff. For me personally, because I always want to learn the cooking style of my head chef, I usually come in pretty early to learn a couple of stuff from him, usually on Thursdays. I have a class that ends at eleven fifteen, and then I have another class at two thirty, and in between that time I usually come to my restaurant and learn a couple of stuff. It's a very big learning curve as compared to my old job, but that is the environment I want to get myself into where I'm constantly learning and constantly being hungry for knowledge. It feels like you're going into work every single day knowing that you're going to learn something new, and that's what keeps me going, and that's what keeps me motivated. Yes, that is my job right now.

**What do you do exactly, like your day-to-day tasks?**

Usually, I do not handle the hot kitchen because I think only the head chef handles the hot kitchen, but I will do most of the prep work. I would make the appetizers, make the desserts. For closing, usually I help the dishwasher wash the dishes until it's finished, and then I mop the floor. I sweep the floor and everything, basically closing the restaurant. Sometimes as well when we're very busy, because the restaurant is a family owned restaurant, they try to keep the staff as



low as possible because they're trying to save costs, which there is nothing wrong with that. I totally understand, but sometimes I would have to help the waiters clear out the tables and stuff, which I don't mind at all. Those are my basic day-to-day. I would usually come into work at five p.m., and I will probably get back home at twelve.

**Where in Las Vegas have you lived?**

I lived in the dorms, so that's near campus, basically. Right now, I live in Fremont, but not exactly downtown Fremont, more like five minutes away from Fremont. I've been getting a lot of bad comments about Fremont from my friends saying that it's not really a safe area and stuff, which is true, which is true, not to say the least. But where I live is a gated residential, so it's pretty safe, and it's very well lit at night. It's very bright, so not a lot of problems that arise from that. I'm still alive, so...

**Yes. In these neighborhoods, were there other people of your ethnic background, or were there any other Indonesian people or Asian people?**

Not that I know of, no. I haven't met any Indonesians from my neighborhoods, no. I actually have a couple of Indonesian friends here, too, but they rarely go back to Indo, and they're just basically raised here. They're the opposite of me, basically. Their family lives here, and they're just basically an American. Some of my friends don't even know how to speak Indo, but it's fine. I don't judge. It's not your fault. No, I have not found any Indonesians in my neighborhood.

**Not even on campus or through the school, you haven't met anyone?**

From campus, no. I only met them from my mutuals, basically. My dad and my mom have a couple of friends in Vegas, and they basically have their sons and daughters, and so I've met them. We're pretty close now. So, yes.

**It's kind of like networking, yes, yes.**

Yes, it's basically about mutuals.

**Can you tell me about any traditions or festivals that are important to your family?**

Yes. Number one would be Ramadan. I'm a Muslim. Some of my Catholic and Christian friends sometimes like to join me and fast, but for Muslims it's a must. You basically need to fast during Ramadan. It's for a month. You basically cannot eat from sunrise until sunset. It sounds pretty hard, but you'll get used to it as you go. The first few weeks is always hard because some of the days it'd be like muscle memory; if I needed a drink, I will probably hold a water. But here is the thing, though. If you don't remember that you're fasting and you drank it, you're fine. But if you remember, then you can't drink it. If you drink, you break your fast. It's sometimes pretty unfortunate.

Also, for women during Ramadan, if they have their period, they are not allowed to fast. It's basically the same as praying. They have to...I think it's around one or two weeks, and then they can start to pray and fast again.

During Ramadan in Indonesia, big families gather around. Families from my mom's side and families from my dad's side, we usually gather at my grandpa's place, and we would usually eat foods that are very traditional to Ramadan. To name a few, it's *opor*, which is chicken with coconut milk with ginger, I think if I'm not mistaken, and then we have dates. Dates are very big during Ramadan. I cannot name anything. Those are some that I mentioned.

**What's the symbolism behind fasting?**

I'm not really that religious, by the way. Here's how I see it. We usually are not grateful for the things we have. When those things are taken away from us, we start to appreciate them more. It's basically putting ourselves in the shoes of people who are struggling to eat every single day. That's why people who are financially unstable, they're not required to fast. It's a very good

experience for me to always fast. It's a very wholesome event. You just learn to appreciate more about other people and the things you have. I don't know if this true, but from a medical standpoint, some of my friends say, "Oh yes, your stomach just needs a rest." But I do not think that. I do not think that at all.

