

AN INTERVIEW WITH SU KIM

An Oral History Conducted by Ashley Brooke C. Fuentes

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

Oral History Research Center at UNLV
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Oral History Project

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PREFACE

“Las Vegas is really so bright, at night especially. You can’t really feel it when you are inside.
But when you see from farther away, you can see more beautiful things.”

In about 2007, at age 19, Su Kim left Seoul, Korea, for Provo, Utah, with little knowledge of English and leaving behind her younger sister, her social worker mother and her father, a contractor. Seeing education as her only way out of Korea, she completed her general education credits at College of Eastern Utah. In 2010, she arrived in Las Vegas; she married in 2015 and is currently enrolled at the College of Southern Nevada. She hopes to pursue a degree in Hospitality at UNLV, but for now she works as the office manager for the contractor that employs her husband as a project manager.

In this interview, Su Kim talks about her family in Korea, culture shock, schooling, her life in Utah, her impressions of Las Vegas, discrimination, racism, the COVID-19 pandemic, and immigration.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

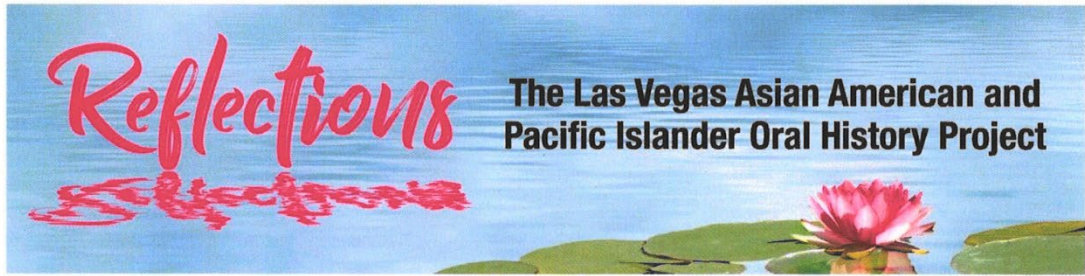
Interview with Su Kim
November 21, 2021
in Las Vegas, Nevada
Conducted by Ashley Fuentes

Preface.....iv

Kim starts off by talking about her family relations in Korea and her contentious relationship with her father. She mentions some brief memories of her maternal grandparents and what it was like moving to the U.S. right after graduating from high school in Korea. She touches on the hardest things to leave behind, how she stays in touch with her family, and her fondest memory while in Korea. Kim elaborates on what eventually drew her to Las Vegas, Nevada, and what her first impressions and memories were.....1-7

Next, Kim touches on some early financial troubles she encountered after moving to Las Vegas, what her first job was, and the difficulties of trying to adjust to all the new changes. She remembers the first neighborhood she lived in and compares the community to the community she encountered while living in Provo, Utah. Switching topics, Kim talks about both American traditions and Korean holidays, as well as what foods are related to the Korean holidays that she celebrates. Kim elaborates more on her relationship with her sister and the biggest differences between living in Las Vegas and living in Korea.....7-14

Since moving to Las Vegas, Kim has enjoyed the large Asian culture that exists in the city and how proud she is to live here. She discusses her distaste for the gaming industry, cooking Korean food, finding out about how KFC was served buffet style in Utah, a home-crafted item that reminds her of her family, and her views on race.....14-21



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[Interview of Su Kim by Ashley Brooke C. Fuentes, November 21, 2021]

Hi, Su.

Hi, Ashley.

Nice to meet you.

Nice to meet you, too.

Please talk about your family and your childhood, like school, recreation, your friends, any family stuff that you had, like vacations, or your relatives.

I have four [family] members: My mom, dad, me, and my little sister. I really don't have a good memory for my dad because we always— I'm a girl, right? But my dad treated me like a boy because he always wants to have a boy, but it didn't happen. He treated me like a boy, not a girl. For me, it's kind of hard to accept, and everything has to be his way. Of course, when I was a kid, no; I followed whatever he told me. But when I'm grown up, I have my own opinion on something, but he really doesn't accept it; he didn't follow me like that. We have a lot of fights.

My mom, she is more a supportive type because my dad was really, really strict, to everyone. My mom, me, my sister. We are really not suffering for money. We didn't really. But I was thinking, I could be happier more, not with money, but happy-happy, happy mood with family, but I don't really have it.

My little sister, we are best friends. We can tell each other anything, everything. My sister is two years younger than me. We fight a lot, too, but, at the same time, we are best friends.

How about your grandparents? Do you have any stories that your grandparents told you from their lives?

I have both my mom's side and my dad's side. I don't really have my dad's side's parents because they left me early. I have a few memories from my mom's side grandparents because

they worked for a farm and the sea. How do you call the sea? We have the ocean out and goes in kind of thing, floating. I think here it's already there. It doesn't really move or go away. But in Korea, we have some—

The tide?

Tide, yes, ah yes. When the ocean is gone, all the shell, all the clams are there, so she is gathering. That's my grandma's work. Every time we have a vacation, we would go there and help them. It was fun in all the water, and we're gathering all the live seafood and things all there. Yes, I still have a good memory.

What and where was your higher education?

In Korea.

If you did have higher education in Korea or here.

I finished my high school in Korea, and then as soon as I finish it, I moved to United States. I started study in Utah, college, and then I transferred to CSN, and at the time, I got married, and I'm still studying. I'm expecting on graduating next semester.

Congratulations.

Thank you.

What college was it in Utah that you went to?

It was College of Eastern Utah. It was my first college, and then I transferred.

How do you identify ethnically?

I am Asian, Korean.

Please tell your family's migration story. Did you come to the U.S. alone, or did you go with any of your family members?

Throughout the history of both my parents' sides, throughout both histories, I'm the first one who immigrated to not only U.S., any other country. Because my friend said, oh yes, I don't know, my uncle or relative, she is there, but I don't have it. I was looking like, how come I don't have it? I want somebody, like my nephew or a relative, to say, "Yes, my auntie," or, "My cousin is there." I want to hear it. That was one reason to—it was helpful to, "I want to go." One reason.

Since you were the only one to move of your family, what was the hardest thing about moving? What was hard for you to leave behind whether it was people?

It was hard. It was really hard because I have friends here, not much, but a coworker. But family, blood family, they're not here. The holidays are coming every year, and that's the hardest season. I like Thanksgiving and I like Christmas, but just being living alone with my husband, it's like, um, yeah.

When the holidays come around, or just in general, how do you stay in touch with distant family members?

I call. Here it's holidays, but there not holidays, so they don't really feel like, oh, it's a holiday, no. They're just living regular life, working. But for me, it's a holiday, and everyone is celebrating the holiday. But nobody can really agree or...it's hard. It's better not to say it, like, "Hey, there's a holiday." I stopped.

What about outside of holidays? Like birthdays, do you talk to your family often?

Yes, I talk to my mom every day twice or three times. Even my mom, because I keep calling her, she said, "Oh, I should get paid to answer your call." Because of a feeling, my emptiness feeling, that's what I want to fill with the love from my mom, but sometimes she's like, "It's too

much.” She’s already married, and then she has her own life, and she’s like, “You keep contacting me.”

Does the time difference make it difficult for you, too?

Yes. Well, not really because sixteen hours—no, fifteen. My lunchtime, that’s the time my mom wakes up. My mom wakes up at six a.m. Korea time, and then in summertime here, it’s two p.m., which is the middle of the day for lunchtime. But without daylight savings, it’s one p.m., so I can take my lunch in maybe twenty or thirty minutes, and I have time to talk to my mom. Okay, that’s good.

What are your fondest memories of Korea? The memories you treasure the most or keep closest to your heart, happy memories, or memories that make you miss being there?

With my whole family, my mom, my dad?

Or just by yourself, being in Korea, what do you miss about it? If there’s a specific memory that you remember, and it makes you really happy thinking back on it.

There is one time. I’m already here, and it was summer break, and so I visited them. At that time, they were still together because my parents split up, divorced. They were still together, and we had a little puppy, which my dad hated. I have my sister and my parents, so four, and so that time, five. It was my second time to have a puppy. We have a little dinner together, five. We’re eating, the puppy and us four. I don’t remember what we were talking about, but we were laughing, and we were teasing the puppy because the puppy is trying to get some human food. I still remember. At that time, I feel like, ah, I’m happy; wow, this is happy; we’re family. Yes, I just remember.