**How did your celebrations or festivals change after you moved to Las Vegas?**

Actually, still the same celebration not with my family but more with Tante Fatmah, with the Indonesian community here. There are actually a couple of Indonesian families that I've met here. Most of them are very old ones, I'd say mid-forties, mid-thirties. Yes, same food, same everything. It's a different feeling when you celebrate in your home country and here, but both of them are as fun as the other.

**What should people who have never traveled outside of Las Vegas know about your country's culture or history? What are some number-one tips that they have to know before traveling, just basic information that they should know about your culture?**

One thing that they need to know, it's not just about Bali because people just want to go to Bali, and people know only about Bali, but there are a lot of other places in Indonesia that are very beautiful. We have this thing called the Thousand Islands, which is not a thousand islands, but it's a bunch of islands, and they're very beautiful, and they're very fun to hang out, too, and have a vacation with.

From a cultural standpoint, don't expect everyone to be able to speak in English. It's pretty hard. In Jakarta, there are a lot of pickpockets, a lot. Probably not the best to show your money or some stuff.

**Is it a good tourist spot, or it's just locals?**

For Jakarta? No, not so much a tourist spot, but more for business because it's basically a metropolitan city, a lot of high towers and stuff. It's probably not best for tourists because you can't really go anywhere. Look, there's a beach one hour away from central Jakarta, but the beach is really bad. It's basically just trash, and the water is not clear. Some of the places have good beaches, like Jogjakarta. Lombok has really good sightseeing, and then Manado, just to name a few.

One thing that I also recommend to people when they to Indonesia is to check out the temples. A lot of Buddhist temples because Indonesia as a country, it was supposed to be a more Buddhist and Hinduism dominate country until the Middle Eastern came into Indonesia to trade for spices. That's why now we're a majority Muslim country.

**How do you feel about the activity of gambling and the gaming industry? As a hospitality major yourself, how do you feel about that?**

For me personally, I feel that it's a very interesting industry because you're basically just playing on chances. It's not like a restaurant industry or a hotel industry. It's designed for people who are, not greedy, but more competitive because you can bet everything. You can bet on sports or different games and stuff.

**Yes, animals.**

Yes. That's crazy. As for Indonesia, they made gambling illegal because, again, it's against the religion. Not a lot of people are aware how big is the gambling industry, so they just never really bother. Me personally, if I was twenty-one, I would probably gamble as well, but not poker or blackjack, but more to sports because I watch a lot of basketball, and I know a couple of stuff. I probably would bet on sports rather than just games.

**What foods remind you of home, and can you get these foods or the ingredients to make them in Las Vegas?**

Yes. As I was saying, the foods that we made in Ramadan, like *opor*. My personal favorites would be *rendang*, which is basically a slow-cooked braised beef. It's basically dipped in Indonesian curry with a couple of traditional Indonesian ingredients. The one that is just basically a boiled egg and chili relish is really good, it's very good. Then satay, which is basically grilled chicken on a skewer, and then you dip it in peanut sauce. It's really good, very umami.

Desserts, there is this thing called *es-teler*, which is basically syrup, like coconut syrup with condensed milk, I think, and with avocado and Jell-Os. It's very refreshing especially during Ramadan. We usually also eat them when we break our fast.

**How has the model minority myth affected you? Have you ever experienced racial discriminatory practices against yourself or other Asian Americans?**

From other Asian Americans or just in general?

**Just in your experience, yes.**

Actually, I have encountered one. It was not that recent, but it was during my freshman year. For the context, there is a city in Indonesia; it's called Aceh, and their laws and policies are different; they're more tied to religion. To name a few—it's pretty crazy—if you get caught stealing, they will cut your hand; and if you get caught peeking through someone's shower, you're going to get your eyes poked out or stuff. It's pretty gory and very sadistic in a way. Again, it's very tied to religion. I had this one guy who basically just Snapchatted me, and then he was saying, "Oh my god, you guys are sadistic. You guys are gory. What are you guys doing over there?" I was trying to explain to him in a very polite tone that, "Oh, that is actually Aceh, and it is a part of

Indonesia, yes, that is true, but they have different laws and different policies.” But I felt like the guy was just disregarding the fact, and he was very ignorant, to say the least. Yes, he just assumed that all of Indonesia is like that. I wasn’t offended at all because, okay, I get it; you’re not that familiar with Indonesia, and I respect that. But to generalize people from Indonesia as sadistic and stuff, it’s kind of impolite and pretty rude, but I didn’t take offense of that. I just let it go through.