Is that something you look back on often?

Not really. I just remembered. Because you just asked me, I just remembered.

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

Especially after pandemic, it takes longer than before. Now, we are still processing to get green card. We already submitted all the paperwork this year, January, and we're still waiting for their answer, but nothing yet. Every morning, I go to the office, and then I deliver a financial report to my boss, and after that, the first thing is I check the USCIS about my case, but nothing yet. It is kind of tiring, and then we already put a lot of money for all the processing fee and lawyer. Time and money, yes, but nothing yet.

What made you come to Las Vegas?

First state I went to, it was Utah. It was kind of funny. Since I moved to the United States, I didn't know what to choose as my major, so I took general. I think it's my first semester, and then I started thinking, Su, you better think about your future. What do you want to be? I feel like, okay, maybe I want to have a job with something in service. At that time in Korea, there's a really popular [program], and the main character works at a hotel. They look so nice and luxury. I was like, oh, maybe I'll like it. I was searching the rank of universities in the U.S., and I think UNLV was the second rank [in Hospitality], and it's so close, just like the next state. "Let's move to Las Vegas." That was the reason.

What was your first impression of Las Vegas when you first arrived?

I can't forget it because I was driving—not me, but my friend was driving. It was eight hours of driving. We left in the morning, and we were here, I would say, seven, eight. It was already dark. The freeway at night is dark. It's black dark. I was just driving and thinking, oh my god, I'm tired. I was kind of sleeping. Then when I opened my eyes, there is a lot of neon and then all the post lights. Las Vegas is really so bright, at night especially. You can't really feel it when you

are inside. But when you see from farther away, you can see more beautiful things. When I opened my eyes, it was like, oh, this is heaven. That was my first thought about Las Vegas.

How about your first memories when you first started living here?

It was tough. It was really tough because my dad kind of cut all my financial because we had a little argument. It was a huge argument. He cut all my financial, even tuition. I didn't know what to do, and I need money for rent and all the things, and they require a deposit, of course, getting apartment. At that time, it was everyday suffering for money.

Did he support you when you went to Utah?

Yes.

He cut you off when it was Las Vegas only?

Yes.

What were your first memories of Las Vegas?

It was night. Next day, I went to CSN to register. I already got the acceptance letter, but I just wanted to see the campus. There is the main campus for CSN, but I chose the wrong one, and so I went to north campus. It wasn't main. The main is Charleston, right? That's it? I was kind of disappointed. I thought it would be more than that, but it's nothing. That was my first memory, to visit my school for the next day.

Where did you live when you first arrived in Las Vegas? Did you live closer to the north side?

No. It was Sahara and Decatur.

Were there any food places in that area that you remember at least going to when you first arrived here?

Yes.

Is there anything else in your first home that you miss or really remember?

At that time, I didn't have a car, and so I had to take a bus, or I had to walk. I had to buy water, too, of course, water. I lived in a little apartment, and right behind my apartment there is a big market named Trader Joe's. Oh, that's good. Anyway, I need water. I went to this store, and the water is expensive because it's not Walmart. It's more like organic things there. Let's say for this regular Walmart or Smith's, a big pack of water is five dollars, but there isn't one pack for five dollars. I feel like, no, I'll just take tap water, instead of getting water. I've been drinking tap water for a long time.

You mentioned financial troubles earlier because of your father cutting you off. What other things were the most difficult for you in your early days in Las Vegas, and is there anyone in particular who was the most helpful for helping you get by?

No. Actually, he cut off all my financial. He's like, "If you don't follow my way, you live by yourself." That's why he cut off. He would send me money monthly, every 15th that's my payday, and then he cut off. I was like, oh my god, I don't know what to do. I called my mom, but they have a joint account. If my mom sent money to me, he'll know. My mom can't really help me-help me. Only two hundred dollars, three hundred dollars, but it's not enough because, I still remember, the rent is four hundred dollars, and my mom could only send a very small amount of money. At that time, I really had to work to support my living.

What was your first job?

It was a sushi place. I was a server.

Was that also a difficult thing about living in Las Vegas? Did you like your job?

At that time, I didn't really think about, I like this job, or I don't like this job, because it's mandatory. If you don't work, you die. It's far. It was at Sahara and Cimarron. Good thing it's

the same avenue, so I can take a bus. I know the bus takes forever. I had to wait, and I had to be there for their schedule. I kind of like it, and I made a lot of mistakes. I was holding [the drink tray], and then it was too heavy. It's like a water cup. Let's say there's a group of customers, like ten, twelve, I make the drink, and then I hold it, and then it was unbalanced, and so I dropped it. *Dung, dung, dung, dung, dung.* The manager got really, really mad at me. "What are you doing? If you think, you can take it half and half. You don't have to take everything at one time." I cried.

Was it even worse trying to figure it out for the first time also in a new environment?

Yes, everything. In Utah, they are so quiet. There's nothing to do, actually. I feel like if I go to Las Vegas, there will be more fun and more things to do. But without money, no, I can't do anything, so I only worked and then school. Yes, it was hard. What was the question?

With no experience, was that even more difficult to learn the job?

The job waitressing, because I never did a part-time job in Korea. I didn't have to. Well, that's all a big mistake. That's why I don't really like indoor girls. They're just really home. They don't really do social life. But we all need it. I didn't know what was my future, next, after I left because I feel like I still have my father as a backup, so I don't have to really work. I didn't really think about working. But after he cut off my tuition, it's a whole different story. I have to be by myself. Of course, I didn't have a server job, no. I didn't. It was worse my first time. It wasn't easy at all.

How old were you when you got this first job?

Because I was here when I was nineteen, and it was twenty-one, yes, because two years later, yes, twenty-one.

You don't have any family in Las Vegas. It's just you and your husband.

Actually, not only Las Vegas, the whole state.

Have you guys lived anywhere else in Las Vegas?

We met here and we married here and then we live here.

In the first few neighborhoods that you were in, did you feel isolated, or were there other people of your own ethnic background?

Actually, right next to each other, this is my house and then next to each other, they're all Korean. I thought it was Koreatown. I don't know. It's so weird. I remember before we moved to the house, the right one, that house was Mexican. They moved out and then somebody moved in, and it was Asians, so I thought, oh, Asian. I'm kind of happy to see Asians around. But I thought it's Chinese, and I heard them speaking Korean. I'm like, oh, they're Koreans. I'm happy. The other one, they're Korean, too.

In different neighborhoods that you've lived in in Las Vegas, were you able to talk to your neighbors or become friends with them?

I want to, but I'm scared because I still feel like I'm a minor. There are, of course, a lot of different ethnicities live here, but the thing is majority is White people. After this pandemic, they hate Asians. They don't really like Asians. They think we have to wear a mask because of you guys. I'm not Chinese. I'm Korean. But still, they don't see the difference. I am kind of scared if I talk to them, and they ignore me. I don't want that to happen. I'd just rather not talk to them. I want to. I'd love to, but I don't do it.

Compared to Utah where you lived before and your current place where you reside in Las Vegas, how different are the people and your neighborhood and your house?

Utah, I was in Provo. Provo is the main city for LDS, means Latter-day Saints, Mormon people. They're all White. When I arrived in Utah, Provo, I'm the only one Asian. Everyone, my

roommates, everyone was White. Then they are so friendly. I really appreciate them at that time because they helped me a lot, English. They even had a lesson for me in English, a little English class, so they can teach me English. It was great. At the time, I have money from my dad, and so I don't have to worry about, where do I get it? No nothing. But here, I don't really see White people around me now. It's all Asian or Mexican, or a different country of people than White people. I don't know why, but the White people are not that nice as much as in Utah. At the time, I wasn't struggling with money, but now it's different because I got married, and now I have my husband.

Are there any traditions or festivals that are important to you and your culture or your family, and are there any that you wish you had here in Las Vegas?