**Have you experienced anything like that in Las Vegas or witnessed it?**

Just to me or to other people?

**In general, if you had any experiences with it, but if you haven’t personally, no.**

That is probably the experience I get, only through Snapchat direct message. But have I seen other people did that? I actually haven’t at all.

**Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are the fastest-growing population group in Southern Nevada. What does this mean to you?**

First of all, I felt that Las Vegas, like rent-wise, is very cheap compared to California. That is why I felt like a lot of these Asian Americans who like to live in California, they moved to Southern Nevada because their rent prices are better. I’ve seen a lot of Filipinos, a lot of Filipinos. I felt that it’s a very big opportunity for them to get money and stuff and better living conditions and stuff. Not only that, but the places I’ve been here are also accommodating those Filipinos or just Asian people in general, like Chinatown. They have a lot of Asian restaurants, and they’re not just Asian restaurants that are non-authentic. The owners are very ethnically close to their roots, like Japanese people, like my chef, for example. Not only that, but they also have grocery stores, like Seafood City, like Filipino grocery stores, and they have bakeries as

well. They're just like one bakery next to Seafood City down Maryland, and they sell *ube*. I think it would be like puffed bread. It's really good. It's actually really good.

**Why is it valuable for the university to collect interviews such as yours? Do you think that people can benefit from hearing your story and about your culture?**

Yes, I do feel that. I feel like people can learn from my experiences especially international students who are studying abroad, and they have a hard time adjusting to the social life here. Know always that you will have a chance, and you will find a lot of people to hang out with. I know it's really hard especially with the language barrier and the difference in the culture and the difference in general. We're different people, and I came from a different country. That is one.

Two, for me personally, try to build a network. That is a very important one. Try to build a network not only with college people but people you also meet in your life, in your career. For example, if you're working in a bar and then you find just this one customer that you're cool with and everything, ask them for their number and talk further and stuff. It's just a matter of how much you're willing to communicate with other people and make that network. Las Vegas, again, is a city that is very closely related to hospitality, which is a business of people. In order to survive here in a career perspective, you need to basically know people.

**What are the greatest differences that you find between Las Vegas and other places you've lived, like culturally?**

Culturally, I mean to compare to Jakarta, a lot. To be fair, I'm more comfortable living in Jakarta because I don't have to worry about food, I don't have to worry about rent; it's pretty much all there. While here it's very challenging because I have to think about gas money, I have to pay rent, I have to make myself some food, and it's pretty tough going sometimes. As much as it

sounds challenging, I am happier here because this means that I grew as a person, and I'm more independent. It made a significant impact to me, living here.

**Was there any culture shock that you experienced?**

Oh yes. Driving on the left side, that threw me off because in Indonesia, the steer is on the right side, and then here it's on the left side, and then you drive in the right lane in the U.S., and in Jakarta you drive on the left lane. It took some time to adjust. It was a bit wonky at first, but then I got used to it, and then I was fine with it after that. It took me only like a minute to adjust.

Other than that, culture shocks...how people socialized.

**Oh. How is it different?**

With Indonesians, obviously the people that are in my bubble, people tend to judge other people a lot, and it was a very toxic environment as compared to here. The people I meet, they're very wholesome right from the start. They don't have any shame or anything. They just introduce themselves and say hi. It makes you feel that you're special in a way. Yes, that is one big difference that I've noticed. But I'm not trying to disrespect my Indonesian friends. I love them as well. That's just how I feel. I felt that it was very easy to connect to my friends here more than to them.

**Awesome. Were there any differences in Las Vegas with politics? How is it different than Indonesia?**

In Indonesia, politics is very tied to religion, very tied. Here, I felt that I am not that involved. I would still vote. I would still vote for who I think was right, but I would say that I'm not as involved as I was in Indo. But in general, I just never really gave a deal about politics. I'm just busy with my own stuff. It didn't really bother me as much.