We have two really big, like Thanksgiving and Christmas here. We celebrate Chinese New Year, and then we have Thanksgiving, but a different date. It's mostly similar stuff what we have here. I don't really have a specific cultural celebration. I wish I could be there to celebrate the Korean—the big one, but I can't because of a different date.

Do you still try to celebrate those on top of the American holidays while you're here?

Yes. I'm here and everyone around me, yes, they're celebrating.

What are the Korean holidays? What are they about, and what do you do for them?

In Korea, there are two major holidays. It's called *Seollal* and *Chuseok*. *Seollal* means Chinese New Year, and then *Chuseok* means Thanksgiving. Old people in Korea, I still don't know why, but we have a different date. They say today is November 21st, right? But we also have a lunar day. I don't know why, but they celebrate it January first. Thanksgiving is usually in September, that time. Before, we are really poor. We've been through a lot of wars. It's a celebration, but we

are so hungry, so we make food and share the food with everyone. I think that's how they started.

What types of traditions do you do these days? Are there certain activities or things that families are supposed to do together?

Yes. Just like here, we go to our parents', and then we have dinner. We have little activities before, so not a lot of people do it as before, no, no. It's just like an event, but people just see it through TV or something, but we don't really do it individually.

Are there any foods that are specific to those holidays for the dinners?

Yes. Rice cake for Chinese New Year, and then we make a rice soup. For Thanksgiving, we make a rice cake. It's not soup, but rice cake. Every family gathering, we make it. It's so fun.

While we are cooking, we are making little—the name is *songpyeon*, like a rice cake. It's so nice to know everyone there and say, "How are you?" People are laughing. Yes, it's good.

Do you still continue to do this?

No, we don't, because it's only me and my husband.

Are there any significant events in the history of your family or community that you feel are the most important to share?

As I mentioned earlier, no, I didn't really have all happy memories with my dad. He is always controlling. He's a provider and he's also a controller. But I never thought I will have a broken family. I will never think about it. Then my mom and dad started arguing a lot. My dad has some problem that he's so stubborn, and then he makes more money, and he changed. Money can change people, right? He got more money, and he got more greedy. That's the time when my mom was already fed up and says, "Well, I can't stay with you anymore." I was here when my mom and my dad and my sister was there. I still feel sorry, a lot of hard feelings for my sister

because I wasn't with her. She's been through all the family thing, and then finally they broke up. Now I have a broken family, and it was still a shock for me, and it changed my life, too.

Do you ever wish that your sister was here in Las Vegas with you?

That's why I offered my sister, after I got married. That's the time my parents are getting divorced, all the paperwork with the court. She was alone, and then I asked her to come here, kind of run away. She was here for three months. That's the time we fight a lot. We argue. It's already been five years that we're not together-together. Before, we are students, but now we are older, so it's a different lifestyle.

She declined the offer to come live with you?

She was here for three months, but that's a dream because of the visa. Right before her visa expired, she left. She went back to Korea.

Do you think she'll stay there permanently?

She really wants to because she already sees me and know that I'm a student and that it's not easy to stay with me. She realized it.

What are the greatest differences that you find between Las Vegas and other places that you lived, so including Korea? We already talked about Utah.

I can compare between here and Korea. Here is more freedom. Yes, it's more freedom because Korean community, they care about other people too much. I can't really go out in house wear. I can't really go out. People say, "What is your problem? You're outside and then you're wearing house wear." But here, you don't care. They don't really care. This kind of thing, it's more freedom and culture.

Both of them have good culture, here and then Korea, too. I don't want to compare culture, which is better, because culture, nobody can really judge. "Oh, mine is better." No. I'm

Korean, and my mother language is Korean. Of course, it's easy. I don't really have to think or translate in my head to say it. But also, I like speaking English even though I have broken English because it's so cool. I have perfect Korean speaking because I'm a native, but still, at the same time, I can speak another language. It's cool. I like it. I'm proud of myself.

I'm not really a political person. I don't even know what's going on in Korea. Here, of course, I didn't have a chance to get interested politically because I was too busy on my own life because I was suffering all those things. It was too much. If I think about politics and all the media, for me it's too much. Let me figure out my life first, and then I'll think about others.

Lifestyle, I love it. I love being in Las Vegas and the United States because I don't have to think about others. Focus on yourself individually. If I live in Korea, it's like I have to think more and more what others think about me; that thing I'm not used to. Korea is a very small country, and my city is the capital. Just like New York or L.A., they have heavy traffic, rush hour in the morning, the same thing. But Las Vegas is more the easy way. It doesn't really have heavy traffic, not like L.A. or a bigger city, but that's one of the reasons I like Vegas.

When you first moved to Utah, did you try to learn how to drive there?

Yes. The thing is my English is really, really bad, so I couldn't pass the written test. I took it four times, and then I fail. I tried to get it, but no, I couldn't drive.

Did you ever try driving in Korea?

Yes. I have a license. I didn't want to, but my dad said, "Su, you need to get a license." He is like, "You're going to drive for me, so you have to get a license first, and you drive whenever I need you." That's the reason why he wanted me to get a license. Yes, I'm licensed already.

What should people who have never traveled outside of Las Vegas know about your country's culture or history?

I can compare Korea and Las Vegas. Korea, we are divided, North and South, more than fifty years ago. During that time, throughout the time, we are—now it's different because they have a strong accent, and then the words they're using are different. The president of North Korea, everyone knows him; he is so popular in a bad way. This is from my personal experience. If somebody asks me, "Where are you from?" I'm like, "I'm Korean." Of course, obviously I feel like Korea means South because North Koreans cannot come here. There is no way. But everyone says, "Oh." I don't know why and how, but they know, oh, Korea is a divided country, but they don't really know, "Are you from North or South?" They all ask me, "You're from North Korea or South Korea?" I'll be like, "Obviously..." Because mostly they [in North Korea] feel like U.S. is their enemy. Well, South, we are friends. That's why we can come here, but not North. But people say, "Oh, you're from North Korea?" I want them to know only South Koreans can come, or U.S. people can travel to only South Korea, not North.

Also, my last name is Kim, right? The president of North Korea, his last name is Kim, too. A lot of people ask me, "Are you two related?" They already have a stereotype, something like you're a bad person. Yes, I want them to know.

What do you like most about living in Las Vegas?

I don't have a lot of experience to visit another city, but I can tell you one thing. Because I'm Asian, I feel more comfortable, more Asian culture around me. In L.A., the biggest Korean Town in U.S. It's only four hours driving. I think there is more Koreans and there is more Asians that are moving to Las Vegas, there are more, so there are more markets here and there. There are more Asian restaurants here. I feel more comfortable living in Las Vegas. I feel like I'm home. This is my home.

Are there any employment or family or entertainment opportunities in Las Vegas that you really like to take advantage of and can't have anywhere else?

The Strip. If my family or my friends are coming here, let's say, the first place I'll take them is to the Strip, and then they're always looking to visit landmarks in Las Vegas. Yes, I will take them. Then Hoover Dam and then Red Rock.

Do you ever feel proud to show your visiting friends or family around Las Vegas?

Oh yes, yes. Because my wedding day, my family was here, but not my dad. It was my mom and my sister and then my uncle and my aunt were here. I was so proud to take them other places that they've never been before, yes.

How do you feel about the activity of gambling and the gaming industry?

To be honest with you, I don't like it. We have all those slot machines even in the airport. Not a lot of states or a lot of cities at their airports ever had it. But gambling and casino, they're another symbol of Las Vegas. Let's say my friend, "What part of United States are you living?" I'd be like, "Las Vegas." The first thing they say, "Oh, be careful gambling." They already have that thing that gambling is really bad. I have a few old friends that are already addicted to gambling. Whenever they have the money, they always go to casino, and then they use all the money, and then they keep borrowing money to pay bills. They can't really help themselves to get out. They even sell their cars or house. For me, it's not right.

Was it culture shock for you to experience the gambling industry here?

We have a very strict law for gambling in Korea. There is one place for gambling, just like a Las Vegas hotel. There is one place, but they only allow foreigners, not Koreans. They can see it as a trip, but we can't really do it-do it. They only allow a different passport or ticket. Here, it's open to everyone. We can't really count how many slot machines and the dealers and the other tables.