**What kind of government is it there because I know in America it's a democracy? Is it similar in Indonesia?**

It's also a democracy, yes. The election is every four years, I think. Here, is it five years?

**It's four years.**

Four years as well? Okay, so, yes. It is basically the same stuff. It's just that in Indonesia I felt like it's very religious. Some of the policies are very tied to religion.

**Because of religion, there are certain laws that are made? Because here there is supposed to be a separation between church and state, but in Indonesia that's not the case?**

No, not the case, not the case. I tell you what was a different case. The city that I told you earlier, that was a different case because they run under a different government, but they're still a part of Indonesia. But as for Indonesia itself, some of the laws, for example, if you committed a murder, then you're probably sentenced to death, but then you read the Bible first. It's very...I don't know how to say it. Very tied to religion.

**Are there any differences between religion and spirituality that you have noticed here compared to at home?**

Yes. With here, people pay attention a lot to astrology. That's one thing I realize. Zodiacs and birth signs or something. I respect that. It's fun for me as well, looking at what are my traits and how is my day and how my day will go. With back home, there are not a lot of people that I observed who really believe in spirituality and meditation except for some people. For example, my mom, she regularly does meditate, sometimes. In Bali, actually more in Bali, they have basically a culture of meditating a lot.

**Are there any differences lifestyle-wise that you thought was surprising when you came here?**

I can say one thing. I used to be a smoker. I used to smoke cigarettes a lot, but now it's been toned down because of the people that I meet and, also, myself. I observe that a lot of people here don't smoke cigarettes. They rarely smoke vapes and stuff. I pay attention to that a lot. One day I just smoked one cigarette, and then I was just like, oh, I don't feel like it no more. Now I'm seven months free, so I haven't smoked a cigarette since. With vape, I actually stopped as well. It's been a week. I felt that it takes a lot of my paycheck, and I just decided to stop. Yes, that's the one thing I realized about the lifestyle. A lot of people actually like exercise here. They go to the gym a lot and stuff, which I need to be doing that soon, very soon, but schooling work is very tough. A lot of the activities and the lifestyle they do, they reflect on how they are socially. They are healthier. They're more open-minded, and they're very easy-going and accepting in a way.

**Is drinking as big of a thing in Indonesia as it is here?**

By big, what do you mean?

**Just how people drink socially. People drink sometimes a lot, addiction.**

That makes sense. From where I live, central Jakarta, drinking isn't very normal. It's a very normal activity to do especially on a Saturday night when people just want to hang and go to the club, or just drink socially and hang out with your friends, but outside of that, basically it's taboo. When people see you drinking, they see it as a very shameful act especially for family members that are more old-fashioned in a way. Yes, they would probably judge you on that, which is something that you don't really want. Actually, the same goes with tattoos. If you pull up with a tattoo in a family gathering, people will look at you and nothing else. Again, it's very tied to religion. It's not a lot allowed in the Islamic religion to have tattoos, and drinking, too.

**We are nearing the end of our interview. Are there any other things, like last things that you want to share or talk about? We still have a little bit more time. Closing statements?**

Closing statements...I would say that you guys should visit Indonesia. It's one hell of a country. Where you thought you discovered everything about Indonesia, you don't. I lived there for seventeen years, and I still haven't seen everything out of Indonesia. I still haven't gone to other places that I should be going to. It's a very big country. I think it's the fourth most populated. It's not just about Bali. You should check out other places as well. I don't know. I think that's it.

**Is it very culturally rich? Is it kind of like where it's so big that each city offers so much?**

Yes. Again, when you said about Indonesian cuisine, it's a lot because it's not just Indonesian cuisine, but each city has their own cuisines and their own specialties. In Jakarta, if I wanted to try something that are more traditional to other cities in Indonesia, they would have it, but it wouldn't taste the same. Some of the things, there is this thing called *nasi campur*. It's basically white rice with a lot of pork, a lot of pork dishes, like grilled, and then they have one that's boiled and braised, one that's sauteed like a chili sauce, and they basically put it in one plate. *Campur* means mix, so you just basically mix it. It's very traditional in Bali. They do have it in Jakarta, but it doesn't taste the same, is what I'm saying.

**Thank you so much for letting me interview you.**

Oh yes. Thank you for interviewing me.

**[End of recorded interview]**