I feel like it's a different world because they're open to everyone, and it's easy to access. Over eighteen, they can go—twenty-one or eighteen? What age, do you know? They can do it. There is no restrictions. For me, it's like, wow. That's why people are involved.

Did you have a negative view of the gaming industry before you actually were able to see it for yourself here?

No, I always have the same opinion that gambling is really bad. For me, any game, a video game or any type of game, I feel is negative. My husband always plays games on the weekend.

Sometimes I feel like, are you married to me or to game? I feel like that. I don't really enjoy game things. But he'll be like, "It's fun. Let's do it." But for me, it's like, "No. That's your thing. Don't convince me for whatever you're doing." Maybe it will entertain you, but you're already addicted. Whatever makes you addicted, I feel like it's not that good for you.

Are there any foods that remind you of your ancestors, and are you able to get these foods in Las Vegas?

Orange chicken. You said my ancestor? Like grandparent? They really liked it. Then when we have a holiday, they always make it, and then we'd share it.

Do you ever try to make Korean food yourself here?

I love cooking. Yes. Because I don't really have a lot of hobbies, but that's the main hobby, yes.

Are there any foods that are part of American culture that you tried for the first time in Las Vegas?

KFC. That was my first restaurant that I went to. The first day I was here, it was two p.m., and then I went to KFC. But in Utah, they have KFC, but it was buffet style. Yes, it's kind of different. I was like, wow. You pay a certain amount, and then there is a ton of food, different types, part of a chicken, a thigh or breast, and they fry it, and then there is coleslaw and mashed

potato. You can get as much as you want. I was like, wow, and then, at the same time, I feel like, oh, that's why in the U.S. there is more chubby people.

Was their buffet-style restaurant very different for you, or did you also have them back home?

Yes, we have buffet style, but not in KFC. It's funny because I never thought KFC can be buffet style. I never thought of it. That's fast food, right? It's like a McDonald's. I was thinking that KFC and McDonald's are the same category. But when I stopped at KFC and saw it was buffet style, and it was super good, I really enjoyed it.

Were you surprised by American-sized portions for food compared to portions back home?

For Korea, a standard Coke size is 1.5 liter, not gallon. Gallon is 3.8. Gallon? Maybe double.

When I'm here, the first time I went grocery shopping, there is a lot of soda packets. I was like, whoa, that's giant, like giant-giant, because in Korea when you go grocery shopping or go to a convenience store or a gas station, you only see the biggest, the 1.5 liter. That's the biggest, or the 500 milliliter; that's regular. But here, there's different sizes of soda, and especially in theater. I think the smallest popcorn they are selling, that's the largest popcorn in Korea. It's big like this, a huge popcorn like this in theater here. I was thinking, again, here is why the U.S. has a problem with obesity, okay, I kind of know why, because the portion is so different. Of course, people, especially when you go to a theater and you are watching, you keep eating. You don't really think, oh, I'm eating, because you're watching. You are focused on what's in the movie, and then you keep eating. Your hands are still picking food. That makes you more nutrition you're taking that you're not supposed to, and that's why it makes you bigger.

Are there any home-crafted items that remind you of any relatives, and are you able to buy them or make them here?

There is a little paper, a cutout little paper that is like a drawing that can protect you from any bad luck. I shouldn't have it, actually. I shouldn't keep it because I am a Christian, I am now. This is from my mom and my grandmother, so I still keep it. Whenever I see it, it's a memory of the day I left at the airport, my mom mostly. She held the post because she couldn't let me go. She held the post at the airport, and then she cried. She sat down and she cried. I still remember.

How has the model minority myth affected you?

Well, because I'm not that good in math, I'm not. Math is not my main thing. People think, oh, she's Asian, so she must be pretty good in math. I'm not. I think this came from Chinese because Chinese has a lot of money in the U.S. It's all cash, and that's fine. But since they own a lot of money...It doesn't really bother me a lot, but I still have some theory that they think—just like when you see other people, maybe they're Indian, when you see Indian people, maybe they're not, but maybe you get some image that they eat curry, just like that.

Stereotypes.

Yes, stereotypes. Yes, it's all that. We are all different. Even though we have the same culture, everyone is different.

Have you ever experienced racially discriminatory practices against yourself or other people you know, specifically Asian Americans or Pacific Islanders, and would you be able to describe these incidents?

Yes. It never happened, any discrimination, in Utah even though I'm the only one, Asian. But here, yes, maybe because of the pandemic. At the beginning of the pandemic, I got really scared to go out. It was because of the pandemic and all the masking, they're not used to it. They're not used to wearing it. I feel like, "It never happened, this situation, but because of you guys, you

guys are Asians, because you guys eat bat,” or something. But it required everywhere to wear mask.

One time I went grocery shopping. A whole family, White, they're wearing a mask, and then they see me and put on the mask. Then the father said, “No, I don't want to wear a mask because you guys did something very stupid.” We are all bad. “How are you guys going to compensate, or how are you guys going to pay for all this happening in the world?” I was about to cry. I didn't know what to say because... They assume I'm Chinese, and then they just say it in person. But I didn't do it because I don't eat bat, I don't. How they say it is so hurtful. I can't forget. Before, no, it never happened to me.

Again, later after pandemic, I was just walking in the mall or something, and a lot of people tease me. “Hi, *ni hao*.” Just the way they sound, it's not right. They think it's okay, but they still do the eye thing, like this. Maybe they don't think it's bad, but I take it like, you really didn't have to do that. Even as a joke, it's not funny.

Do you feel like before in Las Vegas, you didn't really...?

I didn't have that experience, no. But after the pandemic, more, yes, I have a few experiences now. Maybe me, maybe because I feel like I'm shy, and I was like, oh my god, what are people going to think about me? Like, you're bad, the pandemic. Maybe it was me, but I feel people, the way they look, I am more scared what they're thinking or why they're looking at me like that.

Do you feel like they noticed you more?

More, yes.

How did you feel when high-ranking U.S. officials called COVID-19 the “Wuhan virus,” the “China virus,” or the “Kung flu?”

I'm Asian. There's a lot of Asians, but we are different cultures, like Chinese, Japanese, Philippines, or Korea, all have different cultures, but we look similar, so they see us like we're all the same. Just like when we see White people from Europe or they're from Australia, we see them as White. I kind of understand that. I just hope...it's better if it never happened.

How do you feel about the Black Lives Matter movement, and in what ways does it, or does not, affect Asian or Pacific Islander Americans?

In my opinion, if we get a chance and then—yes, I'm pretty opposite side, just like Black Lives Matter campaign, yes, for Asians, Asian version of that kind of campaign. I think it's necessary. The Asian people, we're not a mob. I think the White people and the Black people, there is more different ethnicity, but Asians are really...compared to others. I think it's better to let them know about how we are. We're all the same; we're equal. Nobody is better. There is no such thing. Maybe they don't know, and that's why they are discriminating us. Then it's our turn to let them know.

As of right now, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are the fastest-growing population in Southern Nevada. What does that mean to you?

I'm happy. Because the more Asian people, it means—it's not about population. I'll say it's a chance to—just like previous answer, it's another way to let them know that we are here. Especially U.S., we have a lot of immigrants from other countries. For me, I love all the K-Pop, all the culture, and then “Squid Game,” they like it. I'm so proud of Asian culture in the U.S. I really like it, not because I'm Korean, not because I'm one of Asian. We are telling that we are here. It's like I want the world to know about our culture. It's like introducing. The foods, of course, because they don't really know about *kimchi*. They're like, “*Kimchi* is Korean food?” Yes, I love it.

Why do you think it's valuable for the university to collect interviews just like yours?

Yes, just like previous answer, I love it. I'll support as much as I can because that's another way for Asian Americans...we're not that known yet. It's a good chance to let them know about us. It's good because our portion is so small, they can't go, "Oh, it's nothing," or, "It's not major culture." No, I don't feel like—I want them to be open for culture. This is kind of processing...I love it.

Thank you. Su, thank you for interviewing for us.

Yes, you're welcome.

[End of recorded interview